



# The Bruckner Journal

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Bruckner at the blackboard by  
Ludwig Grandi.

## ODDLY UNIVERSAL

What funny oddities we Brucknerians are!" wrote one reader during the summer. And there have certainly been times when the editor has felt somewhat odd in his auxiliary role of publicist and canvasser. It was, however, a pleasure to meet a number of founder subscribers before Prom concerts (nothing odd about *them*, I hasten to add). It has also been interesting to hear of readers' other musical preferences besides Bruckner. British composers are often mentioned – and not only by Britons. Gunnar Cohrs, a prospective contributor, likes Arnold Bax and Vaughan Williams; Christa Brüstle, who contributed to our last issue, is researching Elisabeth Lutyens and Elizabeth Maconchy. At the lighter end of the range, more than one subscriber admits to a fondness for Sullivan.

Naturally some concertgoers have questioned the need for a composer-journal at all. Yet Bruckner is hardly standard repertoire in Britain. At the time of writing, extensive enquiries had tracked down only two UK performances of a Bruckner symphony by a professional orchestra this winter\*. Others would probably echo the reader – himself a concert promoter – who says that he has enjoyed the Bruckner symphonies he has heard, but Bruckner is not a composer of whom he knows very much. Accordingly, we shall try to offer a variety of entry points, in addition to news of the latest research. Bruckner deserves nothing less. While his music may not be "for the masses", it evidently has followers from many professions.

\**Bernard Haitink will conduct the London Symphony Orchestra in Haydn's Symphony No. 86 and Bruckner's Seventh Symphony at the Barbican on 11 January 1998. Telephone booking: 0171 638 8891. Yoav Talmi conducts the BBC Scottish SO in Bruckner's Fifth Symphony in Ayr Town Hall (01292 611 222) on 19 February.*

**BBC National Orchestra of  
Wales/Tadaaki Otaka  
St Albans Cathedral  
19 July 1997**

by Peter Palmer

Some pundits favour combining all the BBC symphony orchestras in a single, would-be super-orchestra. But Wales would clearly be the poorer for it; moreover it would be hard to quarrel with the National Orchestra of Wales' current form, for which conductor laureate Tadaaki Otaka and his successor Mark Wigglesworth must share the credit. True, when Wigglesworth conducted Mahler's Tenth (in the Deryck Cooke version) several years ago, the orchestral strings were 'stretched' to the very limit. But that testing and controversial score at least served to prepare the players for one directly anticipating it, Bruckner's Ninth Symphony.

In comments about Bruckner, Otaka has invoked both Nature and God. Mahler apart, here was perhaps the last major Western composer to celebrate the traditional Great Chain of Being, from the smallest creatures to the stars. Within the vaulting spaces of St Albans Cathedral, the first movement of the Ninth was given a remarkable intensity of colour akin to a sunset glow. I wasn't altogether ready for the breadth of the interpretation, but the recording of the orchestra's subsequent Prom performance convinced me of its rightness. This movement, after all, is more like a finale than any previous Bruckner first movement. (In his best-known recording Carl Schuricht, for example, takes five minutes longer over movement I than movement III.) The orchestra's basses dug deep in the Scherzo, the harmonically imperilled dance motions suggesting a Danubian rite of spring. Otaka had the benefit of optimal acoustics for a most sensitively phrased rendering of the Adagio. All the players were heroes and heroines, not least the horns and Wagner tubas. When one of the latter group strayed from the pitch at the close, I was reminded of Bruckner's last organ performance, when his foot slipped on the pedal-board.

The symphony was given as the climax to the biennial St Albans international organ festival. The evening began with the wit of Brahms's *Academic Festival Overture*. At the magnificent Harrison organ, Thomas Trotter then executed two arrangements by Edwin Lemare: of the prelude to *Die Meistersinger* and the overture to *William Tell*. The Wagner prelude was a foretaste of the orchestral riches to follow.

**City of Birmingham Symphony  
Orchestra/Simon Rattle  
Symphony Hall, Birmingham  
17 August 1997**

by Raymond Cox

After hearing two recent recordings of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony, one of them the expansive Giulini reading, then the Prom broadcast conducted by Tadaaki Otaka, I found this rendering under Sir Simon Rattle surprising on two counts. It emphasized how far performances of this work can differ; also, given Rattle's broad, objective conducting of the Fourth and Seventh Symphonies in recent years, this was an unexpectedly personal, daunting affair, uncompromising and with terrific power.

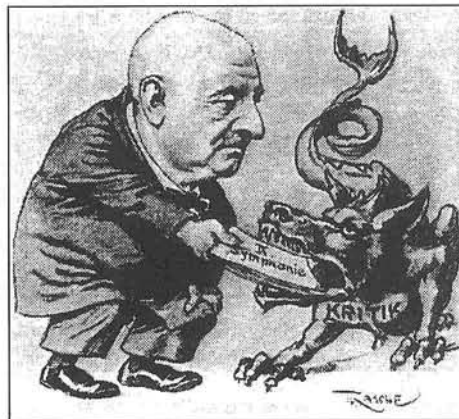
There was, I am sure, a specific intention here. Rattle maintained a consistency throughout, a rigorous, granitic forward thrust. Attention to the structure and flow in Bruckner's symphonies goes far towards making successful performances. Sometimes, though, this is at the risk of losing something of the

composer's calm and mystery. I felt at times that these elements were missing, both in the first movement, which began and continued in a stark and severe way, and also in the Adagio. The climaxes were powerful and the emphasis on themes was clear. The Scherzo was hard and dramatic, rather than quick, while the Trio lacked that spectral quality which some performers give it.

If the general approach made for a slight strain upon the Adagio's calmer and more visionary passages, it was no doubt perfectly valid. One might put it this way: instead of experiencing the step into a spiritual environment that his new, advanced language represents, Bruckner was here realising horror and evil so much more immediately. The calm and radiant state was some distance beyond – although always in view.

There was no question of the CBSO brass section's magnificent playing and glorious sound, or the strength of the string playing. There was a long-held silence after the shattering dissonant chord in the Adagio (Rattle created a similar effect after the brass chorale in the finale of the Seventh Symphony). If longer than prescribed, it was certainly convincing.

Before the interval members of the CBSO wind section gave a most rhythmic and exquisite performance, with delicate nuances, of Mozart's Wind Serenade in B flat, K.361.



# RECORDS

## EMI Historical Boxes

### *Anton Bruckner Symphonien I (3 CDs); Symphonien II (3 CDs)*

EMI 5 66206 2 / 5 66210 2 (mono), mid-price

by Peter Palmer

The exact year of the first recording of a complete Bruckner symphony is uncertain, but it was around 1924 when Oskar Fried recorded the Seventh with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra. Those were the days of the bad old editions: Jascha Horenstein used the Löwe-Schalk version of the Seventh for his first recording, some four years later. By a stroke of good fortune, however, some of the first EMI recordings were also the first to be based on the cleaned-up Bruckner editions of the 1930s. The Historical Box I features Karl Böhm's pioneering recordings, based on Haas, of the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies with the Saxon (now Dresden) Staatskapelle. In his memoirs Böhm recalls making them – on eight and nine “78s” respectively – and comments on the difficulty of finding suitable places for breaks. It was probably no accident that, as Robert Philip notes in *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, Böhm's 1936 account of the first movement of Bruckner's Fourth is faster than his glorious 1972 recording with the VPO, and it accelerates more to the climaxes.

Wilhelm Furtwängler went his own way in many respects. Although Robert Haas published his edition of Bruckner's Seventh in 1944, Furtwängler was still using Löwe for his performance with the Berlin Philharmonic recorded in 1949. Nonetheless this broadcast performance shows Furtwängler at his romantic best. More in the nature of curiosities – although I enjoyed sampling them – are pre-war recordings of the scherzo movements from Symphonies Nos. 0 to 4. Here, the speeds were undoubtedly dictated by the medium. In his performances with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra, Fritz Zaun compensates with his expressive milking of the slower trio sections. The scherzi of Nos. 3 and 4 were recorded by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra (1928) and Vienna Philharmonic (1929) under Anton Konrath and Clemens Krauss.

Furtwängler tended to modify the Haas editions in performances of Bruckner's Sixth and Eighth Symphonies. But admirers will certainly want the second Historical Box for his live 1949 performance of the Eighth with the BPO. Perhaps even more desirable are movements II-IV of the Sixth (the first movement has not survived). Made in 1943, this is Furtwängler's only recording of the Sixth, and the impulsive finale has to be heard to be

believed. The box includes Oswald Kabasta's 1942 performance of the Seventh with the Munich Philharmonic chiefly because it was the work's first recording by EMI. Like Böhm and Furtwängler, the Austrian-born Kabasta landed in hot water for conducting in Nazi Germany, and he took his own life in 1946 at the age of fifty. His objectivity, his undemonstrative feeling for the Bruckner idiom remind me of Kurt Masur. As a recording, however, this is the least successful of the set, the great climax to the slow movement being particularly weak.

Siegmund von Hausegger, another Austrian by birth, was already touching sixty years of age when he conducted the concert premiere of the original version of Bruckner's Ninth in 1932. He did not accept the Nazi regime without qualms, standing up for a Jewish violin teacher at the Munich Academy and then resigning the presidency of that institution. In 1938 he retired from his Munich conducting post. For me, Hausegger's recording of the Bruckner Ninth with the Munich Philharmonic in April 1938 has almost the frisson of a first performance. Indeed, I would happily endorse what Robert Layton, the booklet annotator, says of these early recordings as a whole: “They possess that freshness of discovery and atmosphere that premiere recordings always seem to have.” Digitally remastered, they now take on a new lease of life, and deservedly so. Such packages are not calculated to rescue the recording industry from its present slump, but every Brucknerian can be grateful to EMI for past and current achievements.

#### Other discs received:

- \*Sir Simon Rattle conducts the City of Birmingham SO in Bruckner's Seventh Symphony [EMI]
- \*Te Deum, Psalm 150, E minor Mass and F minor Mass (with Puccini's *Motetto per San Paolino*) directed by Helmuth Rilling [Hänssler, distributed by Select]
- \*Thomas Schmögner's transcription for organ of Bruckner's Fourth. This Edition Lade CD can be ordered at £12.75 (post free in UK) from:  
**Cathedral Classical, Bolbec Hall, Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 1SE,  
tel: 0191 2212268, fax 0191 2620125,  
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**Bruckner: Symphony No. 5 in B flat major**  
*Berliner Philharmoniker/Günter Wand*  
(recorded at performances in the  
Philharmonie, Berlin, 12, 13 & 14 January  
1996)  
BMG/RCA Victor Red Seal 09026 68503 2  
(77 minutes 14 seconds)  
by Mark Audus

The Fifth Symphony stands Janus-like at the centre of Bruckner's symphonic output, gazing simultaneously back to the world of the early symphonies and forward to the mature masterpieces of the composer's later years. Performances tend to emphasise one or other of these aspects. Conductors like Furtwängler and Barenboim highlight the contrastive elements of the score, with plastic tempi, frequent rubato, and extremes of dynamics and articulation. Others, like Karajan and Wand, take an integrative approach, with a more unified pulse, less abrupt speed changes, and phrasing and dynamics that enhance the music's continuity. Wand's latest recording – his third – is no exception. Like his second, with the NDR Symphony Orchestra (1989), this performance is purposive rather than impulsive, with steady speeds and weighty support from the lower brass.

Many of the features of Wand's earlier recordings remain, including the idiosyncratic balance and pacing in the final statement of the Adagio's main theme. The shaping of the second *Bedeutend langsamer* passage in the Scherzo is as loving as ever, as is the *Etwas mehr langsam* (letter C) in the Finale. There are, however, fascinating differences in detail that offer new insights into Bruckner's endlessly absorbing score. The *accelerando* at letter A in the Scherzo is better graded than before, and the viola line after letter C is given special attention. Aided by ripe playing from the Berlin Philharmonic, Wand adopts a more legato approach to many passages: in the first movement the articulation of the string syncopations at the end of the second subject is less self-conscious, the brass chords in the following tutti are phrased more smoothly.

Wand also takes some liberties with Bruckner's scoring. The bass reinforcement to the Adagio's noble second theme is less extensive than it was in 1989, but in the Finale's coda the first line of the chorale is now played by the trumpet at the higher octave, more discreetly (and thus less successfully) than on recordings by Jochum and Welser-Möst.

As so often with Wand's Bruckner, the woodwind balance is backward; so, more curiously, are the horns and trumpets in important passages, including the final peroration. Much of the fault lies with the recording itself, in which the strings (especially the basses) are often oppressively close and a true pianissimo is rarely achieved. As a result, the work's peculiar mixture of austerity and myriad baroque detail – so carefully delineated by Bruckner's multi-layered dynamic markings – is missing here. Those hoping for a 'dream ticket' will be disappointed, but Wand's many admirers will not want to be without his latest thoughts in a recording that complements rather than displaces his earlier accounts.

*Mark Audus teaches at the University of Nottingham and has published CD booklet notes on composers from Bach to Birtwistle.*

**Bruckner: Symphony No. 5 in B flat major**  
*Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Georg Tintner*  
Naxos 8.553452  
by Elizabeth Thompson

Naxos deserve applause for launching their Bruckner symphony cycle with this dignified, searching and involving Fifth. The project's great asset is conductor-in-charge Georg Tintner, a survivor of that dwindling generation of traditionally trained European conductors including Günter Wand and the late Sir Georg Solti. Assistant conductor of the Wiener Volksoper at 19, Tintner left Austria in 1938 and forged a career in Australasia, South Africa and Canada – all the while carrying the Bruckner torch. In his booklet essay he likens the composer to the Russian novelist Dostoevsky in his ability "to touch the innermost recesses of the human soul".

The recording reveals a conductor sympathetically in tune with Bruckner's personal vision. Tintner is an astute pacer of this gradually evolving music, and he allows the ideas to unfold as naturally and unhurriedly as a stream of thought. He is sensitive to sudden changes of mood and direction without undue exaggeration. His grasp of the time-scale betokens long experience of Bruckner's musical language.

From the soft tread of the slow opening, there is a sense of setting out on a wonderful adventure with some visionary goal in sight. The pulse is firm, but even more striking is Tintner's choice of closely related tempi for the main themes of the first movement. He also declines to follow the practice of the many conductors who speed up for the heroic section before the brass chorale in the finale. One of Bruckner's most majestic utterances, this 25-minute movement with its combination of fugue and sonata might have gained from tauter handling. The beautiful slow movement conveys simplicity and spirituality at a flowing tempo; the Scherzo is a crisp, unsettling dance.

With its fine brass section the RSNO makes a good impression – but the recording places the orchestra at a distance. Henry Wood Hall, Glasgow, has a dryish acoustic and many Bruckner lovers will prefer a warmer ambience. I found an extra notch on the volume control brought the sound picture to life. Taken on its own terms the recording is pleasingly clean and detailed, but it cannot compare with recent full-price versions such as Dohnányi (Decca), Welser-Möst (EMI) and Barenboim (Teldec). At its budget price it would make a stimulating introduction for newcomers to Bruckner's music. Seasoned Brucknerians will want to hear it for the authoritative interpretation of a veteran conductor.

**Bruckner: Symphony No. 9 in D minor**  
*Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra/Zubin Mehta*  
 Belart 461 3572  
 by Elizabeth Thompson

When his apocalyptic Ninth burst on the record scene in 1966, Mehta was a daring young maestro who had already forged a partnership with this great orchestra after a Viennese training with Hans Swarowsky. "Terrifying" was the word which frequently occurred in my listening notes after I had renewed acquaintance with it. Caught in vintage Decca sound with rich textures and ripe brass typical of the company's Vienna recordings is a glowering performance, dark and intense. Like Coleridge's ancient mariner, this emphatic reading buttonholes the listener. A modern parallel would be Franz Welser-Möst in his uninhibited Bruckner Fifth with the London Philharmonic (EMD).

The 30-year-old Mehta identified early in his career with Bruckner and other late 19th-century composers whose traditions remained very much alive in Vienna. He draws voluptuous playing as he projects the first movement like a powerful

suspense drama. The opening sounds sepulchral, ponderously slow; the brass-laden outbursts are of crushing weight, the lyrical themes boldly delineated and inflected. Mehta is a gifted colourist for whom this awesome, troubled music is a bellish descent into dark imaginings akin to the art of Goya or Hieronymus Bosch.

The CD version lends added edge, intensifying the nastiness of the demon frolics of the Scherzo – fast, incisive and brutal. The trio is taken at a canter before the all-pervasive rhythm returns, an infernal dance to exhaustion (a sudden loss of resonance mars the end). In the Adagio Mehta finds nobility and grief if not the profundity of Bruno Walter or Eugen Jochum. At times one wishes for a lighter hand, but Mehta can sustain a long line and build to a climax convincingly.

Here, for a fiver, is a powerful reminder that there is more to Mehta than the glamorous conductor of the Three Tenors.

**MUSICGRAM**

A little test of your general knowledge of the repertoire. Each word below is associated with a particular composer. Write down the surname (six letters). When the list is complete, it will be possible to read vertically the name of one more composer. Who is it?

Answers to TBJ (Gram), 2 Rivergreen Close, Nottingham NG9 3ES, by 1st December. The first three correct answers out of the hat will win Belart CDs of Bruckner's Fifth and Ninth Symphonies (Concertgebouw Orchestra c. Eugen Jochum, 1964; Vienna Philharmonic c. Zubin Mehta, 1965).

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- Nanie
- Zampa
- Mariza
- Haffner
- Oedipe
- Galanta
- Zlonice
- Ruslan
- Boréades

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**Gustav Mahler**  
**The Symphonies**  
 Constantin Floros  
 Translated by Vernon Wicker

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Constantin Floros undertakes in this book a precise and detailed exploration of each of Mahler's ten symphonies and *Das Lied von der Erde*, bringing to light for the first time various aspects of the works. He examines their history, compositional techniques and autobiographical origins and discusses the events that profoundly influenced the composer's symphonic writing.

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**Bruckner**  
 on Belart

**Bruckner**  
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461 3262  
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**Bruckner**  
**Symphony 9**  
**in D minor**

461 3572  
 Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra/  
 Zubin Mehta  
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## BOOKS FROM AUSTRIA

**Haymo Liebisch.** *Anton Bruckner: 1824 bis 1896 – einst und jetzt. Ein Bericht.* Ennsthaler Verlag, Steyr. ISBN 3-85068-493-8, 496pp incl. 49pp plates

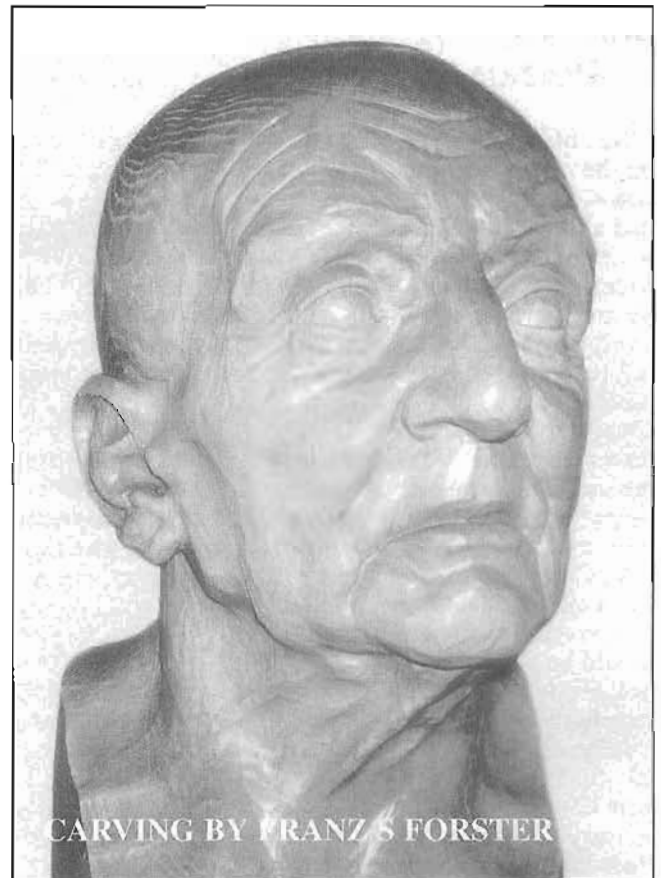
**Elisabeth Maier.** *Anton Bruckner: Stationen eines Lebens.* Landesverlag im Veritas-Verlag, Linz. ISBN 3-85214-654-2, 136pp. S 248/DM 34

The 1996 Bruckner anniversary brought the expected flurry of German-language publications, as Andrea Harrandt indicated in this journal in March. Pride of place should go to the Nuremberg scholar Franz Scheder's *Anton Bruckner Chronologie*, comprising two stout volumes. Drawing on recent discoveries stored in a computer database, the first volume furnishes a comprehensive list of the events of Bruckner's career. The second volume lists relevant people, places and institutions. The flaws in the Göllicher-Auer biography are well-known, and no serious Bruckner student will want to be without Scheder's "Chronology" (further volumes are promised).

Scheder's publication came out in time for Haymo Liebisch to acknowledge and utilize it in the second edition of his own substantial Bruckner tribute. A native of Linz, Liebisch is a retired bookseller and art dealer who set out to recount Bruckner's life by weaving together extracts from Göllicher, Auer, Franz Gräßlinger and others. Being possessed of an enquiring mind, he soon found his material growing apace. The result is a glorious rag-bag of a "report" – for Liebisch disclaims the status of biographer. Prominent among his sources is Bruckner's pupil Friedrich Eckstein, a Jew ignored by some earlier biographers because his memoirs<sup>1</sup> appeared during the Nazi era. Even Max Auer, in several editions of his *Anton Bruckner*, was forced to brand Jewish names with an asterisk.

Although no extended musical discussion is attempted, Liebisch displays a particular love of Bruckner's sacred choral works. It would be hard to improve on his exposition of the Ambrosian hymn of the *Te Deum*. Where the composer's life is concerned, Liebisch always has an eye for the telling detail. That Bruckner was no monk in his later years is reflected in the official caution he received for flouting a curfew in St Florian. For that reason he became more and more attracted to the Benedictine monastery of Kremsmünster, which offered a refuge from Vienna but where the regime was less strict.

Liebisch says that Sibelius "probably" got to know Bruckner's music as a student in Vienna. In fact the young Finn attended the performance of the Third Symphony that Hans Richter conducted



on 21 December 1890. The same evening he wrote to his fiancée: "Today I went to a concert. There, a composer called Bruckner was booed. To my mind he is the greatest of all living composers." Sibelius voiced this opinion to other concertgoers – Brahms supporters, no doubt – and became involved in a scuffle which left him with a limp.

Liebisch's title includes the phrase *einst und jetzt*: "once and now". His final chapter provides a far-ranging outline of Bruckner reception since the composer's death. Invoking Gabriel Marcel's definition of music as "the home of the soul", he touches on the possible therapeutic value of Bruckner's works, as an antidote to the collective neurosis of modern times. The point is amplified in his preface to the second edition, where he quotes a current researcher in this field: "Once a person has identified himself with Bruckner's music, he is no longer the same as before".

Haymo Liebisch's publisher has served him well, not least in the reproduction of the 147 illustrations which round off the book. The rare postcards from private collections reinforce the strong sense of milieu pervading the text. Liebisch is a cultured "layman" after Bruckner's own heart, and his engagingly baroque narrative contains much food for thought.

<sup>1</sup>"*Alte unnennbare Tage!*" . . . (1936)

The author of *Anton Bruckner: Stationen eines Lebens* is director of the Anton Bruckner Institute. For a scholar steeped in the minutiae of Bruckner's life and music to write so concise and readable a biography as hers is no mean feat. While emphasizing the steadfastness of Bruckner's religious faith, Elisabeth Maier takes care to avoid clichés in this respect. Bruckner was, she remarks, a contemporary of Nietzsche, assailed by doubts and anguish, even if he was unable to articulate such thoughts in words. Maier deals sensibly with the suggestion – which caused a stir in Upper Austria a few years ago – that Bruckner fathered a daughter in the 1850s through a brief fling with a lady named Karoline Barghesi. The evidence for this (it is outlined in the *Bruckner Jahrbuch* 1984/85/86) remains anecdotal. And were the story shown to be true, it would detract from neither Bruckner's respectability as a man nor his stature as a composer.

There are two appendices. Wolfgang Winkler,

who has had a hand in the "Klangwolken" concerts in Linz, considers Bruckner's impact on the seemingly alien environment of the late twentieth century, the world of technology and Internet. (In a reference to the 1996 Ottawa conference on Austrian music, he overlooks Benjamin Korstvedt's contribution, "Bruckner and the Cultural Politics of Wagnerianism".) Rather sadly, Winkler believes that much modern interest in Bruckner is attributable to his music's "sound" pure and simple, rather than the tonal and harmonic language.

Renate Grasberger adds a descriptive catalogue of Bruckner memorials, mostly within Austria but also in Bayreuth, Leipzig, Regensburg and Marienbad. Missing is the plaque in Finsbury Square, London, which Robert Simpson unveiled in 1976 and which is illustrated in the late Hans-Hubert Schönzeler's *Bruckner* (1978).

Peter Palmer

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## SCORES

### Magnificat and Four Psalm Settings

by Crawford Howie

One of the most welcome 'by-products' of the Bruckner centenary year has been the publication of several volumes in the *Anton Bruckner Gesamtausgabe*. These include settings of the Magnificat and Psalms 22, 112, 114 and 146, and all five works are edited by Professor Paul Hawkshaw of Yale University, one of our foremost Bruckner scholars. Paul Hawkshaw's research into the music of the 'Linz period' (1856-1868) is well known. His detailed examination of the *Kitzler Studienbuch*, a fascinating collection of the various exercises in form and orchestration which Bruckner undertook under the guidance of Otto Kitzler in Linz during the years 1861-1863, has helped us to acquire a deeper understanding of this formative period in the composer's musical education. In many ways these volumes are the fruits of Hawkshaw's work in this field. Apart from Psalm 112, which was published by Universal Edition in the 1920s, none of the other works has appeared in print outside the confines of the Göllerich-Auer biography of the composer. Those who have access to this massive but flawed nine-volume work will find a reduced score of the Magnificat and facsimiles of the autograph scores of Psalms 22 and 114 in Volume II/2. Musical extracts from Psalm 146 can be found in Volume III/1. A well-produced modern critical edition of all five works is most welcome and, it is hoped, will inspire some performances. Nothing is beyond the capability of a well-trained amateur choir.

In fact, the Magnificat, WAB 24, Psalm 114, WAB

36, and Psalm 22, WAB 34, date from 1852, when Bruckner was working as an assistant schoolmaster at the St Florian village school and as organist at the abbey. It was a time when, as Hawkshaw writes in his foreword to the Magnificat, 'the young organist . . . was beginning to flex his compositional muscles and looking to broaden his musical horizons.' The Magnificat was dedicated to Ignaz Traumihler, the choir director at the abbey, and was probably written for the Feast of Assumption in August 1852. Dates on the autograph score suggest that it was performed several times during the next few years. The work is scored for soloists, chorus and a fairly conservative orchestra consisting of strings (without violas), two trumpets, timpani and organ continuo. We do not know which earlier settings of the text – either as part of the musical Evening Service or as an independent work – Bruckner would have heard or studied, but we can surmise that he had some knowledge of works by Michael Haydn, Mozart and Schubert as well as those of lesser-known provincial composers. As in the earlier Requiem, WAB 39 (1848/49), and the slightly later Mass in B flat minor (*Missa solennis*), WAB 29 (1854), so in this work Mozart – the Mozart of the Litanies and Vespers – is the main influence. With the exception of the solo enclaves, the string writing is extremely 'busy' and decorative throughout, particularly in the freely fugal final 'Amen' passage. Trumpets and timpani are kept for climactic accents. Although the vocal writing is equally conservative, characteristic octave leaps and occasional illustrative

treatment of the text foreshadow later, more refined methods of textual interpretation in the D minor, E minor and F minor Mass settings and the Te Deum.

Among the fairly extensive primary sources of Psalm 114 is an undated autograph fair copy with a dedication to Ignaz Assmayr, music director at the Imperial court in Vienna, whom Bruckner had met during a visit to the Austrian capital the previous year and to whom he had shown his Requiem setting. In an accompanying letter, dated 30 July 1852, Bruckner asked Assmayr to receive the work as proof of his ongoing studies. The psalm is scored for five-part mixed-voice choir (SAATB) and three trombones, and the text is equivalent to verses 1-9 of Psalm 116 in the Lutheran translation and Authorised and current versions of the Bible.

Bruckner was acquainted with some of Mendelssohn's sacred music and one can discern Mendelssohnian influences in several places, but the composer was being unduly modest when he described the work as a 'weak effort.' The autograph manuscript clearly reveals that the working-out of the final double fugue was troublesome, and there is a certain amount of rhythmical shapelessness and lack of textural variety. But Bruckner's competence in harmony and counterpoint in this pre-Sechter period is obvious.

The unmistakable influence on Bruckner's setting of Psalm 22 (Psalm 23 in the Lutheran translation, Authorised and current versions) is Schubert's *Gott ist mein Hirt* D 706 (1820) for women's voices and piano. Bruckner's setting also has pianoforte accompaniment but is written for mixed voices (SATB). While he copies Schubert's technique of outlining the melody in the keyboard figuration, he is not able to emulate the variety within unity which Schubert achieves by means of subtle changes of pattern. Nor does he make any distinction between the functions of the right and left hands. The final fugue is more successful than its counterpart in Psalm 114 in maintaining an ongoing momentum, and the closing chorale is based on the first part of this fugue subject. Although there is no date in either the original manuscript score or parts, internal evidence suggests that it was composed c. 1852.

The surviving musical sources of Psalm 146, WAB 37, are also undated. In addition, there is no overt reference to this work in Bruckner's correspondence. Although it was assigned the date 1860 by Göllerich-Auer, there is no documentary evidence that it was composed in Linz and it is unlikely that Bruckner would have had the time to write such a large piece during the period of his most intensive studies with Simon Sechter. In the foreword to his edition, however, Hawkshaw argues convincingly that Bruckner would not have embarked on such a large-scale fugal Finale 'without at least some influence from Simon Sechter' and concludes

that 'some, if not all, work on the Psalm may well date from the early Linz years, 1856-58.' Psalm 146 (= Psalm 147, verses 1-11 in the Lutheran translation, Authorised and current versions) is scored for soloists, double choir and an orchestra comprising strings, woodwind, horns and brass and timpani. Its cantata-like structure of recitatives, arioso and choruses recalls the earlier St Florian works *Vergissmeinnicht*, WAB 93 (1845) and *Sankt Jodok spros aus edlem Stamm*, WAB 15 (1855) but, in many respects, it looks forward to later works. The principal theme of the second chorus, for instance, bears a family likeness to the main theme in the first movement of Symphony no. '0' and to the string accompaniment of the trumpet theme at the beginning of Symphony no. 3, and the maintenance of a semiquaver string figuration throughout this section foreshadows a similar unifying technique in the 'Gloria' and 'Credo' movements of the D minor and F minor Masses. Long-winded and 'academic' it may be (with entries of the subject in diminution and in stretto), but the final Fugue demonstrates a much more mature handling of counterpoint than the fugues in the earlier Psalm settings.

Bruckner's setting of Psalm 112 (= Psalm 113 in the Lutheran translation, Authorised and current versions), WAB 35, was composed in Linz in June/July 1863 shortly after the completion of the F minor 'Student' Symphony and was the last work to be written under the watchful eye of Otto Kitzler. The autograph score is not complete, but, as it ends abruptly after the 'Alleluia' fugue with the repetition of the first five bars of the opening chorus, it is more than likely that Bruckner intended the work to end with the recapitulation of this chorus (up to bar 70, as Wöss suggested in the 1926 Universal Edition text of the work). Like Psalm 146, Psalm 112 is composed for chorus and full orchestra, but there are no solo parts. Instead, all interest is concentrated on the chorus which is subdivided into two separate four-part groups, deployed antiphonally on occasions. In many respects this work is a prelude to the three great Masses of the 1860s. Bruckner's technique of climax building, developed in these works and in his later compositions, both orchestral and choral, is already in evidence throughout the Psalm, particularly towards the end of the first part where his much more mature grasp of harmonic movement is also fully revealed. There are still some Mendelssohnian traces, but we are on the threshold now of the mature Bruckner. In the summer of 1863 he and the Kitzlers celebrated the end of his 'apprenticeship'. In 1864 came the first work of real stature, the D minor Mass. We owe Paul Hawkshaw and the *Bruckner Gesamtausgabe* a great debt of gratitude for making these 'student' compositions available and enabling us to follow Bruckner's development as a composer during the years 1852 to 1863.





# BRUCKNER PROPOSITIONS (III)

by Constantin Floros

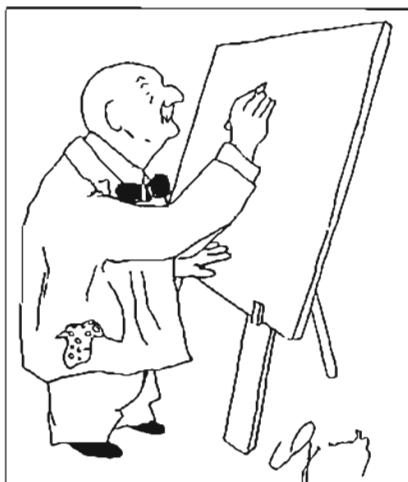
## Interpreting Bruckner

Researchers into Bruckner are undoubtedly faced with various tasks. But the central question with regard to understanding Bruckner will always be the interpretation, the essence of his symphonism. Is there a close connection between the personality and the work, or is Bruckner's 'intellectual world' irrelevant to his composing? Should his symphonies be comprehended and prescribed as *absolute music*, or do they conceal an extra-musical 'content'? And if the latter question is answered with a yes, then how can this content be examined in a scholarly way?

There is scarcely a prominent Bruckner scholar who has not considered these questions. But it would be a miracle if everyone agreed on the answers. Two opposed theories have dominated the debate so far.

It is Bruckner's proverbial religiosity – and this is highly relevant – in which some scholars have sought the key to a deeper understanding of his music. Especially in the nineteen-twenties Bruckner was celebrated as a mystic *par excellence*, as one of the 'great metaphysicians in German music' (Oskar Lang), as a composer whose work could be grasped entirely from the standpoint of the mystical experience behind it. He was compared to Master Eckhart<sup>1</sup> and Jakob Boehme; he was claimed by anthroposophists and theosophists as one of their own (Erich Schwab). His symphonies were compared to Gothic cathedrals or Masses without words (Karl Grunsky). Even so outstanding a scholar as Ernst Kurth based his interpretation of Bruckner on a mystical concept. Kurth believed that certain stylistic peculiarities of Bruckner's symphonies could be interpreted in terms of his 'Gothic' expressive will. Thus in the Ninth Symphony, the 'steep upward striving', the 'precipitous effects', the jagged leaps and 'elongations' were seen as Gothic features. Spiritually and intellectually, 'alienation from life' and 'mystical communion' were deemed to provide the creative basis for this work.

Many later scholars also adhered to the mystical image of Bruckner. Geoffrey Sharp regarded him as no simpleton but an artist whose mysticism was expressed in every aspect of his highly inspired music.<sup>2</sup> For Alfred Einstein<sup>3</sup>,



Bruckner was a 'religious symphonist', a composer whose religious world and experience were reflected in the symphonic oeuvre. More recently Walter Wiora concluded that Einstein's thesis was valid with certain reservations. According to Wiora the religious element in Bruckner's symphonies as a whole (particularly in the Adagios and outer movements) is appreciably greater than in the symphonic works of any other major composer. The essential

qualities of 'the numinous' – namely *mysterium tremendum*, majesty, awe, splendour and *fascinans* – are inherent in Bruckner's music.<sup>4</sup>

The advocates of this theory base their case on three main arguments. The first is that religion played an important part in Bruckner's spiritual life; secondly, he intended his Ninth Symphony to be dedicated to 'the dear Lord'; thirdly, his work abounds in chorales and a good many features of church music. But on closer scrutiny these arguments lose much of their force. The idea that all Bruckner's music is based on a mystical experience is too one-sided. Not only the sacred but also the profane is present in the cosmos of these symphonies and takes up a very significant area within them. This is immediately obvious if one thinks how often ländler-like melodies occur in the scherzi. So without a doubt, Bruckner's symphonies are too diverse in structure for them to be reduced to a relatively simple formula.

A similar objection can be raised to those who regard Bruckner's symphonic oeuvre as a prime example of autonomously conceived music. For many leading scholars, Bruckner's symphonies constitute pure, *absolute music*, devoid of literary, extra-musical aims or pictorial ideas, and the very antithesis of 'programme music'. Most of these scholars could take as their motto Friedrich Klose's claim that 'Bruckner's symphonic writing is altogether unprogrammatic in character'. Robert Haas, for example, regarded Bruckner as the 'strongest proponent of a truly absolute music', while Peter Raabe thought him 'the most absolute of all absolute musicians'. Scholars proclaiming these views are inclined to play down Wagner's influence on Bruckner and to emphasise the supposed antithesis between Bruckner and Liszt. Robert Haas argued in his

1934 Bruckner study that the 'New German' movement of Liszt and his followers was 'virtually without significance' for Bruckner.

Such views cannot be squared with the numerous statements that Bruckner himself made on the interpretation of many of his works. Until recently, however, scholars were reluctant to take these statements seriously. They questioned their authenticity or imputed an opportunistic motive to Bruckner. Arguing that such comments had been made after the event, they laughed at their alleged inconsistency and suggested that Bruckner was acting on the (bad) advice of pupils.

But all these arguments derive from fixed, doctrinaire thinking. Recent research has shown that the prevailing image of Bruckner is in need of thorough revision.<sup>1</sup> In no circumstances should Bruckner's symphonies be classified as *absolute music*; they have nothing to do with the formalistic aesthetics of Eduard Hanslick. It has been overlooked up to now that Bruckner was familiar with the artistic maxims of the Wagnerian movement and rated 'programme music' more highly than absolute music. Similarly, research has shown that Bruckner's explanations of the meaning of some of his works are authentic. These are not 'attempts at interpretation after the event', as people keep insisting, but date back to the time the works were conceived. Even more telling is the precision with which Bruckner's interpretative data can be related to musical details. The existing correspondences and correlations prove that, with Bruckner, extra-musical ideas and images accompanied the creative process and vitally affected the construction of the music.

Hence the authentic programmes for the Fourth and Eighth Symphonies, which have been ridiculed or ignored, must now be taken seriously. They can contribute substantially to a deeper understanding of the symphonies. Admittedly Bruckner's 'programmes' smack of sheer improvisation, especially compared to those of Berlioz, being neither fully worked out nor tightly organised. Rather, they consist of a string of loosely connected images which do not necessarily add up to a strictly logical 'plot'. When Bruckner was writing the first movement of his Fourth Symphony, which he nicknamed the "Romantic", he was inspired by images from

Wagner's *Lohengrin* and by Nature impressions. His slow movement was conceived as a nocturnal pilgrims' march. The Scherzo was designed (in the 1878 version) as a hunting piece and the *länder*-like Trio as genre-painting: 'Dance tune during the huntsmen's repast.' It is revealing that Wagner's 'Romantic opera' *Lohengrin* was the epitome of romanticism for Bruckner. He associated it with the miraculous, mysterious, religious and pure, and much of this ideational world found its way into the Fourth Symphony.

The first movement of the Eighth Symphony is based on a dramatic conception. Writing to Felix Weingartner on 27 January 1891, Bruckner explained the content of two passages in the movement (1890 version) – the climax of the recapitulation (at figure V) and the coda (at figure X). The dotted rhythm of the main theme, heard ten times on horns and trumpets, he interpreted as an 'annunciation of death'; the dirge-like ebbing away of the coda he described as 'resignation', but also as a 'passing-bell' or 'death-watch'. The scope of these characterisations will only be appreciated when it is noted that Bruckner's inspiration for the movement was the Flying Dutchman's C minor aria from the first Act of Wagner's opera of that name. The main theme of the symphony displays a striking similarity to the theme of the Dutchman's aria. The text of this aria ('When all the dead rise again I shall dissolve into nothing. Ye worlds, cease your course! Eternal destruction, take me away!') evokes the spiritual landscape in which Bruckner's music needs to be located.

What can be observed in the Fourth and Eighth Symphonies is equally true of several movements in the other symphonies. The Adagio of the Ninth is autobiographical in its inspiration. It gives moving artistic expression to Bruckner's presentiments of death, his religious faith and his hope of God's mercy.<sup>6</sup>

*The foregoing "Propositions" were first published in German in Musik-Konzepte 23/24: Anton Bruckner, edited by Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, Munich 1982. Constantin Floros' latest book is Johannes Brahms – "Frei, aber einsam": Ein Leben für eine poetische Musik, Zurich/Hamburg 1997.*

<sup>1</sup> One of the inspirations for John Adams' *Harmonielehre* (1984-85) – Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Sharp, 'Anton Bruckner: Simpleton or Mystic?' in *The Music Review* 3 (1942), pp 46-54.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era*, New York 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Wiora, 'Über den religiösen Gehalt in Bruckners Symphonien' in: Wiora (ed.), *Religiöse Musik in nicht-liturgischen Werken von Beethoven bis Reger* (Studien zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts, 51), Regensburg 1978, pp. 157-184.

<sup>5</sup> C. Floros, *Brahms und Bruckner. Studien zur musikalischen Exegetik*, Wiesbaden 1980. Part Three.

<sup>6</sup> C. Floros, 'Zur Deutung der Symphonik Bruckners. Das Adagio der Neunten Symphonie' in *Bruckner-Jahrbuch 1981* (MV 202).

# Bruckner's Requiem in D minor

by Crawford Howie

Shortly after his father's death in June 1837, Bruckner was admitted to the Augustinian abbey of St. Florian as a boy chorister and stayed there for three years until he embarked on a teacher training course in Linz. In September 1845, after two spells as a trainee teacher in the villages of Windhaag and Kronstorf, Bruckner returned to St. Florian, having been appointed assistant teacher at the village school. As a young man, he was now more able to appreciate and avail himself of the rich musical resources at his disposal. As well as playing the superb Chrismann organ, he could visit the library with its large collection of manuscripts and printed music. Although he moved to Linz after ten years and then to Vienna, St. Florian remained his spiritual home for the rest of his life, a 'sanctuary' to which he returned frequently during Christmas, Easter and Summer breaks.

One of Bruckner's closest friends from 1845 to 1848 was Franz Sailer, a judicial actuary and the godfather of his brother Ignaz. Sailer was a keen music lover, an admirer of Bruckner's already formidable improvisational skills, and the owner of a new Bösendorfer grand piano upon which Bruckner was able to practise. When Sailer died suddenly of a heart attack on 13 September 1848, Bruckner inherited the piano which remained with him until the end of his life and became the 'sounding board' for all his compositions. He wrote the Requiem, his first major sacred work, in memory of Sailer. It was completed in March 1849 and first performed at the abbey on 13 September, the first anniversary of Sailer's death.

Bruckner's Requiem, WAB 39, is scored for four soloists, mixed-voice choir, strings, three trombones and organ continuo. The absence of woodwind and horns is striking but not unusual in some of the large choral works of the St. Florian period. Perhaps these instruments were not easily available, or perhaps Bruckner simply preferred the 'darker' combination

of strings and trombones. In 1848/49 his knowledge of the 'Requiem' literature was almost certainly confined to a few settings of his Austrian predecessors, particularly those of Mozart and Johann Baptist Weiss, his cousin and godfather, whose Requiem in E flat had remained one of his favourite works since he first became acquainted with it in the mid-1830s. It is unlikely that he would have heard Cherubini's two settings in C minor (1815-16) and D minor (1836) or Berlioz's highly individual and colourful setting (1837).

Bruckner's debt to Mozart in points of style and structure and in various other details becomes evident in any comparison between their settings. The most obvious and immediately audible similarity is at the very beginning of the work. Apart from a small rhythmical alteration the main theme of Bruckner's *Introit* is identical with Mozart's. Bruckner's setting is mainly homophonic, with the exception of a short imitative phrase at 'exaudi' which is akin to the parallel passage in Mozart's setting. Bruckner seems to have been shackled to the anachronistic figured bass in his early church music up to 1855. Here, apart from the first choral entry where the trombones provide the accompaniment, the bass moves almost continuously in quavers. The first and second violins have the same material in syncopation throughout the movement. The choral unison passage at 'Kyrie eleison' is clearly derived from the bass ostinato. Bruckner's expressive treatment of the words 'luceat eis' provides an early example of his technique of climax building, developed and perfected in the D minor, E minor and F minor Masses.

The *Dies irae* movement is not subdivided (as it is in Mozart's setting), but is through-composed and cast in a rondo-type form. A fourteen-bar orchestral ritornello, which is repeated almost exactly subsequent to its first appearance, acts as a structural link for the entire movement. Internal unity is also provided by the frequent recurrence of an arc-shaped five-note motive which makes its first appearance (twice) at the words 'solvet saeculum in favilla' near the beginning and is used subsequently in both solo and choral passages. There are three main choral enclaves which alternate with passages for the soloists. As in the opening movement, the choral writing is predominantly homophonic. The only contrapuntal interest is provided by a short fugato passage at 'Oro supplex' before the *fortissimo* homophonic outburst at 'Lacrimosa' and by some imitative writing in the final bars ('Dona eis Requiem') which draws on the fugato material. It is not until the end of the second choral section that Bruckner becomes more adventurous harmonically. A descending chromatic phrase for basses at 'tantus labor' recalls a similar descending motion in the

corresponding part of Mozart's Requiem. But the most daring harmonic stroke occurs at 'confutatis maledictis' where a surprising transition to C flat major is succeeded by an equally sudden enharmonic change to a quiet setting of 'voca me' in E major. The 'busy' violin figuration which accompanies the lyrical 'Recordare' passage and is also a characteristic feature of other parts of the work is typical of earlier Viennese Classical church music.

The *Offertorium* ('Domine Jesu') begins with an extended melody for the bass soloist which is taken up by the choir. As in Mozart's setting the illustrative qualities of the text awaken a musical response, for instance the descending chromatic line at 'defunctorum de poenis inferni'. A Schubertian phrase for solo soprano ('sed signifer sanctus Michael') flows into 'Quam olim Abrahae', set homophonically for chorus and ending on a half close in G minor.

In the *Hostias* movement the combination of male voices and occasional trombone accompaniment points forward to the dark colouring of two later funeral pieces, *Vor Arnets Grab* WAB 53 (1854) and *Am Grabe* WAB 2 (1861), but its lyrical mood is in the vein of the 'Recordare' section in the earlier *Dies irae* and there is a symbolical brightening of harmonic colouring at the words 'transire ad vitam'. In the following double fugue ('Quam olim Abrahae') we see Bruckner flexing his 'contrapuntal muscles'. There is a broad first subject which begins with the minor third interval that has already played such an important role in the *Dies irae*. One distinctive feature is the minor seventh leap followed by a descent through a dominant seventh – a figure which is employed in both its direct and inverted forms later. The second subject is more uniform rhythmically but is relatively short-lived and fades from the scene towards the end of the long development process when the first subject appears in inversion. The final section begins with stretto entries of the main subject but ends homophonically above a sustained bass pedal.

Bruckner's *Benedictus*, like Mozart's, is in B flat major and breathes the same spirit of blissful assurance and peaceful resignation. The 'Hosanna' of the preceding *Sanctus* is not repeated but is replaced by a short epilogue for unaccompanied choir.

The vivid contrast between the picture of the suffering Christ – 'Agnus Dei' – and the moving plea for eternal rest – 'Dona eis Requiem' – is not portrayed dramatically in Bruckner's work but is suggested by the change of medium from solo voices (alto, tenor and bass respectively) to chorus. The orchestral accompaniment is uniform throughout, first and second violins alternating with a sextuplet-triplet figure. *Fortissimo* homophonic phrases ('lux aeterna') and contrasting quiet imitative figures ('cum sanctis tuis') bring the movement to rest on a half-close in D minor.

The penultimate movement is a short twenty-bar *a*

*cappella* harmonised plainchant setting of *Requiem aeternam* which derives its material from the *Introit*. The concluding *Cum sanctis* begins with the same melodic gesture which appears at the opening of the *Introit* and continues with octave-unison phrases for chorus, to which a powerful string unison with trombone underlay provides a continuous crotchet counterpoint. Bruckner's characteristic falling octave appears in the two *Adagio* final bars.

Bruckner's Requiem is unexceptional for the most part. The composer has been content to work within the circumscribed stylistic norms of Austrian Classical church music. But there are passages, particularly in the *Dies irae*, which pre-echo unmistakably the Bruckner of the three great Masses of the 1860s (D minor, E minor, F minor), the small sacred works written in Linz and Vienna, and the magnificent settings of the *Te Deum* and Psalm 150. It certainly deserves more frequent performances!

*Haydn's "Nelson" Mass and Bruckner's Requiem will be performed by Nottingham Bach Society in St Mary's Church, High Pavement, Nottingham, on 8 November (7.30 pm). Tickets are £8 at the door (£6 concessions). A recording of the Requiem by the Corydon Singers and English Chamber Orchestra under Matthew Best is available on Hyperion CDA 66245.*

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# PERFORMING BRUCKNER'S STRING QUINTET

by Alan George

String Quartets can be among the most insular of musical institutions. With a history extending back nearly two centuries, the study and perfecting of this specialised area of ensemble playing might justifiably be regarded as an Art-form in itself, with its own traditions, techniques, rules – and repertoire, of course: so vast as to be entirely self-sufficient. Such a heritage can all too easily give rise to the quartet player with little interest in music outside his/her own rich literature, and even less in any current thinking relevant to the presentation of that literature. Traditions for the performance of the established repertoire – particularly the Viennese Classics – have grown up over the generations, but do not necessarily take into account the huge amount of research into practices prevalent at that time. Moving through the nineteenth century we encounter performers and teachers whose methods have reached us via their pupils and their pupils' pupils; but the dangers of distortion which arise from handed-down traditions – as with “Chinese whispers” – are obvious. It is only when we get well into the present century, with the advantages of recording and the personal connections with composers themselves, that we can really be sure how things were done and – in some instances – *expected* to be done.

Whatever one might think of the standard approach to the quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, at least there are enough of them to enable every serious ensemble to feel at home with each composer's language and personality. But as the daunting shadow of Beethoven interreacted with the quest for ever greater sonorities, slowing down the production of chamber music during the nineteenth century, we come across isolated masterpieces which relate only to themselves. It follows that any attempt at an idiomatic rendition of such works would benefit from exploring outside the repertoire itself, a wider knowledge of each composer's output surely being a pre-requisite. Who could expect to give a faithful account of Verdi's quartet with no knowledge of *Aida* or *Falstaff*, or of Sibelius's if the world of Symphonies 3, 4, and 6 has not been fully absorbed? Perhaps more than any of these works, the Bruckner quintet will never reveal its true greatness via study of other quartets and quintets in isolation. Schubert's C major quintet might well provide invaluable experience of a time-scale way beyond the majority of other chamber works, as well as revealing influences which helped form Bruckner's own musical style; yet by 1879 he had produced a chamber composition which can only

realistically be studied in the context of his own surrounding symphonies: the “mighty, cyclopic fifth” (to quote Robert Simpson), and the more congenial sixth which, in its less massive scale and heightened lyricism, comes closest in temperament to the quintet – and might even have been influenced by it?

So this was the Fitzwilliam's starting point when we first tackled the Bruckner quintet, nearly thirty years ago. For many, of course, the most striking aspect of the “Bruckner Sound” is his magnificent and noble exploitation of brass instruments; so it might seem inconceivable to try to reproduce such a sonority without them – even if the conclusions of the outer movements do betray a certain hankering. Yet it is extraordinary how harmony can invoke sonority (witness how many masterpieces seem to lose little of their inherent character in four-hand piano reductions). And although (as with so many composers who thought predominantly through the orchestra) it is vital to look at the score of this quintet, imagine the colours evoked, and then translate them into a variety of string textures, we nevertheless sense this music to be as Brucknerian as any of the symphonies. But *projecting* such identification, however strongly felt, is another matter. An initial obstacle is the quintet's technical difficulty – or rather, the awkwardness of much of the individual writing. Many of the lines simply do not lie readily under the fingers; but neither do a lot of Beethoven's (or even Mozart's!), and so it is up to the fingers themselves to be malleable enough to reproduce them without apparent effort. If this could be traced to Bruckner's own lack of expertise as a string player, it does not explain his exceptional feel for the way stringed instruments sound and resonate with each other. His understanding of how to achieve full, warm – sometimes massive – sonority by means of judicious spacing of parts, rather than by adding extra notes through excessive double-stopping, is equalled by only a handful of composers after Haydn.

The next major consideration is tempo, hand-in-hand with which go the demands of *pacing* such a large-scale construction. It could be said that one of the first requirements when approaching a Bruckner score – whether it be as a performer or as a listener – is patience! So it is crucial to subject oneself to the expanded time-scale of this music. Nowadays, with the advent of the Inter-City 225 and the intrusion of one-day cricket into the Test match arena, we live our lives at so unhealthily hectic a pace that it is almost unnatural to have to accept and adjust to a slower time-scale. Music like this affords us the priceless opportunity of challenging the passing of Time, and we should relish it. All readers will know that the finest performances of Bruckner's symphonies are those which allow the music ample space to evolve and breathe. That is not necessarily to say that tempi must be uniformly deliberate, since only the very greatest conductors have managed to preserve the necessary sense of direction and momentum under such conditions. So it would be unwise

to attempt to impose Karajan's famous approach to No. 8 on the quintet: not only because a chamber ensemble can hardly match the sustaining powers of a full orchestra; but also because Bruckner himself has underlined the difference in his actual writing. The first movement is the prime example, where he has rejected his customary rhythmic or tremolando scene setting and presented us with long-breathed melody from the very outset. The lyrical element is further emphasised through his use of triple metre for the only time in a first movement; indeed, it would be easy to begin the quintet as an Adagio, were it not for the cello's subsequent version of the melody steering the music through a bass-line in quavers to a chirpy motif in the violins: music which would sound ridiculous at anything other than a *tempo giusto*. We all of us know of Bruckner's predilection for building a single movement out of the most unlikely variety of material (e.g. the finales of Symphonies 3 and 4), such that mighty brass chorales and peasant dances can live together quite harmoniously and unselfconsciously. The performer's task is to find a tempo which, whilst not necessarily adhering rigidly to the metronome, can embrace each ingredient with a natural ease. This does often require considerable discipline – and even self-denial at times, when it is tempting to indulge in the beauty of the moment at the expense of the longer-term plan. Yet the beauty itself need not be compromised, and Bruckner did try to help by adding a number of tempo changes at key expressive moments; in fact these often prove a hindrance, and the players need to incorporate them into the musical dialogue without allowing them to become fussy.

An approach to the scherzo is not complete without an awareness that Bruckner here evolved for himself a new breed by utilising the slower of the two scherzo tempi in the fifth symphony – and was satisfied enough to do the same in Nos. 6 and 8. These three examples share a shadowy, almost ghostly quality which the quartet-plus-one might wish to exploit, in the awareness that Bruckner's scherzos (the revision of the Fourth excepted) prefer to look to the darker hues of minor keys. For the Trio, and for much of the Finale, it is necessary to visualise the very environment which had surrounded him in his native Upper Austria, before the requisite move to Vienna. Thus the

open vistas of the landscape, the jollity (and drunkenness!) of rustic life, the fun of village music-making, all are faintly tinged with the nostalgia of homesickness; but as players we have to find a quality of sound which can capture these images; we might arrive at something lazy and fat, yet without appearing contrived or patronising. The difficulty is compounded in the finale by the need to keep all of this on a tight rein: for example, the four-bar *Gesangperioden* can only work – paradoxically – if they are played in strict rhythm and unhurried tempo. And it is this movement which does invariably cause the biggest headaches, partly through trying to make it fit into a conventional sonata-form which, like so many other Bruckner finales, it only superficially resembles. Once (aided by the finale of the Seventh) one has accepted the virtues of the *Bogen* (Arch form), seen ahead far enough to understand why the quintet requires a coda of two extended pedal points to effect a gigantic concluding perfect cadence (the home key of F major having been absent since the end of the first movement) – then this extraordinarily original and diverse movement can crown the quintet as intended.

So has the most celebrated part of the work been passed over here? Since the Adagio's sublime beauty and humanity communicate so readily, it seemed exigent to focus on more problematic and idiosyncratic areas. That is not to forget that it contains one of *the* great moments for the viola player (reminding that fraternity that had Bruckner cast the Seventh a semitone higher in F major, we might have claimed the opening theme for ourselves – as he dreamed it!); nor to deny that, even when those special demands in the other movements have been mastered, it is the Adagio which most obviously takes its place in the line of succession, as one of a series of great slow movements ranging from ethereal solemnity in the Fifth to the agonising beauty of the Ninth. As such it surely guarantees for this quintet an exalted place in the hierarchy of chamber masterworks, perhaps even alongside that illustrious predecessor by Schubert.

*Alan George is a founder member of the Fitzwilliam String Quartet. Their next performance of the Bruckner quintet (with Carolyn Sparey-Gillies) will be in a lunchtime concert at Kendal Town Hall on February 4 1998.*

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## Readers Write

*Tony Luker (Balham, London)*

I am so glad the Bruckner Journal has come about. I have been collecting records of Bruckner rarities for 30 years – since the days of the German GARNET label. But not speaking German makes everything so difficult. We need an English translation of Göllicher and Auer's biography, a recording of the songs and exercises. We need to find any music of Kitzler. Also of Bruckner's early teacher – was it someone called Weiss?

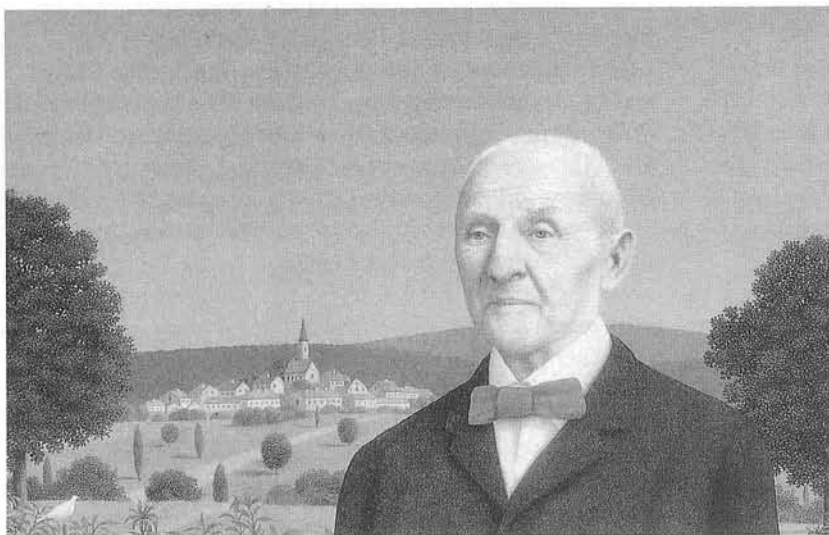
We are lucky to have the piano music at last, and there are a few of the secular choruses on an American disc.

Looking forward to future Journals.

*Steven Halls (Assistant Director, City of Nottingham Leisure and Community Services, and Head of Arts, Tourism and Heritage)*

A belated but sincere note to thank you for the copy of the Bruckner Journal. For your information I am sending off a subscription but (or should this be 'because'?) I enjoyed the articles very much. Bruckner is not a composer of whom I know very much although I have always enjoyed any symphonies I have heard, so I look forward to filling one of the many holes in my knowledge via your publication.

## JOTTINGS



David Cheepen: Anton Bruckner, at the age of seventy, fondly remembering his symphony No. 2 in C Minor

Last year's anniversary saw an upsurge in the number of visitors to Bruckner's birthplace in Ansfelden. Of the trippers from abroad, the greatest number came from Germany, followed by France and Switzerland. Other countries strongly represented were Japan, Great Britain, China, Belgium, Australia and Holland. [From the *International Bruckner Society*]

Subscriber Martin Anderson travelled to Finland for the premiere of Kalevi Aho's four-movement Tenth Symphony in February. Writing in the October *Tempo*, he describes it as a work that should bring Aho (b. 1949) wide international acclaim. The third-movement Adagio is based on a figure in the lower strings taken from the Adagio of Bruckner's Ninth. "In its physical and emotional impact," Martin writes, "it is almost unbearably moving." The symphony includes a part for the *Kettenspiel*: four metal chains anchored to a frame.

In March of this year Gerhard Samuel conducted the Cincinnati Philharmonic in the American premiere of a *Symphonic Praeludium* attributed to Bruckner. Once thought to be by Mahler, the score exists only in a copy made by Rudolf Krzyzanowski in 1876. It is now in the possession of Wolfgang Hiltl, who has published, with Gunnar Cohrs, a new performing edition and orchestral parts. [From the *IBS*]

Copies are available of the performing version of Australian scholar John A. Phillips' reconstruction of the finale of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony. This was printed privately in 1993, prior to the Vienna study and facsimile scores issued as part of the Complete Works. Orders and enquiries to Gunnar Cohrs, Schweidnitzer Strasse 20, D-28237 Bremen, Germany.

Congratulations to trainee solicitor Richard Moore, of Plymouth, on the impressive knowledge he displayed

Completed in June 1997, this acrylic-on-board painting colourizes the 1894 Bruckner photo by Josef Löwy and sets the composer against his native background. David Cheepen specializes in highly detailed miniatures in intense colours and claims Bruckner's music as seminal to his work. He exhibits with the Portal Gallery, 16A Grafton Street, Bond Street, London (open 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat). His Bruckner painting, measuring 6 1/4" x 8 1/4", is priced at £1,200. Alternatively, a postcard reproduction in full colour is obtainable from TBJ, 2 Rivergreen Close, Nottingham NG9 3ES. Please send 3 x 20p in postage stamps for one card or 5 x 20p for two. Subscribers outside the UK: price on request.

of Bruckner's life and music in a semi-final of the BBC TV *Mastermind* programme. Does anybody share the editor's opinion that one of the questions (possibly abridged) was a bit below the belt?

Timothy Jackson's essay 'Bruckner's "Oktaven"' appeared in the August issue of *Music & Letters*. In 1991 Dr Jackson identified the edition of Mozart's *Requiem* used by Bruckner for analytical studies that influenced his own music. With fellow sleuth Paul Hawkshaw, he also deciphered some puzzling annotations in a manuscript of Bruckner's *F minor Mass*, explaining them as page references to his diary notes on the Mozart *Requiem*. Timothy Jackson will be responsible for the Bruckner entry in the next (1999) edition of *The New Grove Dictionary*.

The motto of the 1997 Cambridge Music Festival, which takes place this month, is "Schubert and Vienna". Anglia Polytechnic University Chorus will perform Bruckner's *Mass in E minor* with K239 Chamber Orchestra on 9 November (West Road Concert Hall, 7.30pm). This concert features Schubert's Tenth, completed by Brian Newbould. Bruckner's *Te Deum* opens a CUMS concert featuring Beethoven's "Choral" Symphony on 21 November (King's College Chapel, 8pm). Telephone bookings: 01223 357 851.

Sheffield Symphony Orchestra will give Bruckner's Sixth in St Mark's Church, Broomhill on 31 January (7.30pm). First horn Howard Jones, who is one of our readers, intends to observe Günter Wand's recent amendment to the horn phrase in bar 112 of the first movement!

Bruckner's Seventh Symphony receives a performance by the Hertfordshire Philharmonia under Adrian Brown in St Albans Cathedral on 7 March 1998.