

Aus Der Heimat (from my homeland) for violin and piano was written in the spring of 1880, shortly after Smetana finished his nationalistic tone poem Ma Vlast. It is one of only two pieces that he composed for this combination. He said of the work: 'It is written in a simple style, with a view to its being performed in the home rather than the concert hall.'

Josef Suk was born in Krecovice, Bohemia on January 4, 1874. Precocious, he was enrolled at the Prague Conservatory when he was just eleven. His teachers included Dvorak, who exercised a profound influence on him. After graduating Suk helped found the Bohemian Quartet, an extremely important group that set a new standard for chamber music performance. He played second violin in the quartet for many years. In 1898 Suk married Dvorak's daughter and shortly after wrote his Piano Quartet, Opus 1.

A double tragedy struck Suk in the years 1904 and 1905: the death of Dvorak followed by Suk's wife. Morbidity and brooding prevailed and his melodies became broader and elegiac. All Czechs suffered a further blow when Austrian troops invaded their country. From 1914 all public concerts had to begin with the Austrian national anthem. At the next Bohemian Quartet performance Suk decided to follow it with a work of his own, inspired by the ancient sacred Bohemian 'St. Wenceslas' hymn. It's message is a plea for the wellbeing of the Czech people, directed to their patron saint.

Dvorak once stated, 'to have a fine idea is nothing special. The idea comes of itself, and if it is a beautiful and great one, this is not due to the man who has it. But to realize this idea in a beautiful fashion and to make something great out of it, that is the most difficult thing, that is art.'

Dvorak's 'Dumky' Trio is one of his most beloved compositions, written in 1890 when he was in his fifties and teaching in Prague. Czech songs and dances infiltrated almost all of his works of this period. A 'Dumka' means, literally, an elegy or lament. It was also a type of Slavic folk song with sudden changes of mood, indicated by contrasts in tempo, mood and rhythm. The trio consists of six 'Dumky' (plural), which together form a pattern. The first three, all in sharp keys, are played without a pause. The final three, all in flat keys and arranged in three separate sections, the last of these a Vivace that drives the piece to a dramatic and forceful finish in C Major.