

A sepia-toned profile portrait of Dora Pejačević, a woman with dark, wavy hair styled in an updo, wearing a pearl necklace and a small earring. The portrait is set against a solid blue background.

audite

DORA PEJAČEVIĆ

Complete Symphonic Works

Annika Schlicht
Martina Filjak

Ivan Repušić

Staatskapelle Weimar

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Verwandlung op. 37b 4:30

Liebeslied op. 39 4:56

Zwei Schmetterlingslieder op. 52

Nr. 1 Goldne Sterne, blaue Glöckchen 1:22

Nr. 2 Schwebe, du Schmetterling 1:25

Sinfonie fis-Moll op. 41

I. Andante maestoso 14:31

II. Andante sostenuto 11:26

III. Scherzo. Molto allegro 7:15

IV. Allegro appassionato 9:45

Phantasie concertante d-Moll op. 48 16:05

Ouvertüre d-Moll op. 49 5:55

Klavierkonzert g-Moll op. 33

I. Allegro moderato 12:14

II. Adagio con estro poetico 8:12

III. Allegro con fuoco 8:34

Nocturne Cis-Dur op. 50/I 4:03

(Arr. Igor Kuljerić)

Annika Schlicht mezzo-soprano

Martina Filjak piano

Staatskapelle Weimar

Ivan Repušić conductor

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**Dora Pejačević:
Complete Symphonic Works**

The process of restoring a composer from the brink of historical oblivion is a challenging endeavour. Recent trends indicate that musical quality alone is not sufficient. The presence of an engaging personal history is also crucial for the revival of forgotten or neglected composers. If the composer in question is a woman, the probability of renewed interest increases. Bearing in mind the longstanding marginalisation of female composers over the past centuries, one could almost conclude that in this way the history of music corrects the injustice it has previously done to female composers. While the name Dora Pejačević was never entirely forgotten, particularly in her homeland of Croatia, her international recognition only began to emerge in the 21st century. Her rise to international visibility reached a peak in 2023, the centenary of her death, when two concerts were held simultaneously in Zagreb and Frankfurt am Main. On 3 March 2023, both the Frankfurt Radio Symphony and the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra performed the most celebrated work by Dora Pejačević, the Symphony in F-sharp minor, Op. 41.

Although she is today regarded as the most prominent Croatian female composer, during her lifetime Dora Pejačević enjoyed greater visibility across Europe than in her homeland. Moreover, to this day, there remains no consensus regarding her mother tongue, though it is widely accepted that it was not Croatian language. Surviving correspondence reveals that she spoke Croatian with numerous grammatical errors typical of native German speakers. Unlike her Croatian father, her mother was of Hungarian origin, suggesting that Hungarian may have been her first language. Nonetheless, the composer wrote letters to her closest acquaintances and maintained a reading diary, both of which survive today, in German. Born in Budapest in 1885 and deceased in Munich in 1923, it is perhaps most accurate and appropriate to consider Pejačević as a Central European composer, rather than being defined by national affiliation.

Pejačević's compositional style also mirrors the musical language of numerous composers active at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. Educated in the spirit of Romanticism, her early works are most notably influenced by Chopin, Grieg, and Mendelssohn, while her early vocal compositions clearly reflect the influence of Schubert. However, Dora Pejačević also engaged significantly with the contemporary stylistic currents of her time. One can already discern a strong Impressionist influence in some of her early piano works, while her later compositions reveal that she was by no means untouched by Expressionism, even though this segment of her *œuvre* remains the least performed and least familiar. This, too, highlights a certain injustice in the reception of Pejačević's legacy: she is most frequently represented in concert programmes by her early piano miniatures, as though one were to represent Beethoven's *œuvre* solely, for example, ending with his 4th or 5th symphony. Projects like this recording, which features the entirety of the symphonic output of Dora Pejačević, contribute to correcting the previously noted neglect of her later work.

A crucial element in interpreting and contextualising the life and work of Dora Pejačević is her social background. Born into aristocracy, she was a member of one of the wealthiest and most politically influential Croatian families of the time. Her father and grandfather both held high-ranking executive positions of

Croatia, roles roughly equivalent to the modern office of Prime Minister. This privileged position afforded the young composer the opportunity to pursue a professional musical career; however, it also brought significant burden. Archival evidence indicates that her colleagues and friends expected her to contribute to the cultivation of music in the then Croatia with her influence more than she did.

In addition to the aristocratic family background of Dora Pejačević, her mother, Lilla Pejačević (née Vay de Vaya), who also demonstrated an interest in composition, played a formative role in the musical upbringing of her oldest daughter. Moreover, Dora's younger sister Gabrielle Pejačević composed in her youth at least two piano miniatures that closely resemble the early style of her elder sister. The existence of a family in the southern region of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in which three women engaged in composition, represents a rare phenomenon, both within the European context and on the global musical stage.

In her early twenties, Dora Pejačević relocated to Dresden, where she undertook composition studies for several years. This period was followed by a brief stay in Munich, although unfortunately, little is known about her time there. In 1913, the composer returned to Croatia, where she remained during the First World War and the immediate post-war years. In 1921, she once again moved to Germany – initially returning briefly to Dresden and subsequently settling in Munich. This second relocation was most likely prompted by her marriage to the young Viennese nobleman Ottomar von Lumbe. However, the couple's happiness did not last long. Just a year and a half after their wedding, Dora Pejačević died due to complications following the birth of her only child, son Theo.

Over the course of her 37 years, approximately the same lifespan as Mozart, Dora Pejačević composed 58 works with opus numbers, significantly fewer than the famed Austrian composer. Pejačević was a highly subtle and meticulous artist who often spent extended periods developing a musical idea before committing it to paper. Her artistic evolution was marked by a gradual and deliberate progression, including a cautious but determined entry into the realm of symphonic music. Her principal instrument was the piano, through which she explored harmonic and formal liberties. By contrast, her orchestral writing mostly remained rooted in the stylistic language of late Romanticism.

The first completed orchestral composition by Dora Pejačević was the **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 33**. At the time she was composing this work, Pejačević was also publicly performing pieces by Rachmaninoff, whose influence can be discerned in the concerto's three virtuosic movements. Prior to this, her orchestral output consisted only of what are now considered orchestration studies, including an originally unfinished arrangement of her violin miniature *Canzonetta*. The Piano Concerto was premiered in Zagreb in February 1916 to great acclaim, after which Pejačević began work on her **Symphony**, a project that occupied her for approximately a year and a half. The Symphony was partially performed in 1918 in Vienna, in none other than the prestigious Golden Hall of the Musikverein. The performance was conducted by the Czech composer and conductor Oskar Nedbal; however, the originally planned full premiere did not materialise. Instead, only the two inner movements were presented: the second, a slow movement, and the third, which critics interpreted as a kind of Slavic dance.

Several explanations have been proposed for why only two movements of Dora Pejačević's Symphony were performed at the concert held on 25 January 1918, rather than the complete work. The most plausible reason appears to be the excessive length of the programme. In addition to the two movements from

Pejačević's Symphony, the concert also featured two Piano Concertos, Beethoven's and Liszt's – both in E-flat major, as well as the overture to Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*. Notably, the principal attraction of the evening was the Hungarian pianist Alice Ripper, who appeared as soloist in both concertos. A close friend of Pejačević, Ripper likely played a key role in securing the inclusion of the Symphony's two movements in an already crowded programme.

Several documents from this important concert have been preserved. Chief among them is the concert programme, which lists the composer not by her full name, but only as “D. Pejacsevich”, a detail that suggests she faced obstacles in presenting her symphonic work, likely owing to her gender. Indeed, when Pejačević performed smaller-scale compositions in public, there was no hesitation in identifying her openly as a female composer. Even during the premiere of her Piano Concerto in Zagreb, a familiar and supportive environment, she proudly ensured that the programmes clearly stated her gender as the author of the work. However, the situation was likely different with the more demanding Austrian and German audience. Following the partial premiere of the Symphony in Vienna in 1918, the complete work was performed in its entirety in Dresden two years later. Yet once again, Dora Pejačević was presented on the concert programme using only the initial of her first name. The rationale behind this decision is likely illuminated by one of the surviving reviews from the earlier Vienna concert. In it, the critic reproaches the composer for not being ashamed of her identity and for failing to conceal the fact that she was both a woman and a member of the nobility.

Following the Piano Concerto and the Symphony, Dora Pejačević composed two single-movement orchestral works in 1919: ***Phantasie concertante*, Op. 48** – a highly virtuosic piece for piano and orchestra that stands among her most formally and harmonically progressive orchestral compositions, and an ***Ouverture for Large Orchestra*, Op. 49** of a somewhat more academic character. A particular highlight of this recording is the inclusion of Pejačević's orchestral songs, two of which are especially notable for their literary provenance. ***Metamorphosis (Verwandlung)*, Op. 37b** is set to a text by Austrian publicist Karl Kraus, while ***Love Song (Liebeslied)*, Op. 39** is based on a poem by the renowned German poet Rainer Maria Rilke – both of whom were personal acquaintances of the composer.

A particular highlight of this recording is the orchestral version of the ***Nocturne for Piano in C-sharp major*, Op. 50**. The impressionistic qualities of the piece are especially well conveyed in the orchestral arrangement by Croatian composer Igor Kuljerić, created in the late 1980s for the film and television series *Kontesa Dora (Countess Dora)*, a production that significantly contributed to introducing Dora Pejačević to a broader Croatian audience. Nonetheless, much work remains to be done in uncovering and interpreting the full scope of Pejačević's œuvre – an undertaking that mirrors the broader effort required to recover and reassess the legacies of her and many other female composers.

Domagoj Marić



ANNIKA SCHLICHT

Annika Schlicht was born in Stuttgart and studied voice at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin. During her studies she joined the International Opera Studio of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden and subsequently became a member of the ensemble at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, where she remained for ten years. Guest engagements have taken the mezzo-soprano to the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Opéra Bastille in Paris, San Francisco Opera, the Royal Opera House in London, the Stuttgart State Opera, and the Bregenz Festival.

Her wide-ranging operatic repertoire includes roles such as Brangäne (*Tristan and Iseult*), Fricka and Waltraute (*The Ring of the Nibelung*), the Composer (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Pauline (*The Queen of Spades*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Hänsel (*Hansel and Gretel*), and Mrs Quickly (*Falstaff*). In the 2024/25 season she made her United States debut with Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and appeared as Brangäne and as the alto soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 at San Francisco Opera.

Equally in demand on the concert stage, Annika Schlicht has appeared with the Munich Radio Orchestra, Staatskapelle Weimar, Dresden Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and the UNESCO World Orchestra for Peace.

Since the 2025/26 season, she has been a member of the ensemble of the Hamburg State Opera, where she opens the season as the alto soloist in Schumann's *Paradise and the Peri*, and will also be heard as the Composer (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Pauline (*The Queen of Spades*), Brangäne (*Tristan and Iseult*), and Judith (*Bluebeard's Castle*).



MARTINA FILJAK

Croatian pianist Martina Filjak has enjoyed an international career since winning first prize and the Beethoven Prize at the 2009 Cleveland International Piano Competition. She has performed at prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall, the Konzerthaus Berlin, the Musikverein Vienna, the Teatro Colón, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Palau de la Música in Barcelona, the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the BOZAR in Brussels, the Salle Gaveau in Paris, the Casa da Música in Porto, and the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg. She has also performed at festivals including the Schleswig-Holstein Festival, MITO SettembreMusica, the Festival Pianistico Internazionale di Brescia e Bergamo, and the Dubrovnik Festival, of which she has been Artistic Director since 2023.

Martina Filjak has performed as a soloist with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Hamburg Philharmonic State Orchestra, the German Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orquesta Filarmónica de Buenos Aires, the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, the Zagreb Soloists, the Orquesta Simfónica de Barcelona, the Orquesta Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música, the Orquesta de Valencia, the Orquesta Ciudad de Granada, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, the Bremer Philharmoniker, the Staatskapelle Weimar, the Dortmunder Philharmonic and the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra.

Her extensive solo repertoire ranges from Bach to Berio and includes more than 30 piano concertos. She has released several critically acclaimed albums of solo works and chamber music. A new album featuring works by Boris Papandopulo is scheduled for release on the CPO label in spring 2026.



IVAN REPUŠIĆ

The Croatian conductor Ivan Repušić is General Music Director of the Leipzig Opera as well as Chief Conductor of the Staatskapelle Weimar and the Munich Radio Orchestra. He previously served as Principal Guest Conductor of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, where he led well over 100 performances.

His international engagements have taken him to major houses such as the New National Theatre Tokyo, Zurich Opera House, Semperoper Dresden, Hamburg State Opera, Berlin State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Komische Oper Berlin, and he regularly appears at the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

As a concert conductor, Ivan Repušić has worked with orchestras including the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Slovenian Philharmonic, Orchestre Régional de Cannes, Norwegian National Opera Orchestra, Orchestra Verdi di Milano, NDR Radiophilharmonie, Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Bavarian State Orchestra, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Bremer Philharmoniker, Hanover State Symphony Orchestra, and the Staatskapelle Weimar. In Croatia, he has conducted all the country's major orchestras and opera ensembles.

From 2004 to 2016, he taught at the Academy of Arts of the University of Split, where he was appointed Associate Professor. For his artistic achievements he has received numerous honours, including the Vladimir Nator Prize, the Vatroslav Lisinski Prize, the Milka Trnina Prize, the Orlando Prize, and the Prize of the City of Zadar. In 2021, the University of Zadar awarded him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his outstanding contributions to cultural and artistic life.

Born in Croatia in 1978, Ivan Repušić studied conducting at the Zagreb Academy of Music with Igor Gjadrov and Vjekoslav Šutej.



STAATSKAPELLE WEIMAR

The Staatskapelle Weimar, founded in 1491, is the oldest orchestra in Germany and among the most tradition-steeped ensembles in the world. Nationally and internationally, it enjoys a fundamental cultural significance as a guarantor of quality in the dialogue between tradition and modernity.

Its history is associated with some of the world's best known musicians, including Johann Sebastian Bach, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Franz Liszt and Richard Strauss. Established as premier musical institution of 'Classical Weimar' and part of the Hoftheater from 1791 onwards, the Hofkapelle Weimar continued to attract attention due to the achievements of Liszt and Strauss, who improved its quality and reputation during the 19th century. The orchestra was the first to perform numerous contemporary orchestral works, such as Liszt's *Faust Symphony*, his symphonic poems including *Les Préludes*, and Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration*, as well as operas like Wagner's *Lohengrin*, Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, and Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila*.

Both in its extensive concert activities and opera productions at the Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar, Thuringia's only A-level orchestra has worked to cultivate its great tradition in combination with innovative aspects. World-class soloists and conductors perform regularly with the Staatskapelle Weimar. In past years, the ensemble has made guest appearances in Japan, Israel, Spain, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Great Britain and in the United States, as well as in numerous major concert halls throughout Germany and at renowned festivals. From the 2024/25 season onwards, Ivan Repušić is Chief Conductor of the Staatskapelle Weimar.

audite





DORA PEJAČEVIĆ – COMPLETE SYMPHONIC WORKS

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Martina Filjak: Romano Grozich

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audite

e-mail: info@audite.de

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