



# The Bruckner Journal

Published three times a year and sold by subscription  
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2 Rivergreen Close, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 3ES  
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**VOLUME TWO, NUMBER THREE, NOVEMBER 1998**

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Copy deadlines are 31 January, 30 May and 30 September.

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Silhouettes by Otto Böhler.

## AT ST FLORIAN by CLAUDIO MAGRIS

AT Sankt Florian, to the greater glory of God and of the Hapsburgs, there triumphs a splendour of late-baroque, imperial staircases, long series of corridors, tapestries, Prince Eugène's room, its bed adorned with the figures of Turks and Hungarian rebels portrayed in vanquished poses. But there is also Bruckner's room, bare and modest, with its brass bedstead, a little table, a chair, a piano, and a couple of pictures of no value. In the church of Sankt Florian is the famous organ on which he played. The ornamental pomp of the great Austrian monasteries – Sankt Florian, Göttweig, Maria Taferl and above all Melk, with its splendour and majesty – does not obliterate their truer nature, that mysterious simplicity that makes their domes and bell-towers an integral part of the centuries-old religious feeling of the landscape, of the curve of the hills, the silence of the woods, the peacefulness of tradition. Bruckner, who dedicated a symphony "to the good Lord", embodies this tranquil inwardness, that lives in religion as in its native air, and understands the dissonance of modernity thanks to its sorrowing, open-hearted feeling of harmony. [...]

That rounded harmony has its own ecumenical grandeur, the wide, embracing gesture that imparts order and assurance to the world in the evening benediction. But the great baroque monasteries, which belong to the history of the most illustrious art, smooth and polish that rotundity too much, while certain suburban parish priests sometimes know how to keep it a little rough and simple, so as to leave room also for anomalies and discrepancies.

*From pp. 146/149 of Danube by Claudio Magris, translated from the Italian by Patrick Creagh. First published in 1986 by Garzanti editore, Milan, and in Great Britain in 1990 by the Harvill Press. © Garzanti editore s.p.a. 1986. Translation © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. & Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Reproduced by permission of The Harvill Press. This book is still in print.*

# BBC PROMS AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL, LONDON

## Bruckner: Symphony No. 3 (1877 version with 1876 Adagio)

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Osmo Vänskä

Broadcast on BBC Radio 3, 24 July 1998

Billed in the *Radio Times* as 'a rare chance to hear [the Third] in the original 1877 version' this was in fact a unique opportunity to hear the familiar 1877 revision with the Adagio of 1876 which is now published as a separate movement.

The 1876 Adagio is closer as regards form and content to the original 1873 version than to the Adagio of 1877. It retains the extended ABABA format which Bruckner was to reduce to an ABA form in 1877 by the simple expedient of omitting the central A section. Its main distinguishing feature comes however in the final

A episode, where the original fussy syncopation is replaced by Tannhäuser-like triplets in the violins. It was good to hear this lovely movement in the context of the whole symphony, in fact it was good to hear it at all. However, I don't think anyone is arguing that this should now be the preferred version – certainly one must respect the composer's decision to replace it.

Textually this performance was a rather strange mixture as the 1876 Adagio was followed by a performance of the scherzo which included the coda Bruckner added

in 1878 and shortly afterwards dropped. It was gone by the time the engraver's copy, which served Fritz Oeser as the basis for his edition, came to be made.

The sensitively played Adagio was the highlight of a performance which was clean-cut and attractively fresh but ultimately small-scale and lacking in weight. The main problem lay with the pointlessly over-prominent brass, the trumpets being the worst offenders. Not the most persuasive advocacy for this amalgam that could be imagined!

*Dermot Gault*

## Berlin Philharmonic/Claudio Abbado, 27 August 1998

One hears sometimes of the tendency for orchestras across the world to have developed a much more standardized sound in the last few decades. Yet the Berlin Philharmonic is still nourished by its burnished, glowing character in brass and strings, smooth and polished as always, and taking the edge off that harshness which can be discerned in some orchestras with Bruckner. This was one of the more memorable aspects of its performance of Bruckner's **Fifth Symphony**, perhaps ultimately the only memorable one. Notwithstanding a few gaffes in the

horns, the reception was quite euphoric. How could those last pages of the work not produce such a response!

Abbado had the right grasp of the symphony's architecture. Everything was intact and there was no lingering, no exaggeration. But it was not, for me, a great performance, not something special. Why a performance is great is elusive, and perhaps in the end is not describable, as it has to be a performance which does not overstate and magnify beyond truth either.

In a symphony, however, where

form and organisation are so significant, Abbado will still have given much satisfaction to his listeners, some of whom would have been hearing the symphony for the first time. It was its ninth performance at the Proms. From the list in the programme note: 1964 Philharmonia/Charles Groves; 1971 BBC SO/Jascha Horenstein; 1973 and 1980 Concertgebouw Amsterdam/Bernard Haitink; 1984 BBC SO/John Pritchard; 1986 and 1990 BBC SO/Günter Wand; 1993 Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra/Claudio Abbado.

*Raymond Cox*

## What the Papers Said compiled by Gerard Robello

'The discipline of the Berlin Philharmonic's strings was atmospherically and subtly deployed in the quiet opening . . .'  
(Geoffrey Norris, *Daily Telegraph*)

' . . . even the substantial Berlin strings seemed distant and dwarfed in this ambience, and what was the point of getting 10 double basses to play the pizzicato tread of the symphony's opening – marked pianissimo not inaudible – as if it were meant as a test for the aurally challenged?'  
(Adrian Jack, *Independent*)

'The sense of expectation and awe at the start of Bruckner's Fifth Symphony stressed at once that the musical journey was going to be worth making, an inspired assault on a great peak of the 19th century symphonic repertory'  
(Geoffrey Norris, *Daily Telegraph*)

'This wasn't a performance with much mystery of a deeper kind . . .'  
(Adrian Jack, *Independent*)

' . . . in the climactic coda the communal empathy of the orchestra was evident from the way the mellow brass crowned the ensemble without obscuring important detail elsewhere.'  
(Barry Millington, *The Times*)

'The finale was earthbound, and the sound of the brass towards the end gross.'  
(Adrian Jack, *Independent*)

# LUCERNE FESTIVAL 1998

by Peter Palmer



Internationale Musikfestwochen Luzern  
International Festival of Music Lucerne  
Festival Internazionale di Musica Lucerna  
Festival International de Musique Lucerne

No longer can the early 1873 version of Bruckner's Third Symphony be regarded as unplayable. **Herbert Blomstedt** and the **Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra** rose to all its challenges in their triumphant performance of 8 September (repeated in Lucerne the following evening and in the Brucknerhaus Linz on 13 September). It was in Lucerne, over twenty years ago, that I had my only chance to see the great Eugen Jochum in the flesh. He too was conducting Bruckner's Third, but in the 1888/89 version, and in an inadequate concert hall that has now been replaced with one to delight players and listeners alike.

The new hall forms part of an arts and conference centre which is still being built. The main foyer is not yet ready, and neither is the pipe organ whose magnificent façade towers above the concert platform. Visually, the French architect Jean Nouvel's concert edifice has been variously likened to a cello and a cathedral. At a late stage in the design, and on the advice of Claudio Abbado and other musicians, the original colour scheme was discarded in favour of white stucco for the auditorium; it was also Abbado's suggestion that the main building material be wood. American engineer Russell Johnson was previously responsible for the acoustics of such modern buildings as Birmingham Symphony Hall, Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall and the Northampton Derngate Centre, not to mention the new hall in Dallas. Now 75, Johnson has fought long and hard for parity with the architect in designing these halls. In Lucerne, the inevitable give-and-take involved has worked out very much to the benefit of the ear. After his first concert there Herbert Blomstedt made his approval quite plain. My own first impressions (I also heard contemporary music performed by mezzo Cornelia Kallisch and the Suisse Romande Orchestra) are that the sound is more fully integrated than in Nottingham, while remaining beautifully transparent. Perhaps conductors will find it easier to obtain a pianissimo than a true fortissimo, and the ambience is ever so slightly clinical, resulting in tempered brilliance rather than enveloping warmth.

But the building can't be said to lack atmosphere: its starry lighting consorts well with the name of Lucerne ("city of light"), while the seating design produces a stillness among the audience that I have experienced in

no other house. So essentially musical an arena can only perpetuate the desire for *live* music: an issue that was keenly debated in the course of the festival.

And so to Bruckner's Third, a symphony that Manfred Wagner has justifiably seen as prefiguring collage techniques in the way Bruckner glues together contrasting elements. Time and again in the Gewandhaus Orchestra's performance the clarity and delicacy of the strings shone through. Examples: the first movement's mystical feeling after bar 478, *ppp*; the Adagio's *misterioso* theme; *dolce* first violins over bass pizzicati at letter G in the finale; or the meticulous dynamic differentiation coupled with rhythmic "spring" after letter O. (Some might call it over-fussy, but Nowak was surely correct in recognising a certain fussiness in Bruckner's genetic make-up.) Not that the Leipzig winds, or indeed a timpanist who cultivated a satisfyingly earthly sound, were inferior in any respect. Exquisite horns are a lovely memory, their only moment of discomfort coming in the passage with the trumpet at bar 215 of the Adagio. The marriage of Blomstedt and the Gewandhaus may well prove to have been made in heaven. At all events this honeymoon performance revealed him as one of the most powerfully convincing Brucknerians of our day.

Several days earlier, on 4 September, **Esa-Pekka Salonen** conducted the **Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra** in the revised version of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony. Salonen may have few opportunities of programming Bruckner, and it should not be held against him that he took the precaution of using a score in Lucerne. In every department his orchestra is highly accomplished.

In spite of many engaging touches, however, the final effect seemed superficial – and whatever else Bruckner might have been, he was certainly not tame. Fatally, the second movement began to lose any sense of direction; solo phrasing was under-characterized; and Bruckner's Fourth is not a work where the first horn can be allowed any stumbles.

**As part of the next Lucerne Easter Festival, Lorin Maazel will conduct the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Bruckner's Eighth Symphony on Palm Sunday, 28 March 1999. The performance in Lucerne's new concert hall begins at 6.30pm. For details contact the Lucerne International Music Festival, Hirschmattstrasse 13, Postfach, CH-6002 Lucerne (telephone 41+(0)41 226 4400.**

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## **The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Viennese Connection: Symphonies by Franz Schmidt and Bruckner, and three concerts in the Musikverein**

*by Terry Barfoot*

Yakov Kreizberg, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's dynamic Principal Conductor, had a busy summer. In addition to a series of performances of Janacek's *Katya Kabanova* at Glyndebourne, he toured Japan with his own opera company, the Komische Oper Berlin, and gave concerts with the BSO. One of these, at Winchester Cathedral, featured a performance of the Symphony No. 4 by Franz Schmidt, the composer who represents the last in the line of the great Viennese symphonists.

Yakov Kreizberg was introduced to Schmidt's symphony by a friend: 'At that time I barely knew the composer's name, but when I listened to the piece I loved it. In due course, when we began talking to the Proms management, I mentioned the idea of performing the Schmidt. It turned out that they never included Schmidt's music in the whole history of the Proms, so I pushed the idea forward and convinced them.'

Franz Schmidt (1874-1939) was a very accomplished musician: principal cellist of the Vienna Opera under Mahler, active as a chamber musician, and a gifted composer. He played in the first performance of *Verklärte Nacht* and kept faith with Schoenberg's later works, though he admitted to not understanding them. For his part, Schoenberg said: 'The only problem with Schmidt is that he has too much talent.'

What are the reasons for Schmidt's neglect? Yakov Kreizberg describes him as 'the continuation of the great Austro-German tradition, the last link in that chain. He was not a prolific composer, and his *Book of the Seven Seals* was hailed by the Nazis, which after the war may have worked against him, though he wasn't a Nazi himself. He was also a relatively conservative composer, with a natural spaciousness that offers comparison with Bruckner. Having said that, the two are very different, since Schmidt is dramatic in an operatic sense.'

Yakov Kreizberg and the BSO are performing Schmidt's symphony several times during 1998-99: at the Proms, at Poole and Portsmouth, and in the Musikverein, Vienna's principal concert hall, where the work received its premiere. Three concerts will be given by Kreizberg and the BSO in Vienna next March, and if further proof be required of the orchestra's standing, then surely this is it.

The Viennese link goes further, however. As well as a Beethoven concerto cycle, the season offers symphonies by Mahler and Bruckner. In September Kreizberg conducted Bruckner's Seventh Symphony at Poole, Portsmouth and Basingstoke: 'The slow movement is one of the greatest of all times. And as for the issue of the cymbal clash at the climax, I haven't made up my mind: I've done it both ways. Being an operatic conductor, I recognise how exciting the moment can be, but it is also very difficult for the cymbal player. Believe me, it is possible for him to miss his moment! I have seen it happen, though thankfully I wasn't conducting the performance myself.'

'I believe that the quality of the sound counts for everything in Bruckner. You need to have both density and richness; it is like the difference between milk chocolate and dark chocolate, so we will use a large string section of sixty players. I did not dare to conduct this symphony for many years, for fear of not doing it justice. As a conductor it is not necessary to do everything early in one's career. This is my fourth season with the orchestra, and we have been looking to perform Bruckner throughout that time. I would love to do more in due course; this is music I have felt passionately about since my student days.'

*Another Bruckner symphony – the Sixth – is being performed by the Bournemouth SO this season. Ulf Schirmer conducts the work at Poole Arts Centre on 2 December and at Plymouth Pavilions on 4 December.*

# COMPACT DISCS: Recent Releases

by Elizabeth Thompson

## Bruckner: Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Linz version; Helgoland

*Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Daniel Barenboim; male voices of Rundfunkchor Berlin and Ernst-Senff Chor, Teldec 0630 16646-2*

The boisterous First is Bruckner's wild card: the joker in his symphonic pack. Like most conductors these days Daniel Barenboim favours the composer's first thoughts – the daringly original Linz version of 1865-66. His earlier DG recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1981 was witty and affectionate. Here in a live recording from Berlin's Philharmonie the humour is blacker; the symphony Bruckner dubbed "das kecke Beserl" (the impudent besom) takes on a desperado character as tension mounts in the wilder reaches of the energetic finale and the first movement's hectic final stretch.

Barenboim hauls the imposing weight of the Berlin Philharmonic at this work, turning high spirits into elemental energy. Playful touches take on a dangerous, slightly sinister edge. At a dogged gait the opening trudge has a truculent air with moody little kicks from the horn. The urgent scampering build-up to the first climax sounds almost manic, a foretaste of Barenboim's treatment of the fiery brass-crested outbursts to come. Conjuring powerful robust playing, he leaves no doubt that this is a symphony of sudden mad forays, whirlings and restless trills.

He makes the most of Bruckner's obsession with rocking, spinning figures which add so significantly to the rhythmic momentum of the turbulent outer movements and

hurtling Scherzo. There is something unhinged about this frenzied finale, a quality both furious and triumphant, more alarming than Bruckner's unexpected visitor bursting in unannounced. Yet the First also contains some of Bruckner's tenderest ideas which are treated to expressively lovely playing from strings and woodwinds. The Adagio unfurls eloquently from tremulous tendrils of melody, and its dying moments after an impetuous climax are moving.

In the meditative episodes Barenboim opts for extreme contrasts, dropping back the tempo almost to a standstill in the first movement's Gesangsperiode and again in the finale. Some Brucknerians may prefer a more flowing, less exaggerated approach, yet Barenboim impresses with a dramatic and propulsive reading of unusual weight. Rich-textured and vivid, the recording places the listener in the front row.

Bruckner's last completed composition, *Helgoland* – a setting of jingoistic words by August Silberstein – gets a suitably virile performance from the male chorus as Saxon islanders repulsing Roman invaders with help from heaven in the form of a raging storm. It's a broader, more solemn rendering than Barenboim's fine DG account from Chicago.

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## Bruckner: Symphonies Nos. 2, 6 and 7

*Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra, Arte Nova Classics. Hiroshi Wakasugi (No. 2, 74321 27770 2), Stanislaw Skrowaczewski (No. 6, 74321 54456 2; No. 7, 74321 27771 2).*

In the local parlance of Germany's Saarland province, nudging the French border, "Salü" is a greeting akin to the Austrian-Bavarian "Grüss Gott". A warm "Salü" then to this super-budget Bruckner cycle drawn from recent recordings in the archive of Radio Saarbrücken.

Of the two conductors sharing the project Skrowaczewski is a Brucknerian of stature who needs no introduction. Here he is in charge of a provincial radio orchestra who are audibly stretched by the encounter. Yet these performances (the Seventh recorded live at two concerts in the Kongresshalle, Saarbrücken, in September 1991) are individual enough to command the attention of Bruckner lovers, and both deliver abundant rewards for the modest outlay.

The surprise is Hiroshi Wakasugi, principal conductor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra. His lovely account of the Second is so tenderly imagined, so sympathetic to the inner workings of this complex and daring symphony that I would love to hear him in more early Bruckner. He plumps for the Nowak edition based on the 1877 version but taking account of Bruckner's original intentions.

Pleasantly rather than spectacularly recorded in the Kongresshalle's warm acoustic, this is persuasive music-making of unforced gentleness and subtlety. An understanding guide meticulous in his observation of the pregnant silences which earned the work its "Pausensinfonie" nickname, Wakasugi keeps the treasury

of ideas flowing, bringing out the Upper Austrian charm of the dance measures and uncovering delightful detail. An Andante of almost unbearable fragility is brought to a rapt close.

Radiance is hard-won in Skrowaczewski's gaunt vision of the Seventh. The overall effect is majestic, grave and dark. The conductor makes demands on the players with long taut phrases – like pulling toffee. The sound is immense and somewhat unnerving: you envisage the audience cowering. The deeply felt Adagio unfolds ponderously like a super-human outpouring of grief: the lance-tilting scherzo sounds dangerous. Coaxing eloquent playing, Skrowaczewski slowly binds together the thematic threads in masterly fashion. The final stretch is awesome but the spiritual journey is of the hair shirt variety.

In complete contrast comes a robust and earthy Sixth. The first movement's dominant rhythm needs more attack but the music swaggers at a quickish pulse. I like the upstart trumpets, the peasantry woodwind.

The questing, philosophical slow movement with its wary oboe like a watchful Brangraene at a funeral rite is glorious. Skrowaczewski plays up the weird drama of the scherzo and is a wizard with the crazy mood swings of the finale – nervous and obsessive. But the calmer sections with their good-mannered archaic dance measures and ecclesiastical poses are accorded due dignity and charm.

## Bruckner: Symphony No. 4

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/Bernard Haitink

Philips Virtuoso 442 044-2 (mid-price)

by Andrew Hubbard

How much interpretative licence should a conductor of a Bruckner symphony be allowed?

The question has been exercising me since listening again to Haitink's classic recording of the 4th symphony. Haitink would, I think, be regarded by most people as a "modern" interpreter. By and large he plays the music "straight" with few fluctuations of tempo and without overemphasis. The lead-in to the E major thematic group in the first movement (Nowak 1878/80 edition, letter C) is, for example, done without any *ritenuto*, whereas a more "old-fashioned" conductor such as Böhm slows up the lead-in bar in order to make it clear that we are in a new section. Personally, I prefer the Haitink approach, and I would have thought that this much less flexible attitude to tempo was now the prevailing orthodoxy.

Yet this gives me a problem, because I feel that Bruckner would have expected the Böhm approach. Everything I know about late 19th-century performance practice points to flexibility of tempo and emphasis on detail (you need look no further than any standard 19th-century edition of Beethoven's piano sonatas for evidence). More specifically, I was set thinking by a comment in Derek Watson's Bruckner biography. Referring to Nowak's edition of the 7th symphony Watson regrets the editor's inclusion of Nikisch's conductor's markings as "they can interrupt

the flow of the music unless the conductor takes great care". This is despite the fact that the markings were approved by the composer! In Nikisch's recordings of Beethoven's fifth symphony one can hear exactly this very elastic approach to tempo and emphasis: I suspect that Bruckner would have felt more comfortable with this style than Watson (or indeed myself) and would have been disappointed by the much plainer modern aesthetic.

Back to Haitink. Does this 30-year-old performance stand up to re-issue? Broadly speaking I think that it does. The tempi are particularly well judged. In the first movement, for example, Haitink recognises that the pulse is basically 2 rather than 4 in the bar (listen to Karajan to hear how stodgy 4 beats in the bar can become) but this does not lead him to the breathless rush of Jochum. Generally Haitink is stronger in the more lyrical episodes – the beginning of the slow movement is beautifully poised – than in the more strenuous passages. I don't feel the visceral excitement that some performers bring to the biggest tutti's.

This may of course be because of the recording, which is now showing its age. The dynamic contrast is not as wide as one would expect in a modern CD and some detail does not really come through clearly enough. I miss, for example, the crucial double bass pizzicato note which introduces the D flat thematic episode in the first movement (letter B).

One aspect of the performance did cause me to ponder what Bruckner's notation actually means. To my ears Haitink underplays the dotted rhythm in the opening horn phrase, so that the short note is more like a quaver than a semiquaver (listen to Masur to hear the effect of really sharp dotting). Yet how did Bruckner expect the dotting to be interpreted? The rhythm of the opening horn call has a triple dotted minim followed by a semiquaver. When the material appears in double speed in the development (letter G) it is written as a triple dotted crotchet and a demisemiquaver. Mathematically this is a correct halving of the original notation, but did Bruckner really mean that there should be this degree of precision in the dotting or was his notation merely a way of saying that, however written, the short note should be as short as possible? I suspect it was. Overdotting in Bach is complex enough without having to consider it in Bruckner, but the opening horn phrase is so crucial to the movement (indeed the whole symphony) that the issue seems to me to be worth further examination. What do other readers think?

*Andrew Hubbard studied music at Nottingham University, where he was awarded a PhD. Professionally he has exchanged Mozart for Mammon and is now with an international firm of Chartered Accountants but remains a keen amateur musician.*

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**PHILIPS**

## Bruckner: Symphony No. 8

### Wagner: Preludes to *Lohengrin* Act I and *Parsifal*; *Siegfried Idyll*

Munich Philharmonic/Hans Knappertsbusch, recorded January 1963

Millennium Classics MCD80089 (2 CDs, distributed by New Note)

Received wisdom has it that 'Kna' was seldom at home in the recording studio, and to some extent these recordings (his last) bear this out. The first two movements of the symphony actually go rather well, the scherzo in particular combining sturdiness with forward movement, but the Adagio, in spite of a fastish initial tempo, soon drags. The lack of refinement in the playing and the lack of space in the recording stifle any feeling of atmosphere, in spite of the conductor's obvious dedication. In the finale Knappertsbusch's feeling for the composer is again evident throughout, but the doggedly slow tempi make this rather heavy going. In recent years live performances of Knappertsbusch have gained increased circulation, and it could well be that among them there is a Bruckner Eighth in which the inspiration Knappertsbusch could achieve in concert combines with his natural teutonic thoroughness to make a truly great performance.

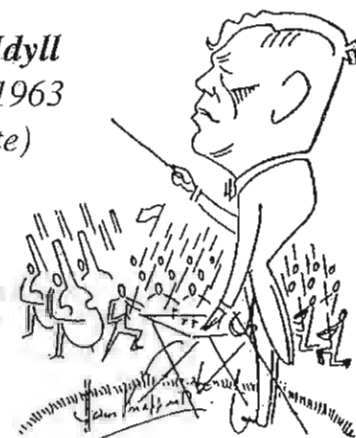
The other problem with this issue (which is nowhere acknowledged in the accompanying documentation) is Knappertsbusch's use of the first

published edition, reportedly seen through the press by Josef Schalk and Max von Oberleithner. This results in a six-bar cut in the Finale

and in many unwarranted and destructive changes in orchestration elsewhere, notably the end of the first movement. As Bruckner wrote it the main climax is terrific, the unaccompanied horns and trumpets stabbing the air with the rhythm of the 'death announcement'. Schalk and Oberleithner add a sustained trombone chord and a 'tasteful' decrescendo in the horn and trumpet parts, ruining one of Bruckner's most striking inspirations.

The Wagner items, soberly played, are an attractive addition. At only 7'31", Knappertsbusch's *Lohengrin* Prelude is unusually flowing, but it seems to have all the time in the world.

Dermot Gault



## Bruckner: Symphony No. 8 in C minor (1890 version) transcribed for organ and performed by Lionel Rogg on the Van den Heuvel organ in the Victoria Hall, Geneva BIS-CD-946 (distributed by Select)

In times past keyboard transcriptions served to make orchestral music more accessible, but since the advent of recording that justification no longer applies. So why transcribe an orchestral work for organ, particularly when that work is as long and complex as a Bruckner symphony? That is a question Lionel Rogg addresses in his programme note for this recording. His answer is thoughtful and has to do with the spiritual content of the symphony and Bruckner's own close relationship with the organ. It is not an answer that will convince the hardened sceptic, but it may persuade us to listen with an open mind and judge this organ transcription on its own merits.

Rogg gives a breathtaking display of musicianship and virtuosity. He has chosen his instrument wisely. Built in 1993, the Van den Heuvel organ he uses is full of interesting colours at unison pitch, with sonorous reeds and a thrilling tutti. He handles it (helped, presumably, by an assistant or two) with consummate skill, finding appropriate sounds without feeling the need always to choose the organ equivalent of the orchestral original. Some of the quieter moments are quite exquisite. Here one feels the transcription achieves Rogg's stated, and very lofty aim of giving 'a new artistic dimension to the original'.

In the first movement the playing of the 'Bruckner rhythm' with an elongated first note is rather mannered and hinders the forward motion, but otherwise the interpretation is masterly. The *Scherzo* also comes off very well. The *Adagio* is less satisfactory, inevitably, for in slow music the unyielding tones of the organ can never match the living sound of string tone. Sometimes also in this movement one becomes aware of the limitations of two hands and two feet in coping with complex polyphonic textures. The lack of impact in the *fortissimo* A major chord of bar 15 is another small disappointment. The finale, on the other hand, is powerfully projected, though it contains three unexpected cuts, amounting to about 130 bars.

On the whole matter of editions the programme note is completely silent. Rogg seems to be following Nowak, although there are occasionally small discrepancies in addition to the missing bars. This being such a sensitive issue, Rogg would have done well to state his sources and explain his decisions. As an example of the transcriber's art, however, this recording commands enormous respect. It is also – with certain reservations – a very satisfying and exciting musical experience. Brucknerians should welcome it.

Tom Corfield

**Andrea Harrandt and Otto Schneider (eds.), *Bruckner Briefe Band I 1852-1886*  
(Anton Bruckner *Sämtliche Werke* 24/1).**

*Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, Vienna 1998. ISBN 3-900270-42-2.*

*xiii + 336 pages. £32.80.*

by Crawford Howie

The appearance of the first volume of a projected two-volume edition of Bruckner's letters is very welcome. This takes us to the end of 1886, the year which marked the first Viennese performances of his Seventh Symphony and *Te Deum* (with orchestral accompaniment) and the growth of a wider appreciation of his music outside Austria. There has been a gap of over seventy years since the most important of the earlier publications of the letters, Franz Gräflinger's edition of 146 letters – *Anton Bruckner: gesammelte Briefe* (Regensburg, 1924) – and Max Auer's more substantial edition (although it overlaps with Gräflinger's) of 326 letters from Bruckner and, in an appendix, 97 letters to Bruckner – *Anton Bruckner: gesammelte Briefe, Neue Folge* (Regensburg, 1924). Also in this new edition are several letters which have already been published, either complete or in part, in other biographies of Bruckner, notably the large multi-volume Göllicher-Auer biography, and in journals like the *Bruckner-Jahrbuch*. As several have come to light in the last fifty years, they appear here for the first time. A particularly interesting feature is the inclusion of "third party" letters, that is letters written by others about Bruckner, where the editors consider that they help to elucidate some details which are not always perfectly clear in letters written by or to Bruckner himself. The correspondence between Franz and Joseph Schalk in the 1880s and 1890s yields much important information about their involvement in the dissemination of Bruckner's works. Thomas Leibnitz has already made substantial use of this source material in his *Die Brüder Schalk und Anton Bruckner* (Tutzing, 1988) and, where relevant, a few of these letters are printed here.

Much of the source material is housed in the Austrian National Library, the archives of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* and St. Florian Abbey. The rest can be found in other Austrian archives and libraries, in collections in Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, the Czech Republic and the United States and in private ownership in Austria, Germany, France and Switzerland. Catalogues of secondhand booksellers and auctions have also been sources of information. Close scrutiny of all the extant sources has made it possible for the editors to correct many faulty readings in the earlier editions.

The method of numbering letters is unusual but not difficult to follow after a few minutes' perusal. It will facilitate the addition of new material which will no doubt come to light by the time Volume 2 is published. The numbering is the same as the date of the letter (year, month, day). For instance, a letter which Bruckner sent to Rudolf Weinwurm on 7 January 1868 is numbered 680107. The presentation of the letters and accompanying notes is a model of clarity. In small type at the end of each letter is an indication of the source (location of original if extant or, if either not extant or unknown at present, source from which copy was made), a reference to any earlier editions, photographs, facsimiles etc., including the occasional mention of a secondhand bookseller's catalogue, as well as relevant notes and comments (correction of spelling, illegible words, deletions, additions).

Letters written during the Linz period include a few

from Simon Sechter, under whose patient guidance Bruckner completed a marathon Harmony and Counterpoint course from 1856 to 1861, and several of a more personal nature to his friend Rudolf Weinwurm in Vienna which give us a glimpse of Bruckner the man, often racked by loneliness and self-doubt. The twelve months following his breakdown in 1867 and leading to his eventual move to Vienna in September 1868 are well documented. With this move to Vienna came a change in his circle of correspondents. He maintained close contact with his Upper Austrian roots – his sister in Vöcklabruck and friends in St. Florian and Kremsmünster – and in the late 1870s and 1880s there was increasing contact with conductors and journalists outside Austria. His letters to Wilhelm Tappert, a Berlin music journalist he met at Bayreuth in 1876, make interesting reading, not least for the references to revision work on his Fourth Symphony and information about the Third Symphony.

The main musical event in Bruckner's life at the beginning of 1868 was a performance of his D minor Mass in Linz Cathedral on 6 January. The performance was a success and, in the letter written to Weinwurm the day afterwards (referred to above), he provided further information and outlined future plans. The postscript suggests that Weinwurm had asked him for a choral piece:

Dear friend,

I have just completed a major undertaking. The performance was yesterday, the 6th, and it went very well, far better than three years ago. The church was packed full and there was unprecedented interest and involvement in the proceedings. I had at my disposal a very large choir and a very good orchestra which consisted mainly of players from the military band. Alois [Rudolf's brother, who was responsible for training the choir] produced excellent results. Three cheers for him! I am deeply grateful to you for your devoted efforts on my behalf at the present time; they have come as a complete surprise. Unfortunately I have no further information for you. As there are so many good violinists at the theatre here, it has been suggested that I have my symphony [no. 1 in C minor] performed during Lent; I will perhaps arrange for it to be played at a Philharmonic concert. I do not want any financial remuneration, and the performers should share the proceeds among themselves. At least in this way I will be able to hear it. The Credo of the new Mass [in F minor] will soon be finished. Unfortunately the first two movements have only been sketched. I am rather tense again – probably the result of recent exertions.

I wish you a really good New Year and plead for your lifelong affection and friendship. If only I could spend the rest of my days near you!

With a thousand affectionate greetings,

Your friend

A. Bruckner

N.B. Unfortunately I have no composition for you. What do you require and for what forces – male voices or mixed, with or without accompaniment? Many thanks for your gracious invitation.

[my translation]



**Anton Bruckner. Ninth Symphony in D minor: Finale.***Reconstruction of the Autograph Score from the Surviving Manuscripts.**Performing Version by Nicola Samale, John A. Phillips and Giuseppe Mazzuca with the assistance of Gunnar Cohrs. Edited by John A. Phillips, 1993.*

Unfinished symphonies tend to acquire symbolical status. An extreme view of Bruckner's Ninth has been expressed by Peter Jan Marthé, music director of the Austrian Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. The finale, he declares, is a 'cover-up', and the Ninth is really anything but a transfigured celebration of the soul's departure from life. For Marthé, the 'shocking failure' of the finale is a testimony to human limitations, a 'crazed and confused torso of a hopeless charge to heaven'. He draws a parallel between the aged Bruckner's mental deterioration and the collapse of Thomas Aquinas just before the completion of his *Summa Theologiae*. And the moral? 'Thou shalt create no likeness of God, not even in the form of a symphony.'

The intrepid Australian scholar John Phillips and his two Italian colleagues think differently. They, too, are critical of current performance practice, seeing it as a misinterpretation of Bruckner's Ninth. In Phillips' view, however, the finale is not only virtually complete but one of the composer's finest conceptions. Nearly all the material, he argues, is based on a single, seminal motif, which Bruckner proceeds to transform, or transmute; upon this are superimposed such carriers of spiritual meaning as the choral theme and Te Deum motif. The finale reflects a significantly new stage in Bruckner's thinking.

Misunderstandings have been exacerbated by the dispersal of the manuscripts of the finale. Some were mislaid or seized by souvenir hunters after Bruckner's death. The largest part remained in the possession of the conductor Franz Schalk and eventually found their way into the Austrian National Library. One short-score draft owned by Ferdinand Löwe was sold in 1933 to the Prussian State Library. Together with some Mozart manuscripts it was evacuated to Silesia in the last year of World War II; by the 1970s it had been traced to Cracow. An up-to-date synopsis of known sources for the finale is given as Table I in John Phillips' publication.

Like his lucid foreword and introduction to the score, the five prefatory tables are published in German and English. The second concerns details of folios, the third reproduces Alfred Orel's synopsis of the surviving material from the 1930s, on which all the earlier performing versions were based. Table IV offers a thorough overview of the source material used in this version. The final table breaks the reconstruction down into sections and paragraphs.

In the score itself, the editor has followed

Bruckner's own policy with regard to accidentals – often a ticklish matter in late-Romantic harmony. Bruckner's inveterate numbering of periods is indicated underneath. The main challenge, Phillips says, was not so much the bar-to-bar reconstruction as the provision of counterpoints. There is an exposition (Bruckner's "Part 1") of 220 bars and a development (Bruckner's "Part 2") of 90 bars, the latter being dominated by the Te Deum motif. A 268-bar recapitulation is followed by a coda of 109 bars.

This coda is not entirely conjectural because more than fifty bars exist in manuscript, but one of its more speculative features (supported by Bruckner's reported comments) is a combining of all the Ninth Symphony's principal themes. The blazing final pages are undeniably effective – though who knows what ultimate surprise a genius like Bruckner might have sprung on his listeners? The critic Michael Jameson, who has himself contemplated a reconstruction, is attracted to the idea of a *quiet* ending. Personally I have lingering doubts not as to Bruckner's ability to complete the finale, but as to the possibility of completing it to his own satisfaction. But this version achieves what it set out to do, namely to give a general picture of the four-movement conception of Bruckner's Ninth.

The present score was recorded by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra under Vassily Sinaisky for the Radio 3 Bruckner centenary series. For most readers the broadcast will have been the only chance to experience this particular completion so far. The first commercial recording – by the Linz Bruckner Orchestra on the Camerata Tokyo label – is hard to obtain in Britain, but a new CD by the Westphalian Symphony Orchestra under Johannes Wildner is due out in Germany any time now. Meanwhile, William Carragan's 1983 reconstruction of the finale, played by the Oslo Philharmonic under Yoav Talmi, was recently reissued on **Chandos CHAN 7051(2)**, and it still makes fascinating listening.

Over and beyond textual and even stylistic problems, *every* completion will inevitably project something of its author's personal image of Bruckner. But that need not detract from the worth and the nobility of the endeavour. As Carragan has remarked: 'Please do not dismiss the idea of completing the Ninth. All of the completers have done their best to present Bruckner's material in a congenial context; and at the very least, intellectual curiosity should impel the listener to see what can be gotten out of their work.'

*A limited-edition copy of the performing version of the Finale of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony, edited by John Phillips, can be ordered from Benjamin Gunnar Cohrs, Theresen Strasse 25, D-28 203 Bremen.*

# Lovro von Matacic (1899-1985)

## An Appreciation

by Nigel Simeone

As a student, I came to know several of Lovro von Matacic's recordings, ranging from a fine Bruckner Seventh Symphony with the Czech Philharmonic, and a very exciting Tchaikovsky Fifth Symphony with the same forces (both on Supraphon), to the glorious 1963 set of *Die lustige Witwe*, with Schwarzkopf and Gedda on EMI, one of Walter Legge's very best opera sets. But it was to be a few years before I was able to hear this fascinating conductor in the concert hall, on a warm evening at the Royal Albert Hall, London, in 1983. The occasion was a Prom given by the Philharmonia Orchestra on 23 July, with two items on the programme: Beethoven's First Piano Concerto (the French pianist Cécile Ousset was the soloist; appropriately enough she played the cadenzas by Saint-Saëns), and Bruckner's Third Symphony, in the 1877 version. Using Oeser's edition, it was an account which it would be hard to imagine equalled for sheer conviction, expressive power and structural integrity. It was fortunate for me that at least one acquaintance did not attend the concert but stayed at home to tape it; listening to the performance many times since, it comes across each time as one of truly visionary splendour and eloquence, and for once the over-used tag of 'unforgettable' seems entirely apt.

After such a revelatory experience, I was eager to grasp any opportunity to hear Matacic again, especially in Bruckner. He was nearing the end of his long career, but during the next few months he gave two memorable Philharmonia concerts at the Royal Festival Hall, one including Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' Symphony, and the other devoted to Bruckner: the Ninth Symphony and the *Te Deum*. In the 1984 Proms prospectus, Matacic was announced as the conductor of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, but sadly he was too ill to conduct the concert (he was replaced by Stanislaw Skrowaczewski). He died on 4 January 1985 in Zagreb.

His recorded legacy of Bruckner is an intriguing one as we shall see, but his passionate enthusiasm

for the composer stretches back to his years of study as a teenager in Vienna before World War I. Matacic was born on 14 February 1899 in the Croatian town of Susak, then part of the Habsburg Empire. At the time, Vienna was therefore the obvious place to send a musical boy, and he became a member of the Vienna Boys Choir in 1908, when he was nine years of age. Subsequently he studied piano, organ and conducting at the Vienna Hochschule für Musik and it was here that he came to know Bruckner's music through his teachers, Oskar Nedbal and Franz Schalk.

His career, however, was to be predominantly in the opera house. A first appointment, as a chorus master at the Cologne Opera House in 1918, led to a début there at the age of twenty, followed by a post as a member of the music staff at the Salzburg Festival. Returning to his homeland, he conducted Janacek's *Jenufa* at Ljubljana on 28 October 1922, only the fourth production of the work to be given outside Czech lands. Matacic went on to a conducting position at the opera house in Ljubljana (1924-6), followed by similar posts in Belgrade (1926-31) and Zagreb (1932-8); as a guest conductor, he gave *Jenufa* again at the Belgrade Opera in February 1927 and just over 10 years later, in 1938 he was appointed General Music Director there (and also chief conductor of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra). At the opera, he did much to raise the standards of performance and to expand the repertory (under his direction, the number of performances rose to over 150 each season). A series of productions conducted by Matacic and directed by Erich Hetzel were among the most successful in the company's history.

Matacic's career reached a low-point during the later years of World War II; after leaving his post at Belgrade in 1942, he worked as a conductor of military music in the Croatian army, though he also worked as a guest conductor at the Vienna State Opera during Karl Böhm's tenure (1943-5). Knowing of the passionate Viennese enthusiasm for opera, the Nazi authorities declared most of its artists unfit for military service, and the consequence was some fine performances, despite the grim circumstances. As a result of his work in Vienna during the war, Matacic was sentenced to death as a collaborator, but he was pardoned by

Tito in 1948. His subsequent career included appointments and regular engagements at the Berlin State Opera, at La Scala, Milan, at the Bavarian State Opera, and as General Music Director of the Frankfurt Opera (1961-5), where he succeeded Solti. Later he worked with the Monte Carlo Opera, the Zagreb Philharmonic Orchestra and returned to London as a guest conductor of the Philharmonia (with whom many of his recordings from the 1950s and early 1960s had been made) for several seasons from 1977.

It was only during the 1950s that Maticic made recordings with any regularity (he had conducted a few sessions of operatic arias before then), and his first London sessions for EMI included Bruckner's Fourth Symphony, recorded at the Kingsway Hall, London, on 12-13 October and on 11 and 14 December 1954, with the Philharmonia Orchestra. The producer was Walter Legge and the reissue of this performance on CD – the first ever recording of a Bruckner symphony by a British orchestra – by Testament (SBT 1050) provided a welcome opportunity to hear an account which had always proved extremely elusive on LP. Maticic has some priceless advantages, not least among them Dennis Brain as principal horn, but the performance was attacked by several critics for using the old edition of the work by Loewe and Franz Schalk, as did Knappertsbusch's almost contemporary recording with the Vienna Philharmonic on Decca. Recent discoveries by Benjamin Korstvedt concerning Bruckner's direct and seemingly willing involvement in the preparation of this edition suggest that its choice by both conductors may not have been the act of near-criminal misjudgement which some of the more zealous post-war Brucknerians felt it to be. Maticic's recording has so many fine moments, and an instinctive sense for Bruckner's sweeping musical paragraphs. As with his slightly younger contemporary Eugen Jochum, Maticic's speeds are flexible and there is a relish of the inherent drama and expressive force of the music, a striking contrast to the more objective and ostensibly more 'faithful' interpretative approach to Bruckner which has been favoured by many critics from the 1950s onwards, but which often runs the risk of turning great and vibrant late-romantic symphonies into works which can seem little more than the musical equivalent of large but lifeless marble statues. Testament are to be congratulated for restoring this searing and intensely exciting account to circulation.

Maticic's recordings of Bruckner with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, made for

Supraphon, include an impassioned Seventh Symphony (textually uncontroversial) and a version of the Fifth Symphony which caused apoplexy among some influential reviewers when it was issued in the mid-1970s, using as it does Schalk's edition of the score, notorious for its reorchestration and its hefty cuts. Discredited this edition may be, but it is worth bearing in mind that it was the only edition of the work to appear during Bruckner's lifetime (published by Doblinger in 1896), and, uncomfortable though the thought may be, it is thus the only version that could possibly have any claim to authority springing from the composer himself.

Maticic conducted a live performance of the Ninth Symphony with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in December 1980 which was recorded by Supraphon (issued in Japan on LP as OX-1209-S in 1981 and later distributed in Europe and America) which is perhaps the finest of all his Bruckner recordings. An account of the Eighth Symphony (using the Nowak edition of the 1890 version) was recorded by Denon with the NHK Orchestra, Tokyo, and contains much that is impressive, including all the customary Maticic characteristics of flexibility and passionate eloquence, though the performance is ultimately let down by some of the orchestral playing, including some disappointingly anaemic brass.

As well as the commercial recordings of Symphonies nos. 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9, Maticic is also one of the relatively few conductors to record the Overture in G minor; his is a splendidly fresh and energetic performance, recorded in the Kingsway Hall on 16 January 1956 (again produced by Legge) as one of two new items for the fourth side of the American Angel release of the Fourth Symphony; this has now been issued for the first time in stereo on the Testament CD of Symphony no. 4. The other additional item, the Scherzo from the Symphony no. 0, has not been reissued.

Returning to the 1983 Prom, I wonder if anyone can be persuaded to seek out the tapes of the 1877 Third Symphony, with the Philharmonia on incandescent form, and to issue that commercially? It would perhaps stand as the crowning recorded achievement of a relatively little-known, occasionally controversial, but indisputably great and individual Brucknerian.

*Nigel Simeone is a teacher, conductor and journalist.*

# BRUCKNER MEMOIRS: TWO NOCTURNES

Translated by Peter Palmer

**Hans Commenda** (1853-1939), who lived in Linz, was a schoolmaster and custodian of the Upper Austrian Museum of Mineralogy and Geology. He belonged to the "Frohsinn" male voice choir which Bruckner had directed during his period in Linz. Although the Bruckner stories collected in his *Geschichten um Anton Bruckner* (1946) are not considered altogether reliable, the degree of editing practised by Commenda was probably no greater than was typical of his generation. Another version of the first event recounted below appears in Stephen Johnson's *Bruckner Remembered*.

## I

The appalling fire at the Vienna Ringtheater on 8 December 1881 made an indelible impression on Bruckner. One reason was that he had planned to go to the performance himself and only changed his mind at the last minute. Another reason was that he was able to watch the fire raging all night from his window in the immediate vicinity. Living alone, he was gripped by tremendous fear. It was fortunate that two of his pupils, who came from his own part of Austria, went to see him and stayed until morning. "I shall never, ever forget it!" Bruckner would say whenever speaking of the horror of that night. But the next day, with a child-like mixture of fear and curiosity, he went to the mortuary at the police station and viewed the dreadfully maimed victims.

After that inferno Bruckner was afraid of fire. He would no longer use a petroleum lamp for fear of an explosion, and would only burn candles. When going out in the evening he would put the candle out very carefully and dash back into his room a couple of times to check that the wick had stopped smouldering. It took a longish period of recuperation in St Florian to restore his equanimity.

## II

Bruckner got some of his best ideas in his sleep. When he dreamed of a musical theme he would get up in the middle of the night so as to record it straightaway, or to develop it at the piano. Even though the priest at Steyr was a true admirer and patron of his, he kicked up a fuss on several occasions, because Bruckner's nocturnal piano playing was depriving people of their well-earned sleep.

Bruckner's creative dreams took a variety of forms. In one dream Dorn, the former Kapellmeister in Linz, played him a theme (not subsequently used) on the piano. In another a violist played him the main theme of the Seventh Symphony. And a delightful story is linked to the origin of the *Te Deum*. When rehearsing for the 1885 performance in Vienna, the conductor Hans Richter stepped down from the podium with tears of rapture in his eyes, embraced Bruckner and exclaimed: "The only other person who could have written that was Beethoven!" But Bruckner said candidly: "And d'you know, Herr Hofkapellmeister, it isn't really by me at all!" Seeing Richter's surprise and bafflement he went on eagerly: "Yes, that isn't by me but by Spohr! And do you know how it happened? It was like this: I'm lying in bed one night and in a dream Spohr comes in and says to me: 'Bruckner, get up and write this down!' Then I woke up and I really did write it down. Now tell me: is it by me or by Spohr?"

## COMPETITION

This illustration by Otto Böhler shows Bruckner pursued by three critics. Can you name one of them? Three correct answers drawn at random will be rewarded with a copy of Stephen Johnson's *Bruckner Remembered* kindly donated by Faber and Faber.

Send your answer to: TBJ (Critic), 2 Rivergreen Close, Nottingham NG9 3ES, to arrive by 1 December. There is no special prize for naming all three critics!



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# LUX IN TENEBRIS (III)

by Derek Scott

## Transfiguration of Themes

I am not the first to recognize the appropriateness of the word 'transfigure' to Bruckner's music. Crawford Howe claims, "In no other settings of the Mass is one so aware of the transfiguration of the contrite mood of the opening *Kyrie* into the confident mood of the final *Dona nobis pacem*."<sup>63</sup> Erwin Doernberg speaks of "two delicately transfigured greetings from the Eighth and Seventh Symphonies" at the close of the *Adagio* of the Ninth.<sup>64</sup> I will use 'transfigure' more specifically, however, to describe any theme or motive that retains its rhythmic identity, but is made 'radiant' by an alteration from minor to major, from low to high pitch, or from chromatic to diatonic, usually accompanied, also, by a change in texture. Examples are found as early as the coda to the G minor Overture (1863) and, in this piece, the 'transfiguring' may derive from Beethoven. Just before the coda of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth (bars 469-76), the development's minor fugue subject (bars 218-23) changes to major, resembling a procedure adopted in Bruckner's Overture.

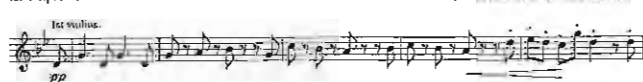
Example 4a Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, 1st movement, bars 218-23



Example 4b Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, 1st movement, bars 469-74



Example 4c Bruckner, Overture in G minor, bars 23-7



Example 4d Overture in G minor, bars 282-5



Beethoven's coda, however, reasserts darkness, and nowhere else does the light shine upon this theme nor upon any of his dark themes. To have concluded his Ninth Symphony with a loud tonic major version of the first subject of the first movement would have been out of the

question. A resolution in Beethoven's dialectic has to be reached by agreement, even if this can only be attained with bitterness and after hard struggle. In contrast, Bruckner often presents a sudden outright victory, but with a sense that the conflict may recommence.<sup>65</sup> Sometimes, a theme seems to epitomize *lux in tenebris*: the revelation of the final bars of the Third, for example, is that the trumpet theme has from the beginning been designed for transfiguration by the tonic major chord (it is accomplished by the alteration of a single note). Light is absent at first, but destined to shine in the darkness at the end.

Bruckner does not transform his themes by changing tempo, metre and rhythm (like, say, Liszt in *Tasso*); he transfigures by changing pitches and harmony. Carl Dahlhaus remarks that "Bruckner's symphonic style . . . is primarily rhythmic rather than diastemic, and thus seems to stand the usual hierarchy of tonal properties on its head."<sup>66</sup> When Bruckner changes the pitch structure (the meaning of 'diastemic') of his motives, "there is no need to search for an overriding thematic process to legitimize the change"<sup>67</sup> as one would seek to do with Brahms. In certain cases, pitch is important: inversions, for example, are not accidents. However, Bruckner does not abide by the musical logic of the Brahmsian 'developing variation' for which pitch structure is the crucial parameter. Bruckner, it may be noted, uses inversion, augmentation, diminution, but not retrograde, which drastically affects rhythm.

Let us examine various kinds of transfigurations in the later Symphonies. In the coda of the first movement of the Sixth, the theme that, for Simpson, originally heaved "darkly in the depth,"<sup>68</sup> now "rises and falls like some great ship, the water illuminated in superb hues as the sun rises, at last bursting clear in the sky."<sup>69</sup> The theme is here transfigured by an alteration in shape, a transposition upwards in pitch, 'glowing' brass timbre and a new accompaniment of religiously symbolic plagal harmony. At the close of the Symphony, the theme is transfigured by a change from Phrygian mode to diatonic major while, above it, the string figure from bars 29-30 of the *Finale* returns transfigured by a change from chromaticism to diatonicism.

## Example 5a

Symphony No. 6, 1st movement, bars 3-6



## Example 5b

Symphony No. 6, end of 1st movement



## Example 5c

Symphony No. 6, end of Finale



Watson speaks of the “grim darkness” of the C minor inverted statement of the main theme in the first movement of the Seventh.<sup>70</sup> It is in marked contrast to the close of the movement, when E major “shines forth.”<sup>71</sup> A parallel may be found in Raphael’s *Transfiguration* (1517-20), in the Vatican Museum, Rome. This painting, which Bruckner may well have known, is based on St Matthew’s description of Christ’s transfiguration: “his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”<sup>72</sup> It is interpreted by Linda Murray as follows: “The contrast between the divine radiance of the vision and earthly confusion and sorrow, between the means of salvation in which one must believe rather than just witness, and the blindness and suffering of unregenerate human nature, made insensible of its state by possession of sin, seems to be the programme behind this work.”<sup>73</sup> Raphael depicts a light/darkness opposition which Murray reads metaphorically as ‘vision’ and ‘blindness’. The clear-cut division into faith and sin would no doubt have appealed to Bruckner, whose library evinced his anti-Enlightenment mind.

The main motive of the first movement of the Eighth is identical in rhythm to the first subject in the opening movement of Beethoven’s Ninth, as Doernberg points out.<sup>74</sup> This is more than simple coincidence for, although they have only rhythm in common, this is the crucial parameter for Bruckner. The motive is, in fact, restricted to a single pitch for the ‘annunciation of death’ (Bruckner’s description<sup>75</sup>), but is transfigured as a C major broken chord at the Symphony’s close. The ‘annunciation of death’ is followed by what Bruckner labelled the *Totenuhr*.<sup>76</sup> Rather than ‘hour of death’, this refers to the Klopfkäfer (knocking beetle), whose sound was a sign, in folklore, for impending death.<sup>77</sup> The negative impact of the ending of the first movement is counterbalanced by the extremely positive effect of four simultaneous thematic transfigurations at the Symphony’s close. Moreover, the transfigured main themes from each movement are joined by a fifth transfiguration: it is of a figure which appeared in C minor at the beginning of the coda and now resounds in C major.<sup>78</sup> After the first performance of the Eighth, no wonder Hugo Wolf felt impelled to write that it was “the absolute victory of light over darkness”<sup>79</sup>

Transfigurations are not restricted to the endings of movements. In the *Adagio* of the Ninth, the “flaming light”<sup>80</sup> that shines at letter A (the dominant 9th plus fanfares) is a transfiguration of the first bar of the movement. Then ‘darkness returns’ again for the ‘Farewell to Life’<sup>81</sup> at bar 29.

### Plateaus of Intensity

Bruckner’s music presents us with plateaus of intensity rather than orgasmic releases. His method of breaking off, replacing, then reinstating is not the typical tonal process of tension and relaxation. Because there is no reconciliation in Bruckner’s dialectic, the resolution of conflict needs massive emphasis, and yet may still be heard as uncertain, conditional, abrupt. In a commentary on St John 1, 1-5, A. E. Brooke explains that in men “life takes the higher form of ‘light’, moral and spiritual life” of which God is the source, and that the “fight between this light and its opposite, the moral darkness of evil, has always been going on, and the light has never been conquered.”<sup>82</sup> The phrase *lux in tenebris* affirms that light has never been conquered – but, then, neither has darkness. In this context, consider Martin Kettle’s warning: “The biggest error you can make with a Bruckner symphony

is to mishear its emphatic sounds and believe they are conclusive . . . His symphonic writing aims at a distant resolution, but when it arrives it only does so through contingent climaxes;” his adagios from the Fifth Symphony onwards “all tend towards a climax, and all reach one, but they all then descend into post-climactic irresolution.”<sup>83</sup>

Perhaps all climaxes for Bruckner are contingent until the *tuba mirum* sounds for Judgment Day. Until then, darkness cannot be completely and forever vanquished by light. The fact that darkness so often returns at the beginnings of his codas shows the provisional nature of his climaxes. If brightness can be eclipsed at this late stage, what sense of finality is really achieved in the concluding blaze of sound? Bruckner seeks a spiritual closure in his codas, but it is never more than provisionally attained, because any sense of a *telos* has been displaced by a multiplicity of break-flows and reversals.

For Watson, the C major climax of the slow movement of the Seventh is “a most wonderful letting in of the light.”<sup>84</sup> Yet, in the bar prior to this blaze of light, we are poised on the dominant of C sharp minor, the movement’s tonic. Half way through this bar, the dominant harmony is interpreted enharmonically as a German sixth in C major/minor, facilitating an abrupt shift of tonal direction. The massive C major climax in this C sharp minor movement satisfies an ideological, not a structural need. Its meaning must be sought in an intertextual field of reference: it is not to be found embodied in some purely compositional logic.<sup>85</sup> The climax of the *Adagio* of the original Eighth was also C major, a key that had already been loudly proclaimed at the end of the original first movement. Like Watson, I assume that when Bruckner revised the loud C major ending of the first movement, he changed the climax of the *Adagio* for some reason, to maximize the impact of the C major final climax. Watson is surely wrong, however, to claim that the original first movement ending “weakens the overall tonal pattern.”<sup>86</sup> This ending is also in C major, although it may not feel much like it, and the last nine bars are hollow fifths. The devout Bruckner could not allow what he himself termed, with its religious connotations, an ‘annunciation of death’ to be followed by a nihilistic minor conclusion as Tchaikovsky or Mahler might have done. In the original version it is the *triumphal impact* of C major at the Symphony’s conclusion that is weakened, not the Symphony’s *tonal pattern*.

*To be concluded in our next issue. Footnotes – see facing page.*

# Letters

## Haruo Tohmatsu (Tokyo)

I thoroughly enjoyed the 2nd volume of your journal. We are quite well served as regards Bruckner in Tokyo. In the past six months [January to July] I was able to enjoy 5th, 9th, and 1st (by Wakasugi/NHK SO), 7th (H. Graf/Tokyo SO), 8th (1st version by Inbal/Tokyo Metropolitan Orchestra) and 5th (Maga/Shinse NSO). There will be two performances of 8th (Haas edition) by the conductor Tahashi Asahina (who made his Chicago Symphony debut at the age of 88 in 1996) and the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra in late September and early October. Otaka will conduct 7th with the Tokyo Philharmonic in November.

## Howard Jones (Dronfield Woodhouse. S. Yorks.)

I've enjoyed reading the latest TBJ. I have just one correction to make to the "Reflections" – the horn at the opening of Symphony No. 4 is not 'muted' it is 'open'. In fact I don't recall that Bruckner ever asks for muted or stopped horns anywhere in his entire output – but I could be wrong about that.

I just came back from Japan armed with boxed sets of Asahina's 1992/95 cycle with the Osaka PO (Pony Canyon) issued in 1997, and Nos. 4, 5, 7, 8 (1992/93) with the New Japan Philharmonic on FONTEC – I have played only No. 8 and No. 4 so far. Apparently Asahina (now 90+) is revered for his Bruckner conducting in Osaka, and for his qualities as a man also (he has very wide interests, it seems).

## Albert Bolliger (Kilchberg, Zurich)

The Bruckner Journal is very solidly presented and I cordially wish it a successful career. Unfortunately, Bruckner's *organ works* are not very plentiful (but organists are now falling upon the *symphonies* the way they fell upon *The Ride of the Valkyries* and *Isolde's Liebestod* in Bruckner's day . . .) 40 years ago I took Bruckner as the subject of my music history exam. Today he has become more of a stranger to me (or else I have become more critical, perhaps wrongly. I say this while fully acknowledging the true greatness of Bruckner). One ought to re-examine one's judgements (and prejudices) at least every 10 years, and the Bruckner Journal may prompt me to listen to the complete works once again (Jochum, plus individual recordings).

## William Flowers (Crystal Palace, London)

Many thanks for sending the Bruckner Journals by return of post. Fascinating articles – I blame you for my insomnia, I was up half the night reading them!

I thought quite a bit about the vexed problem of Bruckner and the 3rd Reich – a nettle some people prefer not to grasp. Perhaps it is all academic 50 years on, but there seems some evidence to suppose that Bruckner rather than Wagner was Hitler's favourite composer. But happily the music itself is too great to have sustained any permanent damage from its association with this dark chapter in German history.

I greatly look forward to the next issue.

*Some letters have been abridged for publication.  
Albert Bolliger's letter has been translated from the German.*

## Lux in Tenebris (III): notes

- <sup>63</sup> Crawford Howie, 'Traditional and Novel Elements in Bruckner's Sacred Music', *The Musical Quarterly*, 67 (1981), 554.  
<sup>64</sup> Erwin Doernberg, *The Life and Symphonies of Anton Bruckner*, London 1960, 109.  
<sup>65</sup> Beethoven's minor-key *Egmont* Overture ends triumphantly in the major, but with a new theme (not an option in a Beethoven minor symphonic movement).  
<sup>66</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson, Berkeley CA 1989, 272.  
<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.  
<sup>68</sup> Robert Simpson, *The Essence of Bruckner* (rev. edn), London 1992, 151.  
<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, 156.  
<sup>70</sup> Derek Watson, *Bruckner* (rev. edn), Oxford 1996, 109.  
<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*.  
<sup>72</sup> St Matthew 17:2.  
<sup>73</sup> Linda Murray, *The High Renaissance and Mannerism: Italy, the North and Spain 1500-1600*, London 1977, 68-70. For a colour reproduction see Marco Albertario, *Raphael*, Milan 1996, 55.  
<sup>74</sup> Doernberg, *The Life and Symphonies of AB*, 194.  
<sup>75</sup> See Watson, *Bruckner* (rev. edn), 115.  
<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*.  
<sup>77</sup> I am indebted to Stan and Carmen Hawkins for this information.  
<sup>78</sup> This figure reappears prominently in Bruckner's Psalm 150.  
<sup>79</sup> Letter to Emil Kauffmann, 23 December 1892.  
<sup>80</sup> Simpson, *The Essence of Bruckner* (rev. edn), 220.  
<sup>81</sup> Bruckner's own description.  
<sup>82</sup> A. E. Brooke, 'John', *A Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Peake, 746.

- <sup>83</sup> Martin Kettle, 'The Bumpkin Who Became a Holy Fool', *The Guardian*, 27 January 1996, 27.  
<sup>84</sup> Watson, *Bruckner* (rev. edn), 111.  
<sup>85</sup> This belief informs Stephen Parkany's article 'Kurth's *Bruckner* and the Adagio of the Seventh Symphony', *19th-Century Music* XI/3 (Spring 1988), 262-81. – Ed.  
<sup>86</sup> Watson, *Bruckner* (rev. edn), 118.

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## JOTTINGS

The Vienna Boys' Choir, which numbers Bruckner among its past conductors, is currently celebrating its 500th anniversary. The first choirboys were called to the imperial court by Maximilian I. Ever since, the choir has sung solemn mass in the Vienna Hofburg Chapel. In recent years it has made numerous concert tours abroad. September saw the release of the CD "Angelic Voices" (Philips), on which the choir ranges from Bach and Mozart to *Shenandoah* and *Scarborough Fair*. Its latest tour starts at Winchester Cathedral on 5 November and ends at London's Royal Festival Hall on 29 November. Other dates are at Swansea Grand Theatre (6 November), Hereford Cathedral (8), Bath Abbey (9), Hastings White Rock Theatre (11), Brighton Dome (12), Jersey Fort Regent (13), Truro Hall for Cornwall (15), Dorking Grand Hall (17), Lichfield Cathedral (18), Manchester Bridgewater Hall (20), Hull City Hall (21), Leeds Grand Theatre (22), Birmingham Symphony Hall (24), Dublin National Concert Hall (26) and Belfast Waterside Hall (27).



The augmented Fitzwilliam String Quartet played Bruckner's String Quintet on 13 September in a matinée recital at the London Wigmore Hall. On 1 October Hans Vonk conducted the St Louis Symphony (USA) in Bruckner's Ninth at London's Royal Festival Hall.



A hitherto unknown Bruckner portrait in German private ownership has come to light. The work is by Rudolf Axmann (1856-1908) and was probably painted between 1885 and 1890.



The Portal Gallery (see our November 1997 issue, back page) has moved to 43 Dover Street, Piccadilly, London W1X 3RE.



Robert Wardell suggests that the figures separating Bruckner and Schubert in the illustration on page 10 of our last issue are, from left to right: Schumann, Liszt, Weber, Wagner, Bach, Gluck, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Beethoven and Mozart.



As part of the International Bruckner Festival in Linz, the annual Bruckner Symposium was held in September. Fifteen speakers from Austria and Germany discussed "Images of the Artist", ranging from the pictures of Moritz von Schwind to operettas with the artist as hero.



The Anton Bruckner Institute has a new address in Linz: Kremsmünsterer Stiftshaus, Altstadt 10/Tummelplatz 18, A-4020 Linz (telephone and fax: 43+ 732 78 22 25).



We were pleased to hear recently from the concert organist and composer Jennifer Bate, who is researching the subject of Bruckner and the organ.



On 2 November the Swiss-Austrian conductor Robert Bachmann and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra were giving Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 at London's Barbican Centre. In addition to the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, the concert also featured the premiere of Bachmann's *Rotation 90°N*, composed after a trip to the North Pole. (It will be recalled that Bruckner himself took an interest in polar exploration.) Bachmann and the RPO

will return to the Barbican with Bruckner's Fifth on 2 March 1999 – see "Special Offers".



Booking opens this month for two concerts by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Edinburgh's Greyfriars Kirk. On 22 January 1999 Yoav Talmi is to conduct Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony and Bruckner's "Romantic". Bruckner's Sixth Symphony will be conducted on 29 January by Takuo Yuasa, following an illustrated pre-concert talk by Stephen Johnson. Each concert begins at 7.45pm. Tickets (box office telephone, 0131 668 2019) are £12 unreserved, and £2 can be saved by booking for both concerts.



The death occurred in April this year of the musicologist *Othmar Wessely*. Born in Linz in 1922, he studied in Vienna under Joseph Marx and Erich Schenk, succeeding the latter at the University of Vienna after a spell as a professor in Graz. His 1947 thesis on Anton Bruckner in Linz was followed by further Bruckner writings; he also edited the *Bruckner-Studien* published by the Austrian Academy in 1975.



**With this issue you should receive a subscription renewal form, and its early return to Raymond Cox (Halesowen) would be greatly appreciated. Please also return as soon as possible the booking form for the Bruckner Weekend in Nottingham on 9-11 April 1999, even if you are not planning an overnight stay. As well as William Carragan (New York) the guest speakers will include Benjamin Gunnar Cohrs (Bremen) and Nigel Simeone (Cambridge, UK). The programme director is Crawford Howie.**