



The Bruckner Journal

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OUR SILVER ANNIVERSARY

Now in its Twenty-Fifth year, The Bruckner Journal first appeared with the March issue in 1997. Under the direction of founding editor Peter Palmer, associate editor Crawford Howie, and managing editor Raymond Cox, the Journal took shape from an informal gathering of UK concert enthusiasts to a formal publication that has since been published regularly worldwide.

The twelve-page inaugural issue (which can be found on our website) contained articles from authors who remain familiar to readers to this day. Andrea Harrandt reported on the centenary of Bruckner's death in Austria; Constantin Floros wrote concerning Bruckner propositions; Elizabeth Thompson described a visit to St Florian; and Crawford Howie reported on the second English International Bruckner Conference in Manchester – the first being in your editor's home state of Connecticut, USA two years previous.

Although the Journal has expanded in content and outreach since that first issue, its core mission has remained unchanged: aiming to be of interest to all lovers of Bruckner's music, whatever their level of knowledge and expertise. As Peter Palmer stated in his first issue statement:

“This publication, then, is for Bruckner enthusiasts everywhere”

BRUCKNER ON THE ORGAN

Perhaps more by coincidence than design, there seems to be an abundance of newly released recordings of Bruckner's music transcribed for organ. As the pandemic has caused consequences not only in concert availability and attendance, the format of many events have also been modified. Ranging from “socially distanced” performances using reduced forces to entirely newly-created “chamber” versions, ensembles have been creative in bringing Bruckner's music in whatever form feasible.

What better way to extend this performance practice than by bringing the music of Bruckner in the most solitary of ensembles: the organ – the instrument that was always at the forefront of Bruckner's creative process, idiom, and ear.

New recordings of the Ninth have been released, cycles of the symphonies are planned to coincide with the Bicentennial. We are living in remarkable times – one hopes Bruckner is smiling.

MC

In this issue:

RIP: Dr. Keith Gifford 1955-2021	Page 3
Let's Dance the Polka! <i>William Carragan</i>	Page 4
Formal Challenges in the Adagio of Bruckner's Ninth <i>Eric Lai</i>	Page 12
“For Later Times”: A Bruckner Film for the Bicentennial <i>Miguel J. Ramirez</i>	Page 22
An Unusual Year: But Bruckner Marathons Go On! <i>Neil Schore</i>	Page 26
Recording Reviews	Page 33
Interview: Gerd Schaller	Page 44
New & Reissued Releases	Page 49
World-Wide Concert Listings	Page 50



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THE BRUCKNER JOURNAL - Online

Readers are reminded of the Journal's presence on the Internet:

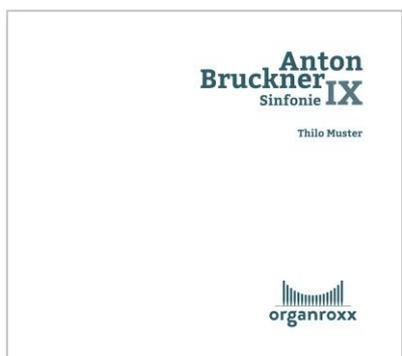
A newly designed website has been launched to replace the previous one. Much of the familiar content has been enhanced; indices to current and previous issues expanded; download links of many past volumes are available as PDFs; content of upcoming and previous Readers Conferences available. Of course, subscription information and payment links are also available. The website remains in development as content is being transferred. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome. Please visit us:

www.brucknerjournal.com

NEW!!! A rudimentary SEARCH function has been added to the *Back Issues* section of the website! Currently limited to issues available for download, this will be expanded to include all issues soon.

Additionally, The Bruckner Journal now has a presence on Facebook. The page will be periodically updated with information pertinent and of interest to our readers. A page for posting by subscribers has also been set up with the intent to develop a discussion forum of like-minded individuals. Once you "like" our Facebook page, clicking the "Sign Up" button allows you to access the discussion page, which is otherwise private. We look forward to you joining us:

www.facebook.com/brucknerjournal



THILO MUSTER *performs*

Bruckner: Symphony No. 9

transcribed for organ by
Eberhard Klotz



Recorded on the organ of St Martin, Dudlange (Luxembourg), Swiss-based organist Thilo Muster has released a new recording of the Ninth Symphony, transcribed by Eberhard Klotz.

Klotz, who has also transcribed the 4th - 6th symphonies for organ, intends to complete all Nine numbered symphonies by the bicentennial in 2024.

The recording is released by Organroxx and is available on CD as well as download:

organroxx.com/en_US/shop/product/16-anton-bruckner-sinfonie-ix-2273

RIP...

Dr. Keith Gifford 1955 – 2021

Readers who knew him will be sad to learn that Keith Gifford, composer and long-time subscriber to The Bruckner Journal, was found dead in his flat in East London on Wednesday 17th February 2021.

Keith sought me out at a performance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 9, shortly after I took up the editorship of The Bruckner Journal in 2005. The Ninth was a symphony that was especially important to him: he played recordings of it over and over after the death of his mother. He became a friend and his help in those early days of my editorship was invaluable. I was able to bounce ideas off him, and he was able to advise me from his wide-ranging musical knowledge and saved me from many an embarrassing faux pas. He helped TBJ to grow into the high-quality publication it has become.

At his suggestion, he and I travelled to St Florian and Linz for the BrucknerTage festival, and he was a great companion on my first two trips. He didn't suffer from the shyness and lack of confidence that inhibited me at such events, so with his help I made contacts that have proved to be invaluable for The Bruckner Journal to this day.

Keith had a very successful early career as a composer, with a considerable number of works receiving performances in the 1990s. He studied in Berlin with the composer Isang Yun. The British Music Collection website lists 15 works from the 1990s. He won several awards and commissions. The world premiere of his 20-minute orchestral piece, *Dawn On The Chao Praya*, was given in Tokyo in 1993 by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis, and other works were performed at notable London venues by eminent musicians and broadcast on Radio 3.

Later, his career as a professional composer was hampered by psychological difficulties and he was under treatment and medication for 25 years. His was a troubled soul and when asked why he didn't like Mahler his reply - "I've got problems enough of my own!" - was not merely a clever witticism. He composed works at the computer in more recent times, describing himself as a nihilist composer, and some of those works are available on Soundcloud and YouTube, but are often grim, violent, relentless and challenging to listen to.

His contributions to The Bruckner Journal were both lively and scholarly - including an essay on Richard Strauss and Bruckner "The Page-Turner and the 'Stammering Cyclops'" in Vol 19/i, and a concert review of Peter Jan Marthé's completed Ninth symphony in Vol 10/iii. Keith was a frequent attendee at The Bruckner Journal Readers Conference where other attendees will remember him as an intelligent and perceptive participator in discussion and a friendly and amusing presence at social occasions. Crawford Howie remembers "He acted as a most proficient and sharp-witted page-turner for me in at least two of the two-piano performances of Bruckner's symphonies with Will Carragan at Hertford College in Oxford." We shall miss him very much at concerts and future Bruckner Journal events.

Ken Ward



The late Keith Gifford (far right) talking to the late Peter Palmer, first editor of The Bruckner Journal at the 2009 Readers Conference.

LET'S DANCE THE POLKA!

William Carragan

Contributing Editor, Anton Bruckner Collected Edition, Vienna
Vice-President, Bruckner Society of America

The Chorale

Bruckner loved the chorale. In his very first orchestral work, the Overture in G minor, he wrote early in 1863 the suggestion of a chorale into a revised ending, more solemn and dignified than the giddy, Rossini-like conclusion of the December 24, 1862 original. Then in the First Symphony completed in 1866 he provided in the coda four phrases of a chorale with interludes, supported by prominent trombone parts. There are also suggestions of a chorale texture in the codettas and codas of the finales of the F minor and D minor symphonies, and a scale chorale near the end of the first movement of the Second Symphony. But the earliest movement in which he built a chorale into the basic thematic material of a symphony is the finale of the Third. Here he used the strophic organization which he had fully developed in the second theme groups of the Second, both first and last movements, to create a substantial hymn of sixteen phrases, within which there are included reminiscences of the “Liebestod” from Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* and of the motto theme of Bruckner’s own Second Symphony.

These sixteen phrases are mostly of 6 to 10 measures each, but the two reminiscence phrases are of 13 and 14 measures, with a total of 144 measures for the first *Gesangsperiode*, including four introductory measures. That is a very large number; the corresponding number for the early Second Symphony is 74, for the early Fourth, 60, and for the Fifth, 70. In the “1876”, 1877 and 1889 versions of the Third, this same second theme group, in which the introductory measures have been removed, has a total of 90 measures, still comparatively long. Throughout this whole passage, the strophic structure is defined by continuous and well-articulated harmonic phrases which could just as well be sung as a hymn in a Protestant church if an appropriate sacred text could be found to fit it. In the 1873 version, the first phrase of the chorale and its varied repetition are given to the upper woodwinds and horns, while the subsequent phrases are expressed by alternating woodwinds and horns. In “1876” and later the hymnic texture is considerably strengthened in the first phrase and its varied repetition by the addition of trombones with part of the melody supported by trumpets even to the extent of the dynamic *ff*. We know that Bruckner urgently desired to strengthen the chorale as early as 1874, perhaps because of what he heard at the rehearsal that year which had not convinced the orchestra to agree to perform the symphony. Indeed, he scrawled notes to himself to that effect in Mus.Hs.6033 so vehemently that the pencil broke through the paper. Across the top of the page where the winds start he wrote at first “*Winds stand out*” (folio 150r, exposure 2-079) and then added before that beginning on the previous facing page (folio 149v, exposure 2-078) “*NB In the whole Gesangs | periode*” which is where the pencil did the damage. Then above the violins he wrote “*In the Gesangsperiode strings hold back*”. Presumably in the “1876” re-orchestration with added trumpets and trombones, which was retained with small adjustments in 1889, these warnings would no longer be needed and the strings could play their dance with more spirit. Indeed the same enrichments were made in the return of the opening phrase later in the theme group. In the other phrases the orchestration of the brass areas is sometimes made stronger, sometimes retained. But the woodwind half-phrases are more similar to those in the early version. The different orchestrations of the first phrases of the chorale in the versions of 1873 and “1876” are shown in short score in the first example.

(The first state of the second version of the symphony, completed in the spring of 1877, is here referred to for clarity as the “1876” version, because it was mostly prepared in 1876, because its special large five-part adagio has been published by Nowak as from 1876, and because the altered version of November 10, 1877, which is Nowak’s nominally 1877 version, is quite a different proposition in many ways.)

Example 1 – Symphony No. 3, finale chorale

The image displays a musical score for the finale chorale of Bruckner's Symphony No. 3. It is divided into two systems. The first system, labeled '1873' and 'Etwas langsamer', features two staves: the top staff for woodwinds (measures 69-72) and the bottom staff for horns 1 and 2 (measures 73-76). The second system, labeled '1876', features three staves: the top staff for horn 1 (measures 77-80), the middle staff for horns 2 and 3 (measures 81-84), and the bottom staff for horn 1 and trumpet 1 (measures 85-88). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

In all versions, the melodic contour of the chorale starts with a rising fourth in the first phrase and its immediate developed restatement. As is pointed out in *Anton Bruckner, Eleven Symphonies*, several other melodic ideas in this symphony share that feature, which seems to be inspired by the “Liebestod” or “Verklärung” in Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde* (1859). Indeed there are unmistakable reminiscences of the “Liebestod” itself in both the first movement and the finale of the Third Symphony in the versions of 1873 (Nowak, after Bayreuth) and 1874 (Mus.Hs.6033). In the finale the “Liebestod” reminiscence is the ninth phrase of the chorale, 13 measures long, and its anticipation in phrase 1 makes it seem right at home. Following it in 1873 and 1874, there is a 12-measure allusion to the Second Symphony. This reference had also been adumbrated in the earlier phrases, some of which give the rhythm and at least one the contour, within the first eight phrases. Then there are two rest measures and a developed recapitulation of the first phrase. But in the revision of 1876 and 1877 Bruckner removed the explicit reminiscences of the “Liebestod” and the Second Symphony from the finale, but not the suggestion of them in the immediately previous material. He took references to those two themes and of the “magic sleep” from *Die Walküre* out of the first movement at the same time. This was done before April 25, 1877, along with the other revisions and reorchestrations of the chorale, and thus the listener can be well assured that these changes were Bruckner’s own idea and not the result of outside pressure from Johann Herbeck or anyone else.

The opening phrase of *Tristan und Isolde*, which contains the famous “Tristan chord”, is recalled by Bruckner in the adagio of the Third Symphony, at mm. 23 and 157 in 1873, at mm. 31 and 164 in 1876, and at m. 35 in 1877 and 1889. But it had already been quoted by Wagner himself in his next completed opera, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1867). This phenomenon is discussed in Bryan Magee’s excellent *The Tristan Chord* (Henry Holt, 2000, pp. 252–253). The middle-aged and highly respected cobbler and singer Hans Sachs courteously and a bit sheepishly explains to the lovely and marriageable Eva Pogner that he would be too old for her, just as King Marke was too old for Isolde. At the same time Eva was explaining to Sachs that everything had suddenly changed for her; she had fallen in love with the young knight Walther, just as Isolde and Tristan had fallen in love beyond expectation at the end of Act I. As Eva describes her new passion, the pulsating background rhythm strongly resembles the rhythm heard in *Tristan* at the instant of love, and might be even more intense. (The octave ostinato with which the Bruckner Sixth begins and the ensuing C-theme rhythm are also related to these textures. One wonders what Bruckner might have meant by that.) But the rising vocal gesture of her enthusiasm suddenly collapses into the ominous rising motive heard at the beginning of *Tristan*, and Sachs soberly sings that he could not stand to experience King Marke’s woe, with the exact six-note contour that the king himself uses in the earlier opera to ask bitterly why he should be disgraced. The texts of the two operas show many other meaningful technical similarities in this region. Bruckner had managed to attend the slightly-postponed Munich premiere of *Tristan* in 1865, and returned to Munich for the premiere of *Die Meistersinger* in 1868, having himself already conducted with Wagner’s cooperation a “pre-premiere” performance of its concluding chorus. He thus can be expected to have

understood the significance of this striking and clearly-labeled quotation, long before he planned his third symphony. On the basis of this *coup-de-théâtre* alone, one should not be surprised to encounter reminiscences of Wagner in many places in Bruckner's music, potentially with narrative intent.

The Third Symphony finale chorale has the texture of a hymn, but the only way to make the phrases of an already-written text fit it is to recognize some of the music as interludes, not to be sung. A prototype for that technique is in the solemn sung chorale in honor of St. John the Baptist which begins *Die Meistersinger*. There the interludes contain fragments of the themes of the rest of the opera, reflecting in music the sudden interest Walther and Eva have in each other. In the chorales of the D minor and First Symphonies, and in the first statement of the great chorale of the Fifth, there are irregular interludes of varying length, but in the coda of the Fifth the interludes are equal in length just as they are in the chorale in Chopin's third scherzo for piano solo. But in the great chorale of the finale of the Ninth, Bruckner provides no interludes, just as Schumann has no interludes in the opening chorale of his unjustly neglected opera *Genoveva* (1849), which in that and other respects could have served as a potent inspiration to Wagner.

The great chorale of the finale of the Fifth is in iambic tetrameter, or long meter, in which the great majority of ancient office hymns as well as hundreds of modern poems have been written. A possibility is Sedulius's fifth-century Lauds hymn for the Nativity, *A solis ortus cardine*, which in John Mason Neale's translation begins:

From lands that see the sun arise,
to earth's remotest boundaries,
The Virgin-Born today we sing,
the Son of Mary, Christ the King.

The chorale in the Third is a more difficult prospect, but with discreet establishment of interludes the lines to be set all turn out to have ten syllables in the iambic pentameter favored by the greatest English poets (but not so much by hymn writers). Even then, not all such poems will work well with the structural timing of this chorale, but a reasonably good fit is provided by the following rather well-known hymn text by W.H. Turton:

Thou who at thy first Eucharist didst pray
that all thy church might be forever one,
Grant us at every Eucharist to say
with longing heart and soul, "Thy will be done."
O may we all one bread, one body be
through this blest sacrament of unity.

The last line would have to be repeated to reach the point when in the first version the "Liebestod" quotation begins, and when in the second and third versions the initial phrase is recapitulated. (Repeating the last line of a hymn was often done in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in both England and Germany.) One would not propose singing these words or any others in a performance of the symphony, but the fact that it is possible at all says a very great deal about the nature of the chorale in Bruckner's writing. Still one very important choice yet needs to be made, and that is the symphonic tempo. Is this to be rendered as if it were in a service in the grand eight-second Basilica of St. Florian, or in the lovely intimate lady-chapel to the right as one enters which is also fitted with an excellent organ? The chorale could be done either way, but not the polka, as we shall see.

Some background

Bruckner's student and biographer, the younger August Göllerich, describes how Bruckner was walking home late one evening in 1891 when he passed an imposing house from which the sounds of a happy celebration poured into the street. Bruckner had been greatly saddened by the death of his friend the cathedral architect Friedrich von Schmidt who at that moment was lying in state in the Sühnhauskapelle at Schottenring 7, and he said that these conflicting emotions of joyful celebration and sober mourning were expressed in the finale of the Third. The incident is related in Göllerich-Auer, volume 4/3 pages 133–4, with two internal footnotes:

A true triumph for him, however, was the repetition [of the premiere] of his Third Symphony in the musical event organized by the Vienna [Academic] Wagner Society on January 25 at half past noon in the large Musikverein hall, in which the work was preceded by Wagner's

Parsifal prelude and his Siegfried Idyll. The symphony, about which Dr. Robert Hirschfeld published a detailed and excellent analysis in the “*Neue Wiener Musikzeitung*” of February 1, 1891, achieved an almost unprecedented success¹ about which Bruckner wrote to Levi: “Yesterday, the 25th, was the second performance of the D minor Symphony. H. Richter conducted and the Philharmonic Orchestra played as I have hardly ever experienced in Vienna.² After each movement, the audience (probably the finest audience in Vienna) became so enthusiastic and jubilant that nothing could top it. Richter was so encouraged that he promised the Master to perform the symphony in the [upcoming] 3rd or 4th London concert.”

After this huge success, Bruckner expressed to Göllerich: “Today Hanslick is probably thinking: ‘That rascal! For thirty years I’ve been trying to put him down and now it’s all for nothing.’”

At that time he also told his biographer about the two themes in the finale: “The polka represents humor and cheerfulness in the world, the chorale the sadness and the pain of it.” On the way home that night, this concept was illustrated: At the “*Stiftungshaus*” (“*Sühnhaus*”, house of atonement), which had been built on the site of the burned-down Ringtheater, he suddenly stopped and said: “Look, here in this house a big party, next to it in the *Stiftungshaus* lies the Master on the bier!” The cathedral master builder Schmidt, who had just died, was laid out there.

Friedrich von Schmidt, born in Württemberg in 1825, one year after Bruckner, was one of the architects who after many centuries completed the cathedral at Cologne, and was also involved with the rehabilitation of the Cathedral of St. Ambrose in Milan. He was the designer of the vast Rathaus in Vienna, and dismantled and rebuilt with modern reinforcements the 448-foot south spire of the Vienna Stephansdom. For these and other achievements the emperor ennobled him in 1885. He and Bruckner had been friends, and his death, occurring on January 23, 1891, just two days before the repeated great success of the Third Symphony, profoundly affected Bruckner.

Sühnhaus, 1885



Even in a city as filled with nineteenth-century monumental historicist architecture as Vienna, the *Sühnhaus* at Schottenring 7 stood out. It was an elaborate apartment-building with a second-story chapel,

¹ What was said in Vienna at that time about Bruckner’s main enemies, we learn from a letter of Joh. Ev. Hubert from January 3, 1891, which reads: “[Josef] Labor is here again. He told me that the ovations for Bruckner are also directed against Brahms. It is said, whether it is true or not, that Hanslick receives an annual salary from the publisher of Brahms’s works (Simrock), therefore every newly published work is discussed and praised, which is not the case with other works. And Hanslick in particular has always been considered incorruptible.”

² Ferdinand Löwe recounted a delicious incident from those days: “On the occasion of Cosima Wagner’s presence in Vienna, Bruckner was invited to Böhler’s house with Löwe. In the course of the evening, Cosima wished to hear something by Bruckner. Löwe played the Scherzo from the Third Symphony. Afterwards, Bruckner scolded him for playing it too fast. Löwe claimed that on the piano one had to take it a little faster, which Bruckner was quite unwilling to admit. — A few days later, after Richter had performed the work and played the Scherzo even faster, he said to Löwe: ‘Mister Hans is quite a smart guy!’ ”

intended for benevolent purposes and designed by Schmidt himself in the grandest style. Its construction was personally funded by the emperor Franz Josef I, and one of its first residents was the young, recently-married Sigmund Freud. Its left side fronted the Hessgasse, and Bruckner lived directly across the street at Hessgasse 7 where his landlord was the young Anton Ölzelt Ritter von Newin (“Neuwien”), who with his wife was the dedicatee of the Sixth Symphony. The Sühnhaus was accidentally damaged when the Gestapo torched the adjoining police station in 1945, and it collapsed and was razed in 1951. Some of its stained-glass windows are preserved in a small church in Stammersdorf.

The Polka

Thus we have from a reliable direct witness the fact that Bruckner regarded the string accompaniment to the wind chorale to be specifically a polka, which is an ethnic dance of Bohemia and Moravia, not Poland. Bruckner’s polka is rather elaborate and formal, and its counterparts in the work of other composers should surely be sought in serious concert music. Thus we have in Smetana’s tone poem *Vltava* (*The Moldau*, 1874) a scene depicting a country wedding on the river bank, and in his opera *Prodaná Nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*, 1866) a grand party scene at the end of Act 1. And in the works of Dvořák there is a polka in the Czech Suite op. 39 (1879) and one in the Slavonic Dances op. 46 (1878). The *Bartered Bride* polka is the only one of these to be written before the Bruckner Third Symphony, and it also contains both rhythmic and chorale-like components. The textures of the polka are clear in all these examples, but the articulation is sometimes rather legato, and sometimes quite pointed, *détaché*, and asymmetrically accented. In his meticulous bowing indications Bruckner himself originally gave his polka a legato texture in 1873, but changed it to a much more sprightly phrasing in 1876 when he also brought the trumpets and trombones into the chorale. The two styles of articulation in the overlapping first and second violin parts are shown in the second example.

Example 2 – Symphony No. 3, finale polka

1873 Nowak *Etwas langsamer*

69

74

“1876” Mus.Hs. 19475, exposure 4-021

65

70

As performed by Czech conductors, tempos for these polkas vary from half-note 78 (Rafael Kubelík in *The Moldau*) to 96 (Zdeněk Košler’s spectacular video of *The Bartered Bride*), with the Dvořák polkas in that same range. A later Bohemian example of much the same character, though with a spicy modernity, is the wonderful polka in Jaromír Weinberger’s 1928 opera *Švanda dudák* (*Schwanda the Bagpiper*), which is first used to raise the spirits of a depressed queen, and later to crown a happy celebration in the underworld following the outwitting of the devil by Schwanda’s friend Babinský.

Two other polkas come to mind, from composers one might not think of at first. Johannes Brahms’s first collection of assorted piano pieces, Op. 76 (1878), contains the Capriccio in B minor, no. 2 of the set, which embodies the polka style in both *détaché* and legato articulations. It comes alive when performed by pianists who get the connection. And then Gustav Mahler includes the polka in the third movement of his Symphony

no. 3 (1896). This movement is in four parts, ABAB, with a short coda based on A. The A parts are the first shy then vigorous polka, centered in C minor/major, while the B parts are given to long, dreamy solos in F major by the offstage “posthorn in B flat”, usually rendered on the mellow flügelhorn, a conical relative of the trumpet. Constantin Floros, who discusses the Bruckner polka on page 115 of *Anton Bruckner, the Man and the Work* (2015), also calls attention to Part 3 of this Mahler movement as being “polkalike” in a rather detailed analytical discussion on page 101 of *Gustav Mahler, the Symphonies* (1997). But in fact, the polka character using the asymmetrical accents from *The Bartered Bride* is established from the beginning of the movement. Mahler’s original title for it was “What the animals in the forest tell me”, bringing to mind not so much Bruckner as the Smetana of *From Bohemia’s Fields and Forests (Z českých luhů a hájů)* (1878) and the Raff of his third symphony *Im Walde (In the Forest)* (1869). In both Part 1 and Part 3 of the Mahler the animals begin shyly, the tiny shrew and the scurrying vole, each with its own character and tonality; but as the music progresses the larger animals join and the dance gets more boisterous until when the towering Irish elk and the bulky aurochs make their Brucknerian entrance a simpler rhythm than the polka has to be found. All of these polkas and much more can be heard by scanning the accompanying quick-recognition (QR) code.



<https://carragan.com/composer-anton-bruckner/lets-dance-the-polka/>

Bruckner’s own rather more polite polka in his Third Symphony exactly follows the strophic form established by the simultaneous chorale, using the notes of the chords of the chorale and occasionally supplying essential harmonic foundation. The first eight-measure phrase, which is immediately repeated with variation, contains the most melodic expression of the polka, in Bruckner’s typical contrapuntal interweaving of two competitive melodic lines, an independent bass line, and a tenor or alto line with its own contour which fills out the harmonies. He had already developed this technique in the ornate *Gesangsperioden* in the outer movements of the Second Symphony, which in many places have six independent lines operating at the same time with their own rhythms and articulations. After the first phrase and its repetition, in the initially surprising tonality of F sharp major, both chorale and polka become somewhat simpler in all versions, but they spin out to great length as the audio file of the chorale shows. In 1873, after a total of eight phrases widely ranging in tonality, the music reaches the dominant of F sharp minor, and in that tonality the Liebestod begins, still with the polka accompaniment, which by this point has not much melody but the intact rhythm. It feels right at home, not like an insertion as in the first movement, and indeed it seems here to be merely an organic development of the chorale itself. But after a few statements of “Mild und leise” the polka fades away and the Second Symphony is recalled in quiet chords close to those in the first movement. Without any further reminiscence the polka and chorale then reappear much as they were at the beginning of the second theme group, but now a semitone lower, in F major, the expected relative major. After more development and the appearance of new melodic gestures and a brief transition, the C theme enters as a grandiose unison in D flat major. As said before, the entire *Gesangsperiode* of 1873 occupies 144 measures, colossal even by Bruckner’s standards.

In 1876, as can be seen in Mus.Hs.19475, the extraneous recollections after the eighth phrase were removed along with the third phrase, and the recapitulation of the initial double phrase follows immediately. The subsequent material is less discursive and quite a bit shorter than in the early version, and the full length of the *Gesangsperiode* is a more modest 90 measures. These dimensions were maintained during the 1889 (and later) revision and 1890 publication. The second *Gesangsperiode*, in the recapitulation, was strophic as in the exposition, but it had no reminiscences in any version. In 1873, it was 64 measures long, in 1876 46 measures, and in 1889, known for its expeditious ending, only 32. But the impression in 1889 is of a longer chorale, because in that year the recapitulation of the A theme was removed, and the sad chorale without polka at the end of the development came to abut the combined chorale and polka of the recapitulation. A somewhat similar shortening had been done in the revision of the finale of the Fourth in the previous year, but the formal irregularity so created was somewhat different in effect. As for the Third, the foreshortening of the form and the juxtaposition of fundamentally different treatments of the chorale, one sad without polka, and one relatively cheerful with polka, was energetically criticized by Robert Simpson in *The Essence of Bruckner* (1992): “From the abortive doodling with the chorale [the 1890 revision] goes direct to the recapitulation of [the combined chorale and polka], and the crass tautology that results has to be heard to be believed. In the 1878 version the two things are at least decently separated by the big *tutti* at bar 379, and

cannot form the kind of incestuous union that was later perpetrated, presumably by Franz Schalk.” This music can be seen in a manuscript Simpson knew only from reputation, Mus.Hs.6081, folios 37r, 37v, and 38r (exposures 167–169). The true recapitulation of the combined chorale and polka at letter **U**, measure 361, is the beginning of the second system on folio 38r, in orderly succession to the material before. Such substantial sectional changes in mood are in all seven of the prototypical and metatypical polkas discussed above. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*.

The revisions to the polka in the “1876” version, which were actually carried out in the winter and early spring of 1877, are parallel to those of the chorale, following the chorale’s harmonic structure which was kept almost completely intact from 1873. That said, the revised chorale has a considerably lower register in many places by virtue of the addition of the trumpets and trombones, and it thus invited a lower tessitura for the string writing of the polka accompaniment. But in practicality the string music could not be lowered by as much as an octave, which meant that Bruckner had to do an almost complete rewriting of it. That was carried out with Bruckner’s typical thoroughness, and a number of new textures were put into play. For example, the occasional bold quarter-note writing in the first violin part of 1873 is gone, and in the louder phrases the first and second violin parts instead reinforce each other in steady groups of four eighth notes. At measures 87, 97, and 105 this technique results in lovely interlocking violin parts cascading downward in harmonically associated voices. When the firsts are playing at the highest register most of the notes were lowered in “1876” by at least a third, and the music sounds more substantial. At the same time the viola pizzicato line contains many new double stops which enrich the harmonies, while the cello and bass pizzicatos are changed in nearly every measure even though the harmonic structure of the entire passage is maintained with hardly any change. None of this is the sort of thing which would have been suggested to Bruckner by anyone in 1876, and indeed the revisions that were made under pressure in the following summer, that created what we now refer to as the 1877 version, were not of this character at all. Bruckner is still working on his own without outside interference. All of these features can be easily heard in the two sound files of the polka music alone. They are accessible through the QR code, lettered h and k.

As suggested earlier, the polka can define the tempo. For tempo indication we also have *Erstes Zeitmaß* (opening tempo) for the exposition C theme at letter **K**, measure 155, and at letter **W**, measure 393, the C theme in the recapitulation is marked *Erstes Zeitmaß, beschleunigt* (opening tempo, faster). When Bruckner says “Erstes Zeitmaß” he can only be referring to the tempo of the beginning of the movement, which is a simple *Allegro*. Thus if Bruckner’s wishes, expressed in every version, are to be respected, the C theme must be played at the tempo of the A theme. Since the war, the tradition has been growing to take the A theme quite fast, at tempos over half note = 128, some as fast as 140. By itself, that does not sound bad. But it is utterly impossible to play the heavily syncopated C theme at any such speed, as several fairly recent widely-available recordings demonstrate all too well. The solution thus is to play the C theme as fast as the orchestra reasonably can play it, and play the A theme at that same speed or maybe a bit faster.

The table gives the tempos of 30 selected performances spanning the 81 years of recorded history, showing the conductor, the performance date, the version, the A, B, and C tempos, and a rating showing its degree of similarity to “ideal” tempos of 106, 78, and 100:

Performance	A	B	C	Rating
Weisbach 1938 (1890)	78	67	78	1.02
Lehmann 1940 (1890)	91	66	77	0.95
Jochum E. 1944 (1890)	124	64	98	0.88
Fekete 1950 Mozarteum O (1890)	127	71	86	0.84
Schmidt-Isserstedt (“Gerd Rubahn”) 1952 (1878)	112	66	96	0.94
Adler 1953 (1890)	116	64	80	0.85
Andrae 1955 (1890)	125	65	103	0.90
Hindemith 1960 (1889)	118	66	87	0.87
Jochum G.L. 1964 (1890)	106	63	90	0.94
Knappertsbusch 1964 Munich (1890)	92	51	58	0.81
Krips 1964 (1890)	115	58	68	0.78
Schuricht 1965 (1889)	109	54	62	0.77
Szell 1966 (1889)	115	66	86	0.88
Tennstedt 1976 (1889)	137	70	80	0.78
Kubelík 1980 BRSO (1878)	115	72	97	0.94
Haitink 1988 VPO (1877)	125	66	81	0.82

Haenchen 1991 (1889)	130	63	90	0.83
Celibidache 1993 (1889)	105	53	56	0.75
Harnoncourt 1997 Vienna SO (1877)	140	70	81	0.78
Tintner 1998 Royal Scottish NO (1873)	114	66	79	0.85
Vänskä 2000 BBC Scottish SO (1877/6)	123	67	108	0.93
Skrowaczewski 2001 (1889)	120	48	74	0.75
Blomstedt 2006 Philadelphia O (1873)	130	70	113	0.93
Norrington 2006 SWR Stuttgart (1873)	117	92	102	0.96
Barenboim 2011 (1878)	127	60	70	0.75
van Zweden 2011 RFO Hilversum (1877)	121	62	84	0.84
Cohen 2014 Musica Nova O (1874)	118	59	92	0.87
Järvi P. 2014 (1889)	131	64	70	0.75
Roth 2017 Gürzenich O Köln (1873)	132	81	97	0.88
Pittman 2019 New England PO ("1876")	95	74	89	0.99

Hans Weisbach (1885–1961) begins the series with a grand and stately A theme at 78, a fairly slow but still idiomatic polka at 67, and a C theme with a tempo miraculously equal to that of the A theme. The speed limit for the C theme is probably half note = 100, which is faster than the tempo used by Fritz Lehmann (1904–1956) for the A theme in his fragmentarily-preserved recording of 1940. His stern and vigorous beginning at half note = 91 makes a very good impression once one gets used to it, and his B theme is at a sprightly 76. Both of these recordings follow reasonably well the principles that the polka should be danceable and the third (C) theme should be at the same speed at the first (A), and thus they have high ratings, 1.02 and 0.95 respectively. It is tempting to think that they represent a tradition dating back to Bruckner's day in that they really do follow the score. But the third one, by the redoubtable Eugen Jochum, has a much faster opening theme and a second theme at about half the opening tempo. The C theme here is at a good tempo, but the rating is lowered to 0.88 because of the speed of the A theme. Indeed for many conductors the A theme tempo has been edging upward over the years. The fourth recording, by Zoltán Fekete (1909–1978), has an even faster A theme and a slower C theme and thus a slightly lower rating of 0.84.

From then on for nearly 50 years, ratings are mostly lower. Rafael Kubelík, who sadly did not complete a Bruckner series, is a prominent exception with a rating of 0.94. (He made three recordings of the Sixth which also derive great power from following the indications in the score.) Then we have Osmo Vänskä with his innovative recording combining the 1876 version of the adagio with the 1877 version of the other three movements, with a rating of 0.93. It is obvious that he made a real effort to play the C theme as fast as the A theme. But his and Roger Norrington's interpretation still have rapid A themes leading to C themes which sound rather hurried and indistinct. Their high ratings stem from the nature of the rating algorithm which gives a high value for tempos which approximate the ratios of the ideal paradigm even if they are all faster, or all slower as with Weisbach and Lehmann.

Lastly there is the 2019 recording of the reconstructed "1876" first phase of the second version, which is the true home of the separately-published 1876 adagio. In this recording Richard Pittman and his New England Philharmonic made a real effort to follow the score rather than play the first theme fast and the second theme slow. I was there for rehearsals and performance, and I can remember how vigorous and elegant the polka sounded accompanying the pensive intoning of the re-orchestrated brass chorale. For a moment I was standing outside the Sühnhaus, musing on the joyful, tragic, and beautiful nature of the human experience.

I would like to thank Peter Aigner, Caroline Bell, John Berky, Dermot Gault, Crawford Howie, Johannes Menzel, and Ken Ward for essential help in the research for and writing of this paper.



FORMAL CHALLENGES IN THE ADAGIO OF BRUCKNER'S NINTH SYMPHONY

Eric Lai

Introduction

The Adagio of the Ninth Symphony has been considered one of the most profound movements Bruckner ever composed. Its emotional and spiritual intensity, brought about by daring harmonies, extreme dynamics, and striving melodies, always leaves the listener with a sense of awe, at the same time contradicting feelings of fulfillment and uncertainty, hope and loss, and peace and conflict.

These features of the Adagio representing the composer's mature style notwithstanding, I am always puzzled by its form. Although the movement is generally understood to have a five-part structure similar to his other symphonic adagios such as the Fifth and the Seventh symphonies, I find it hard to fit the Ninth's Adagio nicely into this model, for there is always something in the music that contradicts what I would consider a clear ABABA design. A review of scholarly literature has proved that I am not the only one with this observation. For example, some commentators would to some degree accept the five-part interpretation but at the same time identify peculiarities that deviate from the norm. On the other hand, there are those who reject this interpretation in favor of other formal options. Hence this paper, through which I hope to shed some light on the different views about the form of this Adagio, as well as share some of my own findings.

* * *

As mentioned above, the generally accepted view of the form of the Adagio is a sort of five-part rondo, or ABABA, having its roots in the slow movement of Beethoven's Choral Symphony. As shown in Figure 1, the first four sections comprise A at m. 1, B at m. 45, then A again starting m. 77, and B at m. 129. Due to similarities of keys, thematic material, and texture, our perception of these four sections representing the ABAB portions of the five-part design is quite intuitive. But there is one anomaly. Even though the two B sections are similar in style and expression, they do not correspond exactly in terms of content. In section 2, the B material consists of two theme zones of different character, B1 and B2. Section 4, however, begins with B2 (m. 129), and continues through the end of the section (m. 172) without any trace of B1. As for the location of the final section of the five-part design, opinions differ. In the diagram here, I present two common views. The first view holds that the last A section starts at m. 173, which, interestingly enough, references *not* A material as one would expect, but rather B1 from m. 45.¹ The support for this reading is therefore tonal return (in the home key of E major) rather than thematic reprise. As for the second location of the final A section, m. 199 is the climax where the movement's opening motive is dramatically presented in canonic fashion by the brass, thereby causing one to hear the moment as a significant restatement of A material.²

Figure 1 *Five-part design of the Adagio*

Section	1	2	3	4	5?	5?	Coda	
5-part	A	B (B1 B2)	A	B (B2)	A? (B1)	A?		
mm.		45 57	77	129	173	199	219 231	243
Key	E	Ab Gb	E	Ab	E	?	E	

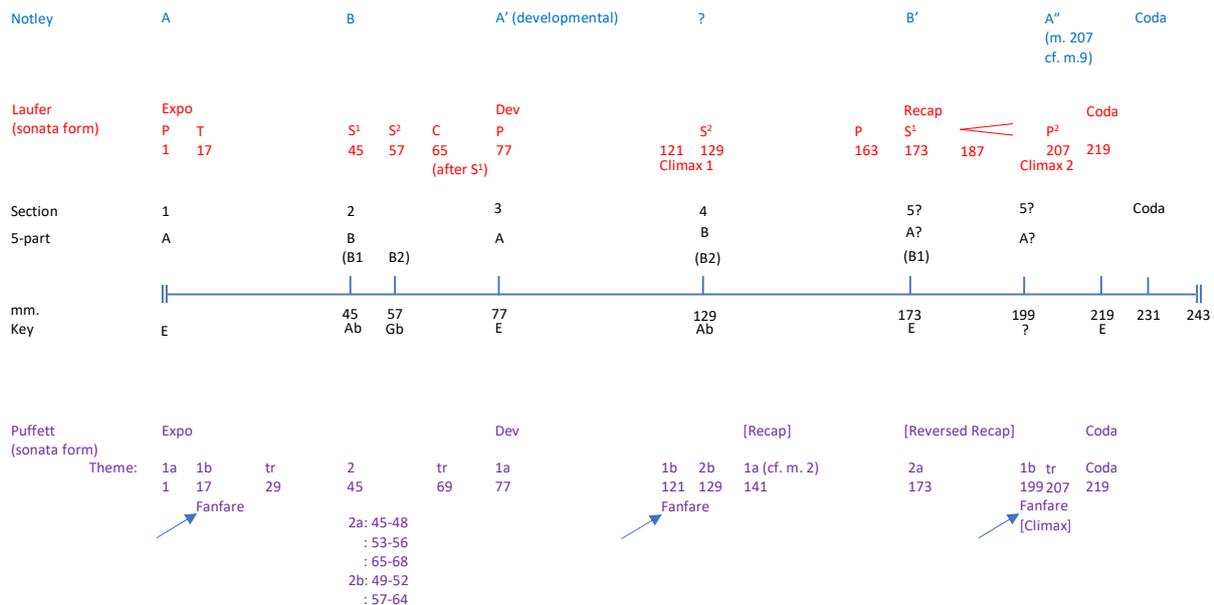
¹ For example, see Gault, 190.

² This view is expressed in Carragan, 197. See also Figure 6 and related discussions later in the paper.

To account for these and other deviations from the traditional five-part design, some commentators have resorted to other established models, in particular sonata form, for explanation of the Adagio’s structure. As early as 1925, Ernst Kurth adopted sonata strategies as a shaping force of the Adagio. In his monograph on Bruckner, the Swiss theorist argues that “the entire formative process of the Adagio is as simple as it is captivating: first a sonata form process up to the development section.”³ Kurth’s statement notwithstanding, examining the Adagio as a sonata movement can still be challenging due to the many unconventional treatments that digress from the more “normative” techniques found in Bruckner’s first and fourth movements.⁴ Nevertheless, this approach has been taken up and expanded by some later studies, as the following review of three of these studies demonstrates.

Margaret Notley, in her article on Bruckner’s symphonic slow movements, asserts that the second A section of the Adagio of the Ninth “resembles a development section more than the corresponding passages of the earlier [symphonic] Adagios...” (Notley, 2003; see top row of Figure 2). In addition, this section displays a “dissolution of thematic elements” that permeates the entire movement, a process that, according to Notley, “takes on extraordinary meaning” in the course of the musical unfolding. Although Notley never used the term “recapitulation” in her analysis, she cites the return of mm. 9-16 later in the section beginning at m. 207 as a formal marker of the A theme (mm. 1-24). Measures 9-16, in its first appearance, function as the “first intensification” that builds toward the initial climax at m. 17 (Figure 3). This passage’s later reappearance in m. 207 (letter R), therefore, is part of a thematic complex that can be considered a reprise within the sonata discourse (Notley, 2003). Interestingly, most commentators do not pay much attention to m. 207 as a significant point of formal return, as it follows a massive *Steigerung* (mm. 187-206) culminating in that catastrophic chord many consider to be the peak of the movement, or what some refer to as the “tearing of the veil” (Coones, 5) right before m. 207. To Notley, Bruckner’s formal approach “centred on progressively dissolving themes...there is no clear statement of the tonic until thematic material has disappeared” (Notley, 2002).

Figure 2 Analyses after Notley (2004), Laufer (1997), and Puffett (1999)



³ “...der gesamte Formvorgang des Adagios ebensowenig einfach wie fesselnd: erst eine Sonatenentwicklung bis zur Durchführung...” (Kurth, 737).

⁴ Apart from the opening movements and the Finales, the slow movements of the Ninth and the Sixth Symphony are usually understood in terms of sonata principles. See Jackson 206–207, 218–25 and Brown, 158.

Figure 3 Adagio, mm. 1-14, 205-213

Measures 1-14

Langsam, feierlich

ADAGIO

1. Flöte 2.3. Oboen 1. u. 2. Klarinetten 3. in A Fagotte 1. u. 2. Hörner 3. u. 4. in F Tenor- u. Bass-Tromben 1. u. 2. in B 3. u. 4. in F 1. u. 2. Trompeten 3. u. 4. in F Alt-, Tenor- u. Bass-Fagotten Kontra- u. Bass-Bassoonen Pauken Violin I Violin II Viola Violoncell Kontrabaß

196

10

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Vcllo

Kontrabaß

Measures 205-13

188

A''

Steigerung → Climax

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Vcllo

Kontrabaß

194

211

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Vcllo

Kontrabaß

Edward Laufer, in his article “Aspects of Prolongation in the Ninth Symphony” (1997), addresses the influence of sonata form even more directly than Notley. This is shown by the labels he provides for the movement, which includes the three formal spaces—exposition, development, and recapitulation—as well as subdivisions such as primary and secondary zones. Although his locations for the exposition and development correspond to that of Notley’s A and A’ sections, he identifies the recapitulation as beginning not with the primary theme, but rather the first part of the secondary theme (S¹) in the home key of E major at m. 173, which matches B1 of our early “five-part” reading in Figure 1 (see also Figure 2).⁵ The P theme then follows at m. 207. The development comprises the primary theme (m. 77) and the second part of the secondary theme, S² (m. 129). In addition, Laufer identifies two highpoints as structural markers. The first, a “wonderful outburst” (Laufer, 226), appears in m. 121 in the middle of the development shortly before the appearance of S², and the second (mm. 199-206) is the *Steigerung* passage that we identified earlier (Figure 2).⁶ Laufer justifies his unorthodox reading by saying that:

This reading [is] controversial on two counts: the “development” is indicated as beginning—unusually—on the tonic, and the “recapitulation” as opening with a highly *developmental* treatment of the second subject. As for the first point, there is a specific compositional reason for Bruckner’s starting the development on [the tonic]: this...has to do with the larger compositional intent to *begin anew* as if reaching back to the opening in order to aim one more time for the climactic point of arrival (mm. 199-206). As to reversing the order of the subjects in the recapitulation, in this movement...a partial reason would be that the first subject had been worked so consistently in the development that its restatement could hardly have provided the necessary contrast for the beginning of the recapitulation. Moreover, the strong tonic return at m. 173 clearly indicates the beginning of a new section which corresponds tonally and, in a real sense, formally to the opening section,” (Laufer, 218-19, footnote 10, italics from original)

Two observations from Laufer’s statement are in order. First, he considers the opening theme in the home key at m. 77 a “restart” of the exposition, as part of a long-term trajectory that points toward the climax later in the movement (m. 199); this trajectory is followed by a *return* to the primary theme (m. 207) beyond the initial point of the recapitulation at m. 173. This interpretation notwithstanding, this primary material (labeled “P²” in Figure 2) references the “2nd part of [the] 1st subject” (Laufer, 218) from m. 9, and matches the final A’ section in Notley’s reading. Second, the return to the home key at m. 173 fulfills the *tonal return* function of the recapitulation, even though the thematic content (S¹) differs from our expectation (P), hence the unusual “reversing...of the subjects” in the recapitulation.⁷ Laufer, therefore, treats tonal return as more indicative of recapitulation onset than thematic return in this Adagio.

Derrick Puffett’s essay, “Bruckner’s Way: The Adagio of the Ninth Symphony” (1999), is my final example of applying sonata principles to the understanding of the movement’s form. In fact, Puffett’s paper is a response to Laufer’s article, which is concerned more with Schenkerian analysis than with formal exploration. Puffett, instead, focuses on the harmonic, thematic, and motivic interactions within and among shorter passages, which he calls “periods,” totaling thirty-three of them, with each ranging from four to sixteen bars in length. According to him, “Bruckner’s music lends itself well to this ‘sectional’ approach. Not only are his movements famously ‘episodic’—to the extent that whole passages could be omitted by celebrated conductors, not to mention editors—but the language with which we tend to discuss them (‘cathedral’ metaphors, etc.) recognizes the block-like, spatially-dependent nature of his creations” (Puffett, 12). This observation notwithstanding, he shares Laufer’s view of the movement’s large-scale design by providing a form table with sonata terminology to supplement his discussion (Puffett, 13). As shown in Figure 2, which contains a summary of this table, Puffett’s exposition and development match those of

⁵ Note, however, that Laufer does not specify in his diagram that it is the “first part” of S that appears in m. 173 by simply calling it “2nd subject” even though he has already distinguished between S’s “first part” and “second part” in his reading of the Exposition and Development (Laufer, 218).

⁶ Strangely, Laufer did not associate m. 121ff and m. 199ff with m. 17ff (which he calls “Transition”), which shares a similar climactic feature. See also Puffett’s three “fanfares” discussed below.

⁷ Laufer analyzes the chord at m. 207 to be E major, which is the result of a 5-6 voice-leading motion (III⁵⁻⁶) carried over from the previous measure with a G# bass. However, he puts in parentheses the words “not yet real I: I still withheld” underneath this chord (Laufer, 247). Compare also this analysis with his graph of the corresponding location in m. 9 (220).

Laufer's and the first two A sections of Notley's.⁸ For the recapitulation, however, he provides two alternative readings. The first locates the beginning of the recapitulation at m. 141, which presents material from the opening of the movement—not the very beginning though, but the ascending scalar pattern of m. 2. The opening motive of the movement, with the dissonant leap of a minor ninth played by the first violins, is therefore absent from this reprise. The second location of the recapitulation begins at m. 173, and, sharing Laufer's view, Puffett designates it a "reversed recapitulation." There is, however, a major difference between the readings of the two commentators. The return of Puffett's "primary theme," which he calls "1b," takes place earlier at the climactic moment of m. 199.⁹ For m. 207, which Laufer sees as a significant moment of return of primary material (P²), Puffett now calls a "transition." To Puffett, Theme 1b originates from the part of the primary theme that begins at m. 17 (Figure 2). In addition to these two passages (m. 17ff and m. 199ff), there is another one of similar texture at m. 121—together they comprise what Puffett calls the three "fanfares," which not only serve as local highpoints, but also as formal pillars that project a trajectory of increasing intensity, albeit more "tragic (minor, dissonant) in tone" from one fanfare to the next (Puffett, 15).¹⁰

Puffett's three fanfares invite further scrutiny of formal function of these passages. Borrowing from Kurth's terminology, these fanfares could represent the crests of three large-scale waves that structure the entire movement. In addition, we can interpret the chromatic ascending bass line (cf. footnote 10) connecting the three waves as an accumulation of energy that is released at the final climax. Therefore, Theme 1b, with its inherent kinetic quality, serves as a motivic generator that shapes the exterior undulation of the form. The progressive heightening of musical material through the three fanfares leads to the restoration of "the first five notes of the First Theme, which were omitted in the recapitulation of that theme in Period 19" (= mm. 141-44; Puffett, 35)—that peculiar spot where Puffett identifies as the onset of the recapitulation, but which references m. 2 rather than m. 1 (Figure 2).¹¹ As Kurth has asserted, "In order to penetrate Bruckner's technique of formal development, we must first learn to translate the sonic image into an energetic image," so as to comprehend "how basic symphonic motions appear in developmental waves, as energetic events, in light of which themes and, likewise, the further expansion up through the formal design as a whole first become understandable" (Rothfarb, 151-53).¹²

Another look of the Adagio's form

The above discussion has presented some diverse views about the form of the Adagio. Although each of the three readings (Notley, Laufer, Puffett) has its own merit and reveals some distinct features about the movement, I would like to present one final analysis—my own interpretation—before closing the paper.

From what we have gathered, understanding the movement's form through sonata terminology seems viable, especially when dealing with the developmental character as well as restatement of certain sections. However, as the diagrams of Notley, Laufer, and Puffett have shown, even though their locations of the exposition and development agree, there is no consensus as to where the recapitulation begins. As mentioned before, the different readings are due to factors including, but not limited to, function of tonal returns, interlacing of motivic material, and ongoing textural changes of thematic material that challenge our expectations of formal boundaries within the sonata paradigm. Nevertheless, I believe it is precisely these qualities of the music that, in addition to the sonata elements, generate a fluid, processive form with its distinct soundscape that is unlike other symphonic slow movements Bruckner ever composed. In fact, I find it hard to pinpoint a particular location where I would consider a definitive formal reprise in the latter part of the movement. In Figure 4, the lower diagram revisits the five-part design that I introduced early in the paper—in this case m. 199 is chosen for the beginning of the final A section. Above this diagram is a new diagram, where the last three sections of the five-part structure are fused into a single and much extended

⁸ As Puffett himself has admitted, his analysis was influenced by Leichtentritt's reading of the Adagio of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony as a representation of sonata form (Puffett, 12; Leichtentritt, 393-402).

⁹ This location matches the second interpretation of Part 5 of the five-part reading discussed earlier in the paper (cf. footnote 2).

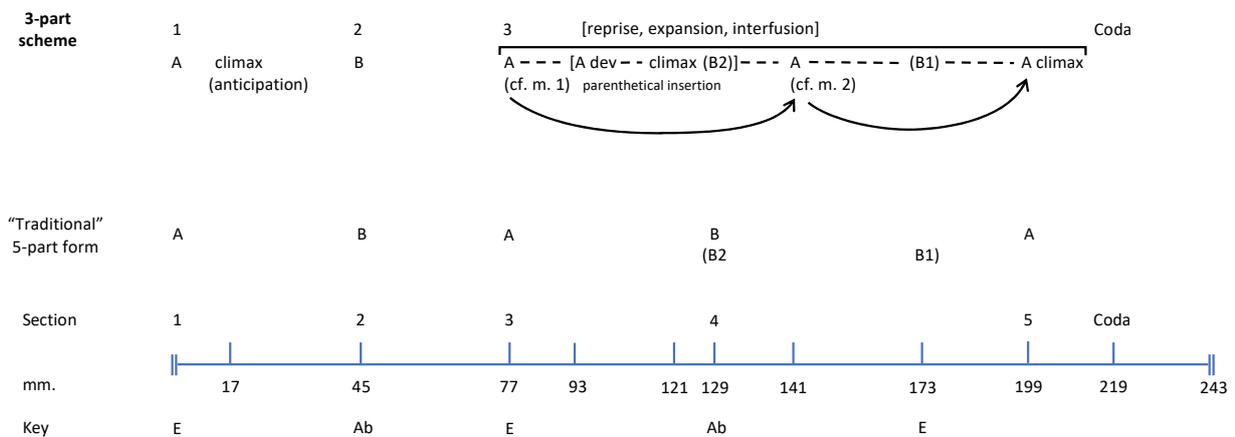
¹⁰ Puffett (15) observes that the fanfares appear a semitone higher (F#, G, G#) each time, although I assume he refers to bass notes rather than keys.

¹¹ According to Puffett, fanfare 1 and fanfare 2 are more thematically connected, for Theme 1b clearly appears in both. Fanfare 3 is associated with the other two fanfares "in both spirit and structural purpose, it is not as similar musically to these two earlier periods as they are to each other" (35).

¹² For additional information on Kurth's view of Bruckner's form as undulatory phases, see Rothfarb, 151-87, in particular pp. 153, 173, and 175.

formal space—the final part of a three-part structure for the entire movement.¹³ The first two parts correspond to the initial A and B sections of the five-part form or the two theme zones of a sonata form reading. The third part, as I have indicated, is an enlarged formal area, one that encompasses several subsections of diverse formal functions, and which interact with one another to generate a coherent structure. One of these functions is the traditional thematic reprise, as shown by the full statements of B1 (m. 173) and B2 (m. 129), though in reverse order from their first appearances. These two statements are in turn part of a rotation of A and B materials, which results in a five-part “A-B2-A-B1-A” (mm. 77-218) subsumed under the movement’s overall three-part design (mm. 1-243).¹⁴ The A sections within this five-part structure, however, serve more than just a reprise function. Although m. 77 begins just like m. 1, the music soon morphs into something formally ambiguous. At m. 93 (Figure 5), although the quasi-ostinato quavers in the strings provide a rather static background, the canonic imitation between the winds and the brass of the movement’s opening motive (and its inversion) in mm. 1-2 creates a momentum that drives this short passage toward the highpoint at m. 121, identified earlier as Laufer’s “first climax” and Puffett’s “second fanfare.” This canonic passage, which is somewhat developmental, is later transformed into something even more intense (closer stretto imitation, *fortissimo*, repeated chords and ostinato)—Puffett’s “third fanfare” (m. 199ff)—and is given full recognition as the final climax of the movement (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 4 *Another view of the Adagio’s form*



¹³ Steinbeck also analyzes the movement as a three-part form using sonata form terminology (96, 103-15), although his sectional divisions—m. 1, m. 77, m. 173—differ from mine.

¹⁴ The concept of “rotation,” which is borrowed from Hepokoski and Darcy, refers to “recycling one or more times...a referential thematic pattern established as an ordered succession at the piece’s outset” (611). In our case, the “ordered succession” is A-B.

Figure 5 Adagio, mm. 91-96

The image displays a page of a musical score for an orchestra, specifically the Adagio movement, measures 91-96. The score is arranged in systems, with various instruments listed on the left. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in B (Klar.), Bassoon (Fag.), Horns (Hrn.), Trumpets (Tromp.), Trombones (Tbn.), Percussion (Pk.), Violins (Viol.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Kb.).

Key features of the score include:

- Flute (Fl.):** Part 1 starts with a *pp* dynamic and a melodic line. Part 2.3 is a woodwind texture.
- Oboe (Ob.):** Part 1.3 has a red arrow pointing to a note in measure 94.
- Clarinet in B (Klar.):** Part 1.in B has a red arrow pointing to a note in measure 94.
- Trumpets (Tromp.):** Part 1.in F has a red arrow pointing to a note in measure 94.
- Violins (Viol.):** Parts 1 and 2 play a rhythmic pattern with the instruction *ff marc. sempre*.
- Viola (Vla.):** Part 1 plays a rhythmic pattern with the instruction *ff marc. sempre*.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Part 1 plays a rhythmic pattern with the instruction *ff marc. sempre*.
- Double Bass (Kb.):** Part 1 plays a rhythmic pattern with the instruction *ff marc. sempre*.

A prominent annotation, **Full-bar stretto**, is written in red across the middle of the score, indicating a change in the woodwind parts. Two red arrows point to specific notes in the Oboe and Clarinet parts, highlighting the 'stretto' effect.

Figure 6 Adagio, mm. 199-200

The image displays a page of a musical score for the Adagio movement, measures 199-200. The score is arranged in a multi-staff format. At the top left, a box labeled 'Q' contains the measure number '199'. The instruments listed on the left include Flute (1, 2, 3), Oboe (1, 2, 3), Clarinet in A (1, 2, 3), Bassoon (1, 2, 3), Horn (1, 2, 3, 4), Trumpet (1, 2, 3), Trombone (1, 2, 3), Percussion (A.T., Pos., B., K.-Bth., Pk.), Violin (1, 2), Viola, Violoncello (Vc.), and Kontrabaß (Kb.). The score shows complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs in the woodwinds and strings, and a prominent 'Half-bar stretto' annotation in red text with arrows pointing to specific notes in the Trombone and Percussion parts. The dynamic marking 'ff' (fortissimo) is used throughout. At the bottom of the page, a box labeled 'Q' contains the measure number '105'.

The return to A at m. 141 was addressed earlier in connection with Puffett's reading, which treats this location as the first of two possible recapitulation beginnings (Figure 2). Because this measure corresponds to m. 2 rather than m. 1, the entrance somehow sounds sudden and unexpected. However, if we step back and look at the bigger picture, we see a larger progression over time with m. 141 serving as a continuation from m. 77 with the exact material from m. 1 (cf. first arrow in Figure 4). This reading makes sense if we

consider the aforementioned developmental A passage at m. 93 and the ensuing B2 passage a kind of parenthetical insertion between the two A sections. If we maintain this view, the A material at m. 141 continues to develop through another “interruption,” this time B1, before reaching the final climax at m. 199. The entire third part of the movement from m. 77 to m. 218, therefore, reveals a large-scale ongoing statement of A, and I interpret this expanded formal space as comprising elements of reprise, expansion, and interfusion. Even though the A materials in this section might appear “progressively dissolving,” as both Notley (202) and Puffett (16) have observed, their multiple statements contribute to a sense of coherence and development, as well as provide a narrative trajectory for the section.¹⁵ The cataclysmic passage beginning at m. 199 is prepared by that extended *Steigerung* (mm. 187-98) that was noted early in the paper, but the lack of tonic affirmation and the unsettling texture continue to drive the music forward. Not until the coda, with the confirmation of the home key and iterations of the *miserere* motive, do we finally experience a sense of peaceful closure.

* * *

The Adagio of the Ninth Symphony is one of the most profound movements Bruckner ever composed. The movement can invoke artistic responses on different levels, be it emotional, sonorous, or spiritual. However, the above commentary has shown that, through looking at its form, we can experience another dimension that reveals the richness of Bruckner’s music. One of the formal innovations in the last slow movement of his symphonic output, as I have demonstrated above, is the fusion of ABABA and sonata form, something that had not really been explored by Bruckner in his past symphonic adagios. In addition, the multi-functioning quality of some of the thematic material, in particular the opening motive, as well as this material’s progressive dissolution and transformation throughout the course of the movement, lead to a ternary design with an out-of-proportion expanded final section that encompasses compositional premises of development and fulfillment.¹⁶ Finally, the extra-musical influence and autobiographical nature of the symphony represent yet another dimension that shapes the Adagio’s structure and narrative plot, as Constantin Floros has remarked:

When Bruckner began drafting the movement in April 1894 he had already been ill for two years...he wanted the elegiac tuba part in the Adagio to be understood as a “farewell from life.” No less significant are the musical quotations contained in the movement...All this suggests that Bruckner was giving moving artistic expression to his forebodings of death, to his religious faith and his hope for God’s clemency in the Adagio of the Ninth Symphony. (Floros, 31)¹⁷

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, the interaction between the musical quotations that Floros alludes to—be they Wagnerian references from *Tristan* (opening motive of the Adagio) and *Parsifal* (Dresden Amen, mm. 6-7) or passages from Bruckner’s own music (Seventh Symphony, *Te Deum*, Mass in D minor)—and Bruckner’s formal strategies as explored in this paper will be a worthwhile follow-up project in the analysis of this Adagio.

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¹⁵ Puffett draws his opinion from Redlich’s view of the Adagio (also the first movement and unfinished Finale) as an example of the “‘telescoped’ Sonata Development and Recapitulation,” where the “‘development section and recapitulation [are] telescoped into one large section, approximating the exposition in length and weight.’ [Redlich] goes on to describe bars 77-140 of [the Adagio] as ‘a kind of first development with variational recapitulation’ and bars 140-72 as ‘a second ‘development cum recapitulation’ followed by ‘a varied recapitulation’ of Theme 2a in 173ff.” (quoted by Kathryn Bailey in Puffett, 48).

¹⁶ This reading, to some extent, resonates with Notley’s view that the movement “takes on extraordinary meaning” through the “dissolution of thematic elements.”

¹⁷ Citing Kurth, Notley’s remark about the dissolution of themes in the movement to create “the effect of dissolving all ties to this world” is an example of this extra-musical association (Notley, 203; cf. Kurth, 719).

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PREMIERE:

Bruckner's Ninth Symphony
with newly-created Finale
by Roberto Ferrazza

Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra
Alfonso Scarano, chief conductor

Prince Mahidol Hall
Bangkok, Thailand

28 May 2021 at 7p – 29 May 2021 at 4p

www.thailandphil.com/events/bruckners-ninth/

Mr. Ferrazza provided a report concerning the Ninth Finale in the March 2019 issue of The Bruckner Journal



FOR LATER TIMES: A BRUCKNER FILM FOR THE BICENTENNIAL

Miguel J. Ramirez

While conducting research on the tonal language of Bruckner's late works my attention was inevitably drawn to the biographical idiosyncrasies of such an unusual artist. Thus, not long after finishing my PhD dissertation I decided to look for ways to make Bruckner's inspiring story and fascinating music available to a broader audience; and given my interests in film and in creative writing I decided that the way to go was to write a movie. I then started learning how to write a screenplay and, although I took a couple of night courses on the subject, I taught myself screenwriting mostly by reading how-to manuals and by analyzing good scripts. Soon I was writing my screenplay about Bruckner, and after about a year's work I finished the first version of *For Later Times*. With a completed script in hand, I eagerly entered various international screenwriting contests—with mixed results at first. It wasn't too long when I started rethinking the plot of my story based on the feedback I got from competition judges. And many rewrites and a lot of tweaking later, my screenplay started to make the cuts in international contests.

For Later Times is a screenplay for a theatrical feature film about Bruckner and the reception of his music in Nazi Germany, and I want to stress the fact that my script is historical only in part—which is why the genre I chose is that of feature, not documentary. Not unlike Shaffer/Forman's *Amadeus*, my project is intended to be an artistic manifestation rather than a historical account. With *Amadeus*, incidentally, my script also shares the dual-plot structure (especially the notion of getting to Bruckner/Mozart through the recollections of Auer/Salieri) as well as the idea of assigning a prominent, even protagonistic, role to the music itself. In what follows, I shall provide a synopsis of the plot, an account of my artistic vision for a production of the film, and a brief note on the sources for the historically factual information on which my story draws. A short concluding section will make clear the purpose of publishing this somewhat informal essay in *The Bruckner Journal*.

Script synopsis

The screenplay's opening sequence introduces Bruckner's biographer, musicologist **Max Auer**. On the run from the Nazi authorities in 1940, Auer has made his way to Lisbon and is waiting to catch a steam liner to New York. (The script will bring us back to this point in the third act.) The next sequence, which takes place in 1922 Vienna, takes us to the first meeting between Auer (then a Ph.D. student) and his professor **August Göllerich**, who subsequently becomes his mentor and friend. This sequence also clues us in to **Anton Bruckner** and his music. There follows a sequence in which, fifteen years later, Auer helps a terminally-ill Göllerich finish his life-long project: an ambitious biography of Bruckner. The ensuing exchange between Auer and Göllerich allows us to get acquainted with Bruckner's trials and tribulations.

Our acquaintance with Bruckner continues with a scene in which—having been brought to a mental institution in Bad Kreuzen by his close friend **Rudolf Weinwurm**—the composer recalls the details of an event that set the tone for a series of setbacks that eventually lead to his mental collapse. From one of Bruckner's recurring recollections, we learn that the premiere of his Third Symphony was sabotaged by an ensemble which essentially consisted of members of the Vienna Philharmonic. (Later scenes will reveal that this pivotal event is obsessively revisited by Bruckner, and they will complete the picture of its devastating impact.)

Later on, another visit to the fiasco of the Third Symphony premiere allows us to get a better sense of Bruckner's ordeals in the Austrian metropolis: **Eduard Hanslick**, Vienna's most influential music critic, becomes Bruckner's most formidable enemy when the musician dedicates his Symphony to **Richard Wagner**. Although Hanslick claims that his devastating reviews of Bruckner's music are motivated by a determination to defend time-honored aesthetic values, his recollection of an event that had taken place years before the ill-fated premiere of Bruckner's work shows otherwise. That event, in which Hanslick was publicly humiliated by Wagner, turns out to be the reason behind his vindictive and relentless attacks on Bruckner: given that his diatribes could not make a dent on Wagner's well-established reputation, Hanslick engages instead in an obsessive crusade against the naive and defenseless musician who has publicly declared his admiration of the German opera composer. In an attempt to come to terms with the repeated rejection of his works by the Viennese musical establishment, Bruckner composes tirelessly and with the conviction that he is writing his unconventional symphonies for later times.

Halfway through the second act we are clued in to the disturbing political developments witnessed by Auer—developments that will culminate in Hitler's highly publicized induction of Bruckner into the

Walhalla Pantheon in the summer of 1937. The reception of Bruckner's music in Nazi Germany gradually reveals itself as much more than a subplot, and the script's dramatic climax is built around the circumstances surrounding the fate of the autograph score of his Ninth Symphony—a manuscript safeguarded by Auer and coveted by Hitler. Following a tense encounter with **Joseph Goebbels**, Auer is forced to leave Germany; and during an eventful flight he loses part of the score of Bruckner's last work: two of Goebbels's SS spies have tracked Auer down to Lisbon, and they catch up with him just as he is about to board an America-bound steam liner; in his haste to board the ship, Auer accidentally drops the suitcase that holds Bruckner's manuscript score. Although Auer manages to recover most of the manuscript, he is forced to leave behind a number of sheets in order to save his life. (Auer's momentous escape in Lisbon, incidentally, provides a fictional explanation for the incomplete state in which the score of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony Finale is preserved.)

After spending more than a decade in New York, in 1952 Auer returns to Vienna as a university professor. Following an event celebrating the much-delayed publication of his Bruckner biography, Auer narrates the last few days of Bruckner's life, and the final sequence shows that in the end the composer's hard work and perseverance pay off. However, although the story offers an example of triumph in the face of relentless adversity, there is an ironic twist to Bruckner's personal victory: the recognition that he desperately wanted all his life is eventually granted him, though not without the bittersweet taste that comes with the attainment of a long-sought goal at the very end of one's life—perhaps too late to enjoy the reward?

Artistic vision

For Later Times, an original drama based in part on historical events and persons, develops two interrelated stories: the ordeals of Bruckner in nineteenth-century Vienna and the struggles of his biographer to keep the Brucknerian symphonic legacy from being appropriated by the Nazi authorities in 1930s Germany. These the two stories are told in counterpoint, as it were, with one plot driving the other.

Rather than using a linear narrative thread, my script tells Bruckner's story partly through recollections, flashbacks, and dreams by the composer and other characters. This narrative strategy is established early on, in a scene in which Bruckner—interned in a mental institution—obsessively recalls the details of an event that eventually triggered his mental breakdown, namely, the sabotaged premiere of one of his symphonies by an ensemble that essentially consisted of members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. The clash between a visionary composer and a conservative musical establishment, and the ordeals that Bruckner endures at the hands of Vienna's most influential music critic add poignancy to the story.

Whether my screenplay really is about Bruckner is a valid question that viewers will ask themselves. (The question of whether *Amadeus* is about Mozart or Salieri comes to mind.) Needless to say, the ambiguity is intentional: while the first character introduced is Auer, the opening sequence also clues us in to Bruckner and his music. Similarly, the final sequence shows Bruckner's last days, though it does so through Auer's recollection. To be sure, *For Later Times* is a biopic about Bruckner; but it is also true that it tells two stories—Bruckner's and Auer's—that are tightly intertwined from the beginning. Although the Nazi backdrop is introduced early on, it is only later in the script that the reception of Bruckner's music in the Third Reich reveals itself as much more than a subplot. As part of this narrative shift, the dramatic climax of the screenplay is built around Auer's efforts to keep the Nazi authorities from stealing the autograph score of the composer's last symphony—a manuscript that Hitler covets for his collection of Germanic artifacts. In turn, this climactic event drives the high point of the other story as Bruckner's tribulations in Vienna reach their most heart-wrenching point.

Owing to my view of film as an art form rather than as mere entertainment, my script motivates the audience to grow with the story, and the plot is built so as to prompt viewers to adjust their perception of Bruckner and other characters as they are given increasingly revealing information about their motivations and struggles. Thus while the conflict-crisis-resolution narrative arc plays out in the story, my script encourages the viewer to embark on an inner journey as well. This approach can be illustrated with a scene in which Bruckner slams his door on a prostitute secretly sent to him by a group of students intent on testing the strength of his religious and moral convictions. After many years—and many scenes—a dream in which Bruckner has sex with the prostitute makes us rethink our initial perception of him as a prude. Bruckner's dream shows that, although his reaction had been conditioned by a deep-seated obedience of Catholic precepts, he had subconsciously wished to act on his prurient desire. It is only after some time, then, that we come to understand the extent to which fear of sin and suppressed sexuality defined Bruckner's personal life.

Given Bruckner's quaint personality, my screenplay highlights the contradiction between his simple nature and the monumental works he composed. (As we know, Bruckner made no effort to conceal his

humble Upper-Austrian roots when he moved to Vienna in the 1860s. Not surprisingly, his peasant-like manners and his deep religious beliefs became a source of derision among the sophisticated Viennese.) Along with amusing situations triggered by his self-imposed celibacy, Bruckner's odd personality furnishes a humorous counterpoint to the drama and provides relief from heart-wrenching moments. Going beyond entertaining material, however, my script tells the story of Bruckner—and of Auer—as a means of eliciting reflection on the conflict between tradition and innovation in art, the quest for artistic perfection and immortality, and the appropriation of music for nefarious purposes.

The production of *For Later Times* that I envision is ambitious, and it would rely heavily on historically accurate sets and beautiful photography of nineteenth-century Vienna and Upper Austria. It would also rely on nuanced acting—ideally by up-and-coming talent. (Needless to say, my vision is not about the cast but about telling a meaningful story in a fresh way.) And, not unlike *Amadeus*, the production that I envision would also rely heavily on the imposing sound of the music showcased. Bruckner's music plays indeed an essential role in *For Later Times*, and I have carefully chosen the compositions and excerpts referenced in my script for historical accuracy and/or dramatic effect.

Although Bruckner's music started to be appreciated toward the end of his life, the times for which he composed his unconventional works have not yet come—at least in terms of widespread understanding of his symphonic conception. I believe that the blend of compelling storytelling and haunting music featured in my screenplay will appeal to a broad audience, and in so doing the production that I envision will bring us closer to Bruckner's later times.

A note on the sources

Most of the characters in *For Later Times* are historical persons. However, whereas the story of Bruckner is closely based on documentary and anecdotal evidence, Auer's is mostly fictional. For instance, it is difficult to establish the exact nature of the relationship between the real Max Auer (1880-1962) and the National Socialist cause, but for dramatic purposes in the script he fights the Nazis and their utilization of Bruckner's symphonies for propaganda purposes. Dramatic considerations are also behind changes in the chronology of events (e.g. Bruckner's stay in Bad Kreuzen being pushed back to the end of his life rather than taking place before he moved to Vienna) as well as the notion that the composer was able to finish his Ninth Symphony—with Auer to blame for the missing pages from the score of the work's Finale.

All historical material is in the public domain, and my sources on Bruckner's life and career are too numerous to be listed in full. Several scenes and sequences are based on anecdotes first published in biographies and memoirs such as Ernst Decsey's *Bruckner: Versuch eines Lebens* (Berlin 1921), Friedrich Eckstein's *Erinnerungen an Anton Bruckner* (Vienna 1924), and Göllicher/Auer's *Anton Bruckner: Ein Lebens- und Schaffens-Bild* (Regensburg 1922-1937). My main source for the sequence on the conflict between Richard Wagner and Eduard Hanslick is a passage from Wagner's autobiography *Mein Leben* (Leipzig, 1876), and the sequence about Joseph Goebbels's role in the induction of Bruckner into the Walhalla Pantheon draws on information and/or photographs first published in Paul Ehlers's "Das Regensburg Bruckner-Erlebnis" (*Zeitschrift für Musik* 104 of 1937) and in other newspaper articles of the time.

From screenplay to production

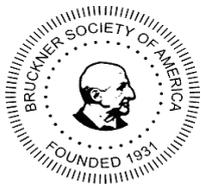
In the past two or three years *For Later Times* has been selected as quarterfinalist, semifinalist, and finalist in important screenwriting contests, including the Austria International Film Festival, Big Break, Creative World Awards, Scriptapalooza, Shore Scripts, and the prestigious Austin Film Festival Screenplay Competition. Although "quarterfinalist" does not sound like an impressive accolade, it should be kept in mind that the number of entries in these contests is in the thousands, and that second round in the 2020 Austin Film Festival, for instance, means placement in the top 20% of 13,175 entries.

Sadly, in spite of encouraging reviews from competition judges and the fact that my script has been refined to the point where it is ready to be considered for production, my project's future looks uncertain. It is not surprising, though, that a biopic about Bruckner—regardless of its intrinsic quality—will have scant chances when competing against the garden-variety action movie scripts auctioned and produced by the dozen in Hollywood. And so, as an industry outsider—and as someone who doesn't even have an agent—the film industry has thus far remained out of reach to me and my project. (For legal reasons, by the way, filmmakers in Hollywood as well as in Austria and Germany avoid reading query letters or emails from people outside the film industry, and agents and managers ensure that unsolicited material never gets to their clients' inboxes.) Regarding the project's financing, moreover, it should be noted that the Indie path is not

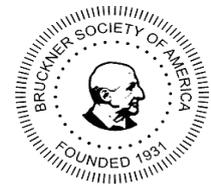
viable for a production of *For Later Times*, as historical dramas as a rule require large budgets. This means that the only path that could lead from my script to a filmmaker seems to be networking—which is the reason behind publishing these lines in a journal devoted to Bruckner.

In short, I am hoping to get help from fellow Bruckner enthusiasts who may know (of) a movie industry professional who in turn may be able to help in getting my screenplay into the hands of a film director or producer. And, as it happens, right now is the perfect time for getting things in motion to produce a movie whose theatrical release would ideally coincide with the bicentennial of Bruckner’s birth year. After all, wouldn’t it be wonderful to have a Bruckner biopic of broad appeal released as part of the 2024 celebrations?

[Editors Note: several pages of script excerpts are posted on the Journal’s website - [here](#)]

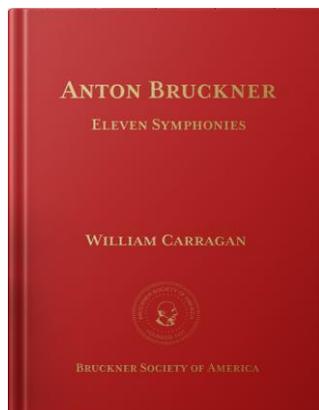


BRUCKNER SOCIETY OF AMERICA



The Bruckner Society of America was founded in 1931, and after a period of inactivity was reactivated in 2009. Currently, the Society is involved in promotion of Bruckner with activities such as the East Coast Brucknerathon & Symposium, awarding the Kilenyi Medal of Honor, and publications such as *The Bruckner Journal* and the “*Red Book*” devoted to the Eleven Symphonies

www.brucknersocietyamerica.org



An Unusual Year: but the Bruckner Marathons Go On!

The two annual USA Bruckner marathons adapted to the circumstances imposed on us all in 2020, and in two very different ways. The 22nd annual “Brucknerthon” organized by Dave Griegel and Ramón Khalona was held entirely virtually on Saturday, September 5th. Dave and Ramón prepared a playlist and distributed it to interested parties ahead of time. On the day of the event, they established a schedule that allowed for about 10 minutes of discussion in between the allotted times for each work. The 12th annual “Brucknerathon” organized by John Berky, instead took a social distancing-based approach, distributing recordings of symphonies by reduced forces, ranging from solo organ to piano four-hands, and up to chamber ensembles. These recordings were made available early so that participants could listen at their own convenience. Most of these performances derived from John’s archive at www.abruckner.com and are not commercially available. For the recordings that are, one may of course obtain more detailed information from the website. Not surprisingly, the two events were most interesting, enjoyable, and informative. As I have before, I’ll present brief reviews, some with (quite personal) comparisons to recordings I know, when relevant. Inasmuch as the two events are not directly comparable, I’ll write about them separately. So, to the performances...

WEST COAST “BRUCKNERTHON”:

All but one of these performances are on commercial labels, although some of course will be more difficult to find than others.

Overture in G minor (1863 version) and Symphony in D minor - scherzo (“Die Nullte”, ed Wöss), Maticic, Philharmonia O, 16/1/56

As is typical of Maticic’s performances, these early representations of his art with Bruckner are intense yet graceful. The overture begins with a portentous introduction, shifting into a quick basic tempo with ample lyricism and good momentum throughout. It is unfortunate that only the scherzo of the D minor was released, because it is full of energy. Noteworthy is the attention to dynamics in both pieces. Chailly on Decca/London provided us with a fine CD coupling of these two works. It is, amusingly, now available as part of an entire set of the symphonies that costs less online than does the individual disk.

Symphony No. 1 in C minor (1877 “Linz” ed Nowak), Davies, Bruckner O Linz, 7/6/05

A number of us heard Davies tour the United States with this orchestra and symphony around the time this recording was made. Those live performances were relentless and rather off-putting. Here, thankfully, Davies is in better form. Tempos are more sensible, and welcome relaxation is heard at appropriate points. A rather overenthusiastic trumpeter is one contributor to poor orchestral balance and sound that is weak in the low bass. However, the performance shows some enjoyable nuance, especially in the slow movement and the finale. In the latter, the transitions from the recapitulation into the coda are well paced, leading to an effective close. Excellent Bruckner firsts abound in the catalog, of course.

Symphony No. 2 in C minor (1872/77 mixed ed Haas), DePreist, Tokyo Metropolitan SO, 12/4/06

James DePreist was one of the first African-American conductors to have a major international career. He had an illustrious tenure with the Oregon Symphony and recorded with both them and numerous orchestras around the world. Here he shows a great affinity for the Bruckner idiom with a crackling performance of the 2nd symphony. It opens with lovely strings, building intensity throughout the opening movement, which is marked by nice phrasing and excellent orchestral execution. Likewise, the sound in the adagio is rich, deep and warm and again well-phrased. The scherzo (*sans repeats*) is lively, with the brass perfectly balanced and a lovely horn that is present in the background throughout. A slight degree of relaxation in the trio is just right. DePreist then rides into the finale with a real vengeance, providing us with a movement that reveals many lovely touches, including rich low strings in the B theme, all the power one could want when appropriate, and a tremendous ending. Oh yes, the timpani are definitely *there*, all the way. A wonderful experience.

Symphony No. 3 in D minor (1873/76/77 ed Nowak), Zender, SWR SO, 2005

Hans Zender's 3rd is a lovely, if quirky, entry, and the only one played in the West that is not commercially available. Zender is better known for a very fine 2nd, recorded around 1990. We'd heard this 3rd almost a decade ago in the East, and it again made a generally positive impression. It's a mix of 1873 for movements 1, 3, and 4, together with the 1876 adagio with its slightly elongated A theme phrases. The performance moves smartly and booms with power. A nice ebb and flow lends interest to the opening movement, which, aside from slowing a bit too much towards the end, is very satisfying. The slow movement is warm and measured, leading to a huge, heavyweight scherzo. Like the opening, the finale is passionate and powerful, a little more measured than, say, a Blomstedt performance, but still very effective. And then there's the quirk: he finishes by stapling the 1877 ending on to the proceedings. I don't think that works very well, but the rest was fine.

Symphony No. 4 in E-flat major (1878/80/81 ed Haas), Konwitschny, Czech PO, 1952

Numerous recordings over the years have illustrated the affinity of Franz Konwitschny for Bruckner's music. At his best, his interpretations are powerful and personal. A decade ago we heard a 4th from him recorded in 1961 with the Vienna Symphony that was oddly a bit bland. That is not the case here. A stately introduction from a horn with lovely vibrato opens this effort, which has quite decent sound for its vintage, if a bit harsh at times. Gear shifts throughout the first movement generate great excitement yet flow completely naturally. A very patient entry into the development section affords a moment of repose, and the orchestra, sounding superb, is with the conductor all the way as an imposing build up to the coda unfolds. The andante opens at almost a halting pace that then seamlessly melts into a peaceful, stately presentation of its pastoral material. A mainstream, measured scherzo is very much in the style of the first two movements, making the urgent start to the finale startling and very effective. Here the brass emerge almost stealthily, as Konwitschny's wonderful toying with dynamics over a strong pulse communicates nothing so much as raw enthusiasm at making this journey with us. The ending, with a remarkable pull back in tempo before the coda, is very dramatic. This, the first commercial recording of Bruckner by this orchestra, gave notice for the impressive recordings to come from them under conductors such as Maticic and Albrecht (see #7, below).

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major (1878 ed Nowak), Rögner, Berlin RSO, 8/6/90

From the 1980s to the early 90s, Heinz Rögner recorded the last six Bruckner symphonies with this formerly East Berlin-based orchestra. As we knew from hearing the electrifying 6th that he produced near the end of his life, his work showed a very individual personality that emphasized the drama in the music. Some might find his approach mannered. However, most of us felt that, while his conducting was interventionist, it was interventionist in a good way. For the 5th, after a solid, measured opening, he quickens to a mainstream tempo for the A theme, with warm low strings and real delicacy. At cadences he slows ever so slightly to increase emphasis, and he's not shy about creating a truly impressive "wall of sound" effect at the big moments. Tempo contrasts between these and the softer interludes allow him to then plow into the coda with real drive. A quick walking pace opens the adagio, and, again, he uses contrasts in both tempi and dynamics to heighten the drama. *Pizzicati* are strongly emphasized, and the close of the movement builds inexorably. The scherzo begins at a moderate pace, with clever balances that allow the low brass to come forward and fill out the textures. His "train leaving the station" *accelerandi* are perfectly judged. Two huge timpani thwacks begin the codas—we're talking about a conductor who leaves no stone unturned, folks. A quicksilver trio sets itself off nicely. With the finale, we see remarkable attention to both dynamics and balances. Emphasis on bringing out secondary lines pays great dividends as everything is clearly heard, even at his quickish tempo. The chorale is noble, slightly decelerating as it proceeds, and the fugue really moves with dramatic pull-backs along the way. Finally, the ending is thrilling, with powerful low brass filling the texture as earlier on, and both dynamic and tempo variations infusing tremendous life into the coda. If your taste runs to seat-of-the-pants roller coaster rides that just avoid crossing the line to excess, then this is a 5th for you.

Symphony No. 6 in A major (1881 ed Wöss), Kamioka, New Japan PO, 19 and 22/4/18

Great sound marks this recent recording from yet another Japanese orchestra well-versed in the Bruckner tradition. Kamioka is again a very interventionist conductor, and his use of the 1927 Wöss edition (based on the 1899 Hynais), with its fascinating dynamic effects, makes for another very interesting experience. He opens the work at a moderate tempo, with strong contributions from low brass and timpani along the way. Decelerations at transitions are sudden, bordering on jarring. Several dramatic *subito piano e crescendo* moments--suddenly soft, then growing louder--occur, and the first movement closes with a coda that begins

slowly but leads to a fast final peroration. A moderate slow movement benefits from haunting timpani contributions and is quite lovely. Unexpected dynamic effects and tempo modifications highlight the scherzo, and a rich instrumental blend comes out strongly. The finale displays even more exaggerated effects: *diminuendi* that cause the music to all but disappear, and a halving of the tempo at some transitions. “Over the top” would not be an unwarranted description, although there is no denying the minute-to-minute conviction of the performers to the work.

Symphony No. 7 in E major (1885 ed Nowak), Albrecht, Czech PO, 24-26/2/95

With Albrecht we return to more normalcy in Bruckner interpretation. Although he is yet another “under the radar” conductor, he has recorded Bruckner’s last five symphonies with this orchestra. He opens the 7th at a moderate pace, with a warm, rich sound, tasteful handling of dynamics, and a pleasing ebb and flow. The horns absolutely soar towards the end of the recapitulation of the A theme. Only a bit of exaggerated acceleration at the end disrupts the atmosphere of the movement. The adagio is a bit of a let down, starting somewhat inflexibly, becoming a bit more lyrical afterwards, but with the climax itself sounding rather perfunctory. The trumpets seem a bit tired in the otherwise muscular scherzo, and the finale is played rather straight, with only a hint of relaxation on occasion. Fortunately, he slows for an effective coda, a welcome contrast to the ending of the first movement. For me, though, Maticic did more with the work in front of the same orchestra.

Symphony No. 8 in C minor (intermediate version of mvmts 1, 2, 4 prepared by Carragan; 1888 adagio ed Gault and Kawasaki), Schaller, Philharmonia Festiva, 7/12

The materials for the 1887 first version of the 8th symphony contain numerous after-the-fact annotations by the composer. Given the existence of a complete intermediate version of the adagio dating from 1888, Professor William Carragan embarked on a fascinating speculative project: He created a score that could be considered a reasonable approximation of the entire symphony as Bruckner might have left it had he stopped work on it around that time. We therefore do not hear the major revisions that led to the familiar version of 1890. The overall structure of the result is thus closer to 1887 than to 1890: The loud ending to the first movement is retained, the trio is that of 1887, and likewise the original coda to the finale is left unchanged. One observation relating to the slow movement can exemplify the “intermediateness” of this version. The score locations that follow refer to Carragan’s invaluable article* discussing recordings of the symphony’s versions. In part V of the adagio of 1887, a relatively soft 10-bar passage (measures 225-234) separates the build-up to the first major climax in that section from the climax itself. Listeners will recognize this material as that which Haas inserted into the 1890 score in constructing his edition of the symphony. Bruckner of course completely excised this music in preparing the 1890 version, so the build-up (Nowak score, section P) leads directly to the climax (section Q). Here, in the 1888 adagio, the build-up and the climax are still separated, but by a shorter 6-bar passage (measures 215-220)—so it is “intermediate” indeed!

The adventurous Gerd Schaller, leading his hugely skilled Munich-based orchestra, took up the project of performing this score, resulting in this marvelous recording. Schaller and Carragan had previously collaborated on a similarly successful effort involving the 3rd symphony. As in his work on a speculative intermediate version of the latter, Carragan finds instrumental lines that enrich the orchestral texture in a number of places as well as uncovering material that Bruckner initially added but then removed. Many fascinating interludes decorate the score from beginning to end, and at no time does one get the impression of anything artificial in the result.

Schaller begins the opening movement slowly, with careful attention to dynamics and a very rich ambience. The restatement of the opening motif opens up with incredible power, in terrific, crystal clear sound. Schaller appears to be very comfortable with unfamiliar passages in the development section, and his momentum doesn’t flag at all throughout the movement. A very slight pull back at the start of the loud coda helps avoid the tendency for this music to sound tacked on to the quiet prior material. He generally avoids anything other than very minor tempo manipulations; however, telling instances of subtle nuance abound and enrich the proceedings. The scherzo illustrates his approach well: It is big-boned, and while tempi are generally very steady, dynamics are varied effectively. His presentation of the 1888 adagio is truly noble, the basses pulsing powerfully in the background to open the movement. Much unfamiliar material decorates the sections of the movement around the climaxes, none more impressive than that beginning at measure 251, fifteen seconds of what Carragan suggests may be “the greatest horn moment in all of Bruckner.” Powerful, roaring brass, yet perfectly blended with the rest of the orchestra, open the finale at (for once) a tempo close to what the composer wanted. Noteworthy in this performance is superb attention paid to dynamics and instrumental balances. In particular, careful layering of orchestral lines ensures that no sense of congestion is

felt anywhere. He clearly does not want any section of the orchestra to overwhelm the texture, and the result is a much more coherent performance than we usually hear. We do, however, hear some felicitous pull backs in tempo, setting off quieter sections from the intense outbursts that surround them. As in the adagio, a great horn moment emerges unexpectedly late in the development section. A relaxation of tempo before the final section of the recapitulation fits perfectly. Finally, the coda is allowed to grow entirely naturally. It does not peak too soon; rather, it's played with amazing care and shape and with a final slower tempo that allows everything to be clearly heard and to make the intended impact. One of the long-time participants at the West Coast event said that this was not only the best performance he'd heard at this marathon, but perhaps the best he'd ever heard at any of those gatherings. Terrific.

Symphony No. 9 in D minor (1894 ed Nowak; 1996 revised finale realization by Samale/Philips/Cohrs/Mazzuca), Wildner, New Philharmonic O of Westphalia, 20-21/4/98 and 12/5/98

Johannes Wildner and his Westphalia orchestra recorded this complete 9th and followed it up with recordings of three versions of the 3rd in 2002. All these recordings have merit, but he appears to have conducted virtually no Bruckner since. Nonetheless, this 9th is a worthy effort. The opening is strong and steady, if not as opulent as what we are used to hearing from the “big” bands. He phrases naturally, relaxes through the B theme and establishes a good pulse for the C. Although the trumpets are a bit bright, the horns are solid and the winds very appealing. His approach is generally very direct, but with effective transitions and an excellent entry to the coda, which is taken quickly. The scherzo is compromised by congested sound in the loudest portions; otherwise, no complaints. Wildner's accelerations at transitional points keep the interest high. The quicksilver trio isn't scary enough, though. Likewise, the adagio feels a bit matter-of-fact at times—the cataclysm is too tame—although the playing is very lovely. The finale is the best part of this performance from the point of view of interpretation. The opening is truly threatening and benefits from excellent control of dynamics and pacing. A forlorn quality to the sound generated by the winds and strings sets an appropriate mood. When we reach the chorale, its nobility is clearly reaching for sunshine to burst through the clouds, and the build to the mid-movement climax is stirring. It's unfortunate that he chose the SPCM realization with its fussy additions that add nothing of substance. Still, Wildner does about as good a job with this particular score as I know. As I've said before, go for Schaller/Carragan if you want something closer to a satisfying completed 9th.

EAST COAST “BRUCKNERATHON”:

Inasmuch as all of these performances are of arrangements, I will give only general information regarding the orchestral version from which each derives, unless there are noteworthy features worth mentioning.

Overture in G minor, Four Orchestral Pieces, and “Symphony for Strings in F major,” Ryker, Tokyo Sinfonia, 13/3/09

This fascinating recording presents effective string orchestra reductions of the overture and orchestral pieces, and, conversely, a chamber augmentation of the string quintet. All of the performances are fine except for some minor initial intonation uncertainty in the violins. A lively if somewhat stiff overture is followed by a more appealingly lyrical interpretation of the four pieces, one that is marked by nice warmth in the lower strings. Finally, the augmented quintet receives a very attractive performance. The opening movement displays a pleasant ebb and flow with nice dynamic variation. The scherzo that follows dances appealingly, and the warm adagio is marked by a lovely, delicate close. With an initial walking pace, the finale sparkles with effective highlighting and emphasis at appropriate points, bringing the proceedings to a satisfying close.

Symphony in D minor (“Die Nullte”, arranged for piano four-hands by August Stradal), Dino Sequi and Gerhard Hofer, 4/9/19

An incredibly demanding four-hands arrangement of the D minor symphony put the skills of Sequi and Hofer to the test in this one-off live performance, and they rose to the challenge. Interpretively, their approach is paced moderately with sensitive relaxation for transitions. The latter was important, because meter changes at those points in the opening movement caused some awkwardness for the pianists. Overall, the playing is solid, with a mainstream slow movement, an energetic scherzo, and an effective finale marked by well-judged tempo and dynamic variations. Strangely, the final note of the symphony, which in the orchestral version is an octave below the ones before it, is here identical to the previous two--the only

obvious misstep in the arrangement. This recording is part of a set that also includes the nine conventionally-numbered symphonies in performances that are never less than enjoyable and at times superb. My favorites were the 4th in the Mahler arrangement and the 6th, arranged by Joseph Schalk. One caveat: The 5th emerges in an arrangement by Otto Singer Jr., which dates from the early 20th century and therefore has the Schalk cuts in the finale. Sadly, this fine set is not readily available in the U.S.

Symphony No. 1 in C minor - scherzo (arranged for steel band), Renegade Steel Band Orchestra, 2/2011

As utterly bizarre as the idea sounds, this little five-minute excerpt was brilliantly arranged and played and was vastly enjoyable. The quality of the musicianship of this group is astonishing. Too bad there isn't more of this sort of thing from them.

Symphony No. 2 in C minor (arranged for twenty instruments by Anthony Payne), Pinnock, Royal Academy of Music, 15/3/2013

This quite effective realization of Payne's chamber arrangement the 2nd was played as part of the 2017 East coast event. The sound is a bit dry, making the violins sound somewhat thin, but overall the playing is beautiful, and the interplay between the sections fascinating and enjoyable. The opening movement is energetically paced with pleasing lyricism, especially in the slight relaxation that allows the horns to play out midway. Tempi for the second movement are well-chosen, and the scherzo is exciting if a bit challenging for the violins. The finale is well-sprung throughout and brings the performance to a strong close. Payne's arrangement was generally based on the second version but was spiced by a number of variations. These included the erroneous notes in the trumpet at the end of the first movement, the horn rather than clarinet at the end of 2, and an 1877 scherzo into which he inserted the final note prior to the coda from 1872, as did Haas in his edition.

Symphony No. 3 in D minor (transcription for organ by Ernst-Erich Stender), Stender, 2001

The organ of St. Mary's church in Lübeck, Germany, was the instrument in the spotlight for this performance, and it is a noble instrument indeed. What brings this performance down a notch for me is excessive fussiness with tempi, leading to awkward gear changes in mainly the opening movement. The registrations don't always work to the advantage of even hearing the main melodic line. The first movement does have truly majestic moments, especially in the recapitulation. Similarly, the adagio is rich and noble, with the instrument opening up thrillingly at times. A brilliantly dancing scherzo is spiced by clever registration that plays up unusual chordal relationships. The finale begins in a somewhat subdued manner. Lively tempo variations in the B theme lend it a real playfulness. Things open up in the development section, with fanciful use of the wind stops for the second theme. The final portions of the symphony are awash in a glorious cacophony. It's a very individual reading, fun to hear, but maybe not one for repeated listenings in the long-term.

Symphony No. 4 in E-flat major (arranged for ten instruments by Rolf Verbeek), Verbeek, Camerata RCO, 1/7/20

This glorious live performance was one of the highlights of both marathons for me. Made in an excellent acoustical space, this recording best showcased how effective a chamber reduction of a Bruckner symphony can be. In particular, the instrumental balances and blend were superior to those in the other performances we heard for small ensembles, several of which were marred by squeaky high strings that dominated the proceedings. Here, all the instrumentalists share the spotlight appropriately, with strong contributions from piano and accordion(!) serving to fill texture without being overwhelming or distracting. By the way, the sound of the accordion was very rounded, more like a harmonium, allowing it to blend effectively and not impart any odd coloration to the overall sound. The propulsive opening movement is both stylish and delicate with power supplied by horn, clarinet, and timpani above the five-string ensemble. The latter, especially the solo viola, are simply lovely in the slow movement, the transitions of which are carried by the accordion. Its climax is truly stirring. The brilliance of the arrangement is very evident in the scherzo: The horn opens first alongside piano, which then gives way to the clarinet, leading finally to a hand off to the accordion. Masterful. The nervous opening of the finale is followed by an especially winning contribution from the viola. The sound opens up thrillingly in climactic moments with horn and piano imparting true nobility, and an ongoing dynamic tension infuses the entire movement. As the symphony proceeds to its close, pauses are given due weight as a very measured presentation of the coda provides a sublime finish. I can't say enough about how outstanding this performance was for me. I very much hope it is released

commercially by this amazingly talented ensemble. Furthermore, I hope Verbeek appears in front of full orchestras in Bruckner—he is the real deal.

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major (arranged for piano four hands by William Carragan), Carragan and Crawford Howie, 16/4/11

Carragan here gives us an arrangement of the complete work, and by complete, I mean *complete*, and as a result, wickedly difficult. The performers open at a quick walking pace, imparting to the first movement a wonderful urgency. Especially impressive is the interplay of duple vs triple meter in the adagio, again at a quick pace. I very much enjoyed the decision to take the scherzo at a more measured tempo. The movement is nicely shaped and possesses effective momentum. Of course, the finale places nearly inhuman demands on performers in such an arrangement, and Carragan didn't cut either himself or his colleague any slack. Hearing these two marvelous musicians rise to the occasion was thrilling. The interplay of the lines is outstanding. And if it weren't enough to present this exhausting work all the way through once, the pianists encored the last part of the finale, this time using an arrangement apparently deriving from the form in which the symphony existed in 1876!

Symphony No. 6 in A major (arranged for chamber ensemble by Mattias Giesen), Thomas Christian, Altomonte O, 17/8/16

The cavernous acoustic for this recording, made in the Marmooraal at St. Florian, rendered it less successful as a listening experience than the other arrangements of this type. Compounding the issue in this acoustic environment was the quick—sometimes scrappy—tempo taken for the opening movement. More sensible tempo choices in the remainder of the symphony helped considerably. The slow movement is more nuanced, with effective relaxation at the more introspective moments. An energetic scherzo follows, with a lovely trio showcasing piano and low strings, and the performance closes with a sensible, well-proportioned finale. Besides the strings, an especially outstanding horn, clarinet, and piano were the major contributors to the proceedings. The piano and strings handled the rhythmic contributions; one missed the underpinning of drums, especially in the first movement. Otherwise, the arrangement worked quite well.

Symphony No. 7 in E major (arranged for chamber ensemble by Hanns Eisler, Karl Rankl, and Erwin Stein), Bolton, Basel SO, 17-18/6/20

This 7th is an interesting example of good intentions that don't quite add up to an optimal result. On the positive side, the interpretation is mostly very sensibly paced, the playing is excellent, and the recorded sound has a pleasant “air” around it. The intriguing idea that for me doesn't work is the very prominent role assigned to the piano. If Bruckner had decided to write a piano concerto, it might have gone something like this. The piano is everywhere, taking various melodic lines throughout. Its use is most strange in the slow movement, where the tempo also drags in places, and balances in the strings are odd, with a “hole in the middle” effect due to the high string writing being very high and the low very low. The scherzo is best, featuring good interplay involving strings, clarinet, horn, and drums, into which the piano fits well. The finale exemplifies the overall approach, however, beginning with piano and viola, followed by piano and cello, and then continuing with piano and clarinet. Some of the Gutman ritards are taken, showing a degree of interpretive sensitivity.

Symphony No. 8 in C minor (arranged for Electone organs by Takeo Noguchi), Noguchi, Japan Electone O, 22/7/20

This performance utilizes sophisticated electronic keyboard synthesizers (four or five—the documentation is unclear) that are capable of rendering mostly very good facsimiles of the sounds of individual instruments. The first movement opens in a nicely paced, sensitive manner, and one is impressed by how “orchestral” the sound is. A mainstream tempo marks the scherzo, and the trio is played with great sensitivity. A bit of a surprise is in store with the adagio, because the 1888 “intermediate” version of the movement is played, just as was the case for the Schaller recording auditioned in the West and discussed above. Here the capability of the Electone instruments truly shines in their ability to reproduce the sounds of the brass and winds, and, perhaps surprisingly, also the cymbals. The interpretation again has a nice flow, with very sensitive nuance. The one notable weakness of these instruments stands out in the finale: their inability to produce anything other than a rather anemic replica of the sound of drums. Otherwise, this movement, as is the case for the symphony as a whole, shows a knowledgeable interpretive hand on the podium (tiller? keyboard?), with quite free tempo manipulation that is still well within normal bounds. The interplay of the orchestral lines in the coda is crystal-clear and the ending suitably effective. Besides the

1888 slow movement, the rest is Haas, adding to the general, never-ending free-for-all of editions used for this symphony over the years.

Symphony No. 9 in D minor (arranged for twelve instruments by Joolz Gale), Gale, Ensemble Mini, 31/7/20

The final chamber arrangement of the event was a reasonably successful presentation of the three-movement 9th. Strong points include flexible phrasing and lovely contributions from the horn in the opening movement. The viola provides an effective middle voice, dynamics are well-handled, and the tension builds well leading into the coda. On the short side, the absence of drums leaves the percussion roles to the strings and piano, with varying effectiveness. At times, an emphasis on the high strings tends to overwhelm the rest of the ensemble, as was the case in the arrangements of the 2nd and 7th mentioned earlier. However, the performance improves as it goes along, with a well-sprung scherzo making good use of the piano. The adagio is the highlight of the performance, with the ensemble providing a rich, full sound, again effectively using the piano at climactic moments and lovely contributions from the clarinet carrying many of the melodic lines. The lack of true percussion here does not detract, and the catastrophe is wonderfully arranged, the instrumental interplay very detailed. Overall, I found this performance to be very enjoyable, falling short only of the level of the astonishing 4th we heard earlier in the day.

As has been the case before, these events proved to be both interesting and enjoyable. Every recording had something significant to offer and several were exceptional. Out of the full-orchestra recordings, the ones that made the deepest impressions on me were Schaller's 8th, followed by the Rögner 5th and the DePreist 2nd. Konwitschny's 4th deserves an honorable mention. Pride of place among the performances using reduced forces was the chamber 4th from Amsterdam, followed by the Carragan/Howie 5th, and the chamber 9th. Also very enjoyable were the electone 8th and the steel band scherzo from the 1st. Finally, I can't say enough in praise of our organizers for their insistence in allowing these events to continue to take place around Bruckner's birthday. Both approaches were eminently successful and enjoyable. Let us hope that, come September of 2021, we can resume convening in person to once again enjoy the company of Dave, Ramón, and Seiran in California, and John, Ken, and Ruth in Windsor, Connecticut. Stay healthy and safe, friends, and enjoy the music.

*Neil Schore
Davis, California, USA*

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Recording Reviews

BRUCKNER: Symphonies nos. 1-9

Münchener Philharmoniker / Valery Gergiev

rec. live 2017-2019, Basilica of the Monastery of St Florian, nr. Linz, Austria

MÜNCHNER PHILHARMONIKER MPHIL0022 [9 CDs: 9:44:31]

Contents beneath review

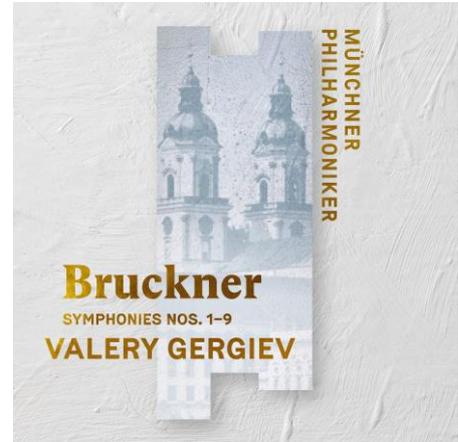
These nine symphonies are presented in a sturdy cardboard slipcase box containing the CDs in cardboard sleeves and a thick, bilingual booklet with colour photographs and extensive notes on each symphony by Bruckner specialist Thomas Leibnitz, Director of the Music Collection of the Austrian National Library and President of the International Bruckner Society. A minor quibble: I find it irritating to have to leaf through the booklet to find the individual movements and timings rather than finding them readily accessible on the reverse of the sleeves.

Gergiev opts to play the Nowak editions, making conventional choices even to the extent of preferring the last, so-called “Schalk revision” of the Third Symphony which these days is less often played than the 1877 version, and rather than do as conductors have more often been doing of late, he plays the three-movement version of the Ninth without adding any of the completions. Some space in the notes is devoted to discussing the SMPC completion but only to quote Mathias Hansen’s harsh dismissal of it as “a well-meaning but hopeless ambition on the part of do-it-yourself enthusiasts”, and options such as Gerd Schaller’s version are not even mentioned.

I admit to embarking on a review of this set with some apprehension, as trusted Brucknerian associates had advised me that there was little here to set the pulse racing; one even wittingly described the recordings as “a glorified sight-read”. On the other hand, I then found some previous reviews covering previous, separate issues of no fewer than five of the symphonies collected here in this new box set, were uniformly complimentary. Furthermore, although I concede some inconsistency in his output, I have greatly enjoyed Gergiev’s work with, to name some composers randomly, Mahler, Mussorgsky and Stravinsky, but had not previously encountered his Bruckner, so whether for me he could disprove the stereotype of Russian conductors not enjoying any great success in, or affinity with, Bruckner, remained to be seen.

The Munich Philharmonic orchestra have a long and distinguished tradition of playing Bruckner and Gergiev has been its Music Director since 2015. We may take their virtuosity for granted – their brass and woodwind are especially resonant - but the more I listened to this set, the more it seemed to me that Gergiev had determined to adhere to one over-riding guiding principle, which was to take Bruckner quite slowly and steadily, avoiding undue haste. It is of course no bad thing to be generally patient and spacious in Bruckner as long as tension does not sag, but for me, that is the problem in the First. It is not a question of timings – they are entirely apt – but more to do with a lack of bite and spring in Gergiev’s direction and a lack of variety and inflection in his phrasing, so the first movement emerges as a bit slack – although that might also have something to do with the soft-edged acoustic of the basilica. The symphony itself is sometimes a bit short-winded and needs strong advocacy to make an impact and I don’t find this account very invigorating. The Adagio is elegantly played but generalised, lacking *Innigkeit*. The strings’ arpeggios do not really sing as they should. The Scherzo is nice but, again, I have heard more convincingly aggressive accounts. The finale is decidedly more energised but I would not say that this is the most auspicious of beginnings to a cycle.

The *Pausensinfonie* goes rather better, with Gergiev strongly characterising the contrasting martial and lyrical sections - but again, the spacious acoustic robs the *tutti* of a little impact. The climax of the first movement, however, is impressive. The ensuing Andante is elegantly encompassed but again, I derive no special sense of “otherness” from its delivery. The Scherzo is a little leaden but goes well enough, especially as the tone of Munich players’ brass is so vibrant. I have no such reservations about the finale, however; it is splendid: Gergiev generates a massive sound and encompasses all its varied moods very successfully from the naïve, blustery bravado of the rustic dances to the sweetness of the contemplative sections, to the grandeur of the exhilarating conclusion. It is a triumph.



The Third is one of my two or three favourites among Bruckner's symphonies and for me it is of supreme importance that the pulsing opening phrases set the right tone of nervous anticipation – and here, unfortunately, Gergiev immediately disappoints. It is too plodding and deliberate – not in speed but in manner, with a sudden, crudely applied swelling of dynamics, and the ensuing *Gesangperiode* does not...well, really sing. As with the Second, some of the orchestral climaxes are impressive, but after the reprise fourteen minutes in of the opening, pulsing theme, the renewed climax at 15:04 is so dull and limp as to make me lose all patience and I find myself thinking that with Gergiev there are some grand moments but no real grasp of organic unity. He too frequently allows energy levels to dip – fateful in such long-breathed music – so the movement fragments. The sublime Adagio is treated perfunctorily, with insufficiently affection and breathing space between phrases – although you can certainly hear the conductor's heavy breathing. The Scherzo is satisfactory but the string figures lack astringency. Timpani are too recessed and the Trio drags rather than lilts. As with the previous two symphonies, the finale, although not without a certain deliberate heaviness, is the most satisfactory movement, such that a pattern begins to emerge. There is certainly more cohesion, especially in a movement whose assemblage of disparate components can result in fragmentation but again, moments of potentially high drama seem to pass by without impact and I have rarely been less stirred by the Wagnerian conclusion.

The Fourth evinces much the same characteristically as its predecessors and for the first five minutes or so into the first movement I find myself irked by the lack of in punch Gergiev's iteration of "the Bruckner rhythm" until the first big flare-up of the chorale eight minutes in, when instead of rounding off the ends of phrases and insisting in making everything legato, he gives the orchestra its head and it makes a glorious noise – yet again, the brass is monumental. However, on listening to the Andante for the first time I found myself asking why I found it dull; I went back to Karajan for purposes of comparison and could immediately hear the difference: there is a plasticity in Karajan's phrasing, a nuance in his application of dynamics and a variety in his tonal colouring which obliterates Gergiev's vision. I found myself thinking of the words Browning puts into the mouth of "the perfect painter" Andrea del Sarto:

"A common greyness silvers everything, -
... All is silver-grey,

Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!"

The Scherzo passes off without incident but the finale, as with Gergiev's Second Symphony and the end of the first movement here, changes up a gear to provide authentic Brucknerian passion in playing of real thrust and drive. Everything here is as it should be and the climax is thrilling. I wonder why Gergiev could not find this level of inspiration consistently.

The Fifth begins very stolidly and slowly and the very reverberant acoustic seems more prominent here than in other performances, muddying textures – although I find it hard to believe that it was engineered any differently. I suppose that matters less in music of such massive shape, but the combination of the sound and one of the slowest timings of the opening movement makes it more cumbersome than majestic; I would like more momentum. Recording in the same location, Ballot, with a similarly extended timing, creates more tension between the alternating Adagio and Allegro passages and his silences are more telling. The slow movement is also played very deliberately but the chorale cannot fail to please when it is played with such dedication and intensity. The Scherzo is hardly nimble; there, *accelerandi* are heavily underlined *rubato* is ceaselessly applied. I would like to hear more delicacy in the Trio and a greater contrast between it and the outer sections. The first fugal theme of the finale is very heavily – even crudely – handled but the carillon second subject and the quasi-Dresden Amen are wonderfully sonorous. There is a certain laboriousness in the articulation of the pounding, contrapuntal fugues, whereas the climax and coda are undeniably grand and propulsive.

The Sixth has perhaps the most chequered recording history of any of Bruckner's symphonies, not least because of the disagreement about the tempo markings of the first movement and the relationships between them, but also because it is the most enigmatic and least performed of them. My reaction to the opening of the first movement is that once more Gergiev does not find enough momentum in his interpretation of "Majestoso" to bring it alive and a certain insipidness obtains and the chorale beginning five minutes in lacks impact. I find myself much happier as the movement progresses, however; Gergiev takes the long view and builds nicely, gathering pace and intensity as he goes and the last couple of minutes are splendid. The Adagio is an unqualified success: stately but with plenty of inner tension and ideal balances between the strings and horns. The conclusion is as tender and ethereal as you could wish – although I could do without Gergiev's heavy breathing obbligato accompanying the thrice-repeated of the last A. The Scherzo triplets bounce along convincingly without losing the sense of underlying menace and the Ländler Trio is relaxed without losing shape. The finale is suitably restless and searching; Gergiev catches the fundamental

nerviness of the music and the orchestra is particularly impressive here, making the most heroic noise without obscuring the texture of individual instrumental lines. Minor reservations about the opening notwithstanding, this for me is one of the two stand-out performances in the set.

The rising phrase which opens the Seventh concludes with strangely exaggerated vibrato. That continues and was presumably specifically requested by Gergiev – and I wonder why. That opening also conforms to the pattern of all the preceding symphonies here in that there is a lack of tautness in the phrasing so the music comes across as too smoothed over. Again, the recurrence of that phenomenon suggests that is exactly what Gergiev wants but I don't think it works. When the tempo starts to increase with the introduction of the third theme the mood remains listless rather than embracing the Alpine jolliness suggested by the rhythm and the movement never really takes off. This is one symphony where Gergiev's tempi approach Celibidache's for slowness but he hasn't the Romanian maestro's gift for creating transcendence. The famous, funereal tribute Adagio simply drags; it weaves no timeless spell, playing into the hands of critics who find Bruckner's idiom long-winded – and I have never heard a more spineless climactic cymbal-crash. The Scherzo ambles by innocuously enough but its Trio is lacklustre. The finale is likewise competent without being very rousing – but that is neither here nor there in a Seventh whose Adagio is missing its emotional core. This is the least satisfactory of all the nine symphonies here.

The Eighth is surely both the beating heart and the apogee of any Bruckner cycle – unless that distinction is accorded to the Ninth (of that more below). Yet again, the opening evinces the same tics which mar the introductions to preceding symphonies: excessive legato, slight elongation of note values and a general lethargy which does not equate to sublimity – and subsequent peaks in the music are pusillanimous. The Scherzo, too, is too comfortable. If the Eighth sets the tone of a Bruckner cycle, then its Adagio is in turn seminal to the effect of the symphony itself. This is such beautiful music and it is here so expertly played, that I cannot fail to enjoy it, but if I return to Knappertsbusch, Karajan, Giulini, Maazel, Sinopoli or indeed a dozen other recordings of this, my favourite symphony, plucked at random from the many I prize, I hear so much more of the numinous in the music. The phrasing here is often prosaic and the celestial harp is sometimes sadly submerged beneath the weight of strings. Gergiev's loud exhaling does not enhance the listener's pleasure. The finale is predictably the most successful movement; it is as if Gergiev applies the same template to every symphony which involves underplaying and withholding the power of Bruckner's inspiration until unleashing it in the finale. The coda is everything the preceding music should have been: tense, menacing, mysterious, then triumphant.

The Ninth begins with grave dignity – the product of absolutely lovely orchestral blend and sound and judicious pacing – building impressively to the first immense declaration of the main theme. The ensuing second, flowing melody is played lightly and tenderly – everything here is right. This took me by surprise on first hearing, as so much of what had come before – I listened chronologically – had been inconsistent or downright disappointing. The perfect combination of lyricism and forward drive is maintained throughout, generating real and consistent excitement in a manner conspicuously lacking in most of the preceding symphonies. The timpani and horns cover themselves with glory and the movement mesmerises throughout. The Scherzo, too, has all the brutal, manic propulsion sometimes previously missing from that movement. The chattering oboe interludes are like a guest appearance by Till Eulenspiegel. After two such masterfully executed movements, the Adagio has to deliver; Gergiev makes all the right choices, allowing the Munich Philharmonic to shine in every instrumental department. The supple lyricism of his direction is couched in instrumental strands of the utmost transparency, despite the slightly challenging woolliness of the acoustic. The sun breaks through every time the Dresden Amen is intoned, then the stormy, pounding riposte from the brass and lower strings threatens to overwhelm it, perfectly characterising the struggle the Adagio embodies. The famous D major sunburst at 16:42 is meltingly beautiful – the inverse counterpart to the cry of despair which is the equally celebrated dissonant, dominant thirteenth chord. The coda is magical; apotheosis is complete. Despite wishing for a fourth movement, I found this to be the best performance by far of all the nine symphonies.

These might be live recordings but any slips in ensemble are negligible and there is virtually no audience noise; the only aural distractions come from the conductor himself and some faint ambient hiss more noticeable on headphones. While I am not necessarily in favour of interventionist conducting – especially in Bruckner – for me there is a residual feeling about most of this cycle that Gergiev often plays the scores so straight and carefully as to render them faceless. The playing is very fine, the timings and proportions unexceptionable, but the end results are often somehow unmemorable. Too many symphonies here follow the same pattern of inconsistency, delivering for the most part an unadventurous account of the music, punctuated by moments – or even whole movements – of real grandeur before defaulting to “safe mode”. In an age where there is absolutely no shortage of complete Bruckner symphonies, this set does not stand out;

apart from sets such as Karajan's which have been long-established in the catalogue, even the most recent comparable live cycle from Wakasugi on Altus, which I reviewed towards the end of last year, seems more involving. To sum up, I do not share my fellow-reviewers' enthusiasm for this. I have to conclude that Gergiev and Bruckner are not ideally matched and while I concede that there are definite highlights, such as the Sixth and the Ninth, but two unqualified success out of nine do not the complete Bruckner conductor make. I would by no means go so far as to echo the verdict that they are "glorified sight-readings", otherwise "frequently routine" would be a fair description of the cycle as a whole; it is certainly far from revelatory – but that Ninth is a beauty.

Ralph Moore

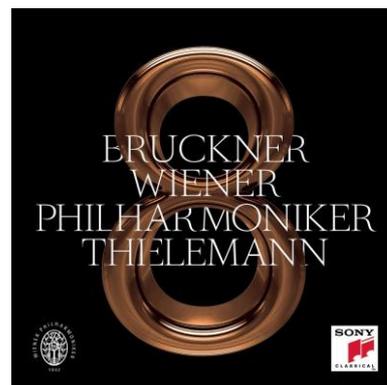
Contents details:

- Symphony No. 1 in C Minor WAB 101 [50:48]
1877 Linz version, ed. Nowak
rec. 25 September 2017*
- Symphony No. 2 in C Minor WAB 102 [55:32]
1877 version, ed. Nowak
rec. 24-25 September 2018*
- Symphony No. 3 in D Minor WAB 103 [55:29]
1888/89 version ed. Nowak
rec. September 2017*
- Symphony No. 4 in E Flat Major WAB 104 [68:30]
2nd version of 1877/78 with the 1880 Finale, ed. Nowak
rec. 26 September 2017*
- Symphony No. 5 in B Flat Major WAB 105 [80:33]
Original 1878 version, ed. Nowak
rec. 23-24 September 2019*
- Symphony No. 6 in A Major WAB 106 [58:38]
1881 version, ed. Nowak
rec. 2-25 September 2019*
- Symphony No. 7 in E Major WAB 107 [71:34]
Original 1885 version, ed. Nowak
rec. 25-26 September 2019*
- Symphony No. 8 in C Minor WAB 108 [80:44]
1890 version, ed. Nowak
rec. 26 September 2018*
- Symphony No. 9 in D Minor WAB 109 [62:43]
Original 1894 version, ed. Nowak
rec. 25-26 September 2018*
- All live, Stiftsbasilika, St Florian*

BRUCKNER: Symphony No. 8 in C Minor, WAB 108 (ed. Haas, 1939)
Wiener Philharmoniker / Christian Thielemann
rec. live, 5 & 13 October 2019, Musikverein, Golden Hall, Vienna
SONY 19439786582 [81:28]

This is the first instalment of a projected complete Bruckner symphony cycle from these artists on Sony. Thielemann's previous recording of this symphony with the Dresden Staatskapelle made in 2009 was generally well received despite being on the ponderous side. This recording made a decade later with an equally celebrated Bruckner orchestra is a couple of minutes faster...but seems slower, being somewhat flabby and lacking in momentum.

This is a composite, live recording derived from two performances but there is absolutely no audience noise I could divine. However, that might indicate the muddiness of the recorded sound; the engineering as not as good as Profil gave Thielemann in Dresden, as there is a lack of dynamic range, the brass and woodwind are too prominent compared with the



recessed percussion, and there is a general opacity and sponginess about the whole sound picture – Jansons was much better served by his engineers in his live recording of the Seventh in the same venue a couple of years previous to this.

The problem is that the whole recording exudes a general air of routine competence but seems devoid of true tension. The repeated “Announcement of Death” theme generates little terror every time it reappears; its climactic restatement thirteen and a half minutes in before the coda of the first movement is limp and...well, *anticlimactic*. One can revel in the beautiful playing of the VPO but listen in vain for the kind of transcendence Karajan achieves with the same orchestra twenty years earlier in his final, spectacular, digital version. Normally, when I sit down to listen to this, my favourite of all symphonies, I am transported; here I feel as if I am a railway passenger observing a sequence of mildly impressive landscapes through the window as I pass through the countryside and it wouldn't much matter if I dozed off for a while.

I never tire of intoning that Bruckner's Scherzos are bombproof in merely competent hands, which is in no sense meant to denigrate music but rather to applaud the composer's craft, and so it proves here – it all works but again distanced percussion is an issue. However, the Adagio is the core of this symphony and again, I found it mundane and earthbound. I cannot pretend to be able to isolate and identify accurately what it is about Karajan, Giulini, Furtwängler and Sinopoli which distinguish their accounts from this beyond vague allusions to a “spiritual” quality, some inner tension in the phrasing, a sense of concentration and cohesion which eludes this recording. The orchestral playing here is undoubtedly smooth and glowing, but when solo instruments are highlighted, they sound episodic and divorced from what should be a mighty, slow-moving progress like the inexorable flow of a glacier. At times, Thielemann almost descends to stasis and stall – for example, at 15:45 – which is precisely where Karajan surges ahead. Above all, and unforgivably, the great cymbal climax is a non-event.; there is no frisson for the listener – it just occurs, rapidly. Of course, there are moments of beauty but this performance bespeaks gesture over content.

As is often the case in listless performances, matters perk up a bit in the finale but that cannot redeem the preceding hour and, in any case, the same torpor pervades and intermittently militates its effect. In truth, it is boring; the brass gallop at 13:30 is so pusillanimous and the coda succumbs to the same point-making which marred the Adagio.

Ultimately, set against so many superlative competitive recordings, this is workaday. Essentially, whatever passion Thielemann might privately have for this music, he has failed to imbue his orchestra with the same sense of wonder and the result is anodyne.

Ralph Moore

Mariss Jansons – Anton Bruckner

BRUCKNER: Symphonies 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 & 9

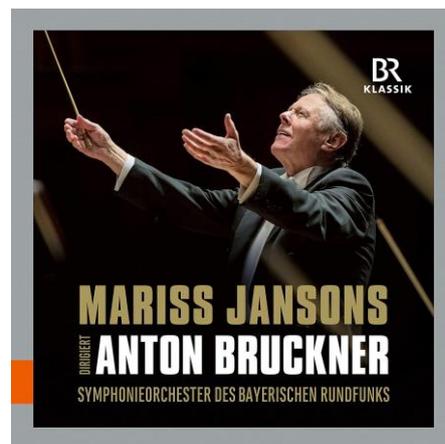
Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

Live recordings 2005- 2017

Details beneath review

BR KLASSIK 900718 [6 CDs: 6:24:48]

Had Mariss Jansons lived longer, this would have become a complete set of Bruckner symphonies for BR Klassik; as it is, the only one missing from the last, seven, so-called “mature” symphonies is No. 5, which was planned. No. 6 has not previously been released on this label and No. 3 has not hitherto been available separately, but was instead part of a composite box set of all nine symphonies issued by BR Klassik (900716) featuring four different conductors, Maazel (Nos. 1 and 2), Haitink (Nos. 5 and 6), Jansons (Nos. 3, 4, 7 and 8, the same recordings as per here) and Blomstedt (No. 9), all directing the same orchestra as in this new compilation, the BRSO. One of Jansons' final recordings was of No. 6 with the BPO, issued as part of a box set on their own label and has received high praise, but qualified with some reservations regarding the speeds in the first movement.



Jansons died in late 2019 and the BRSO posthumously awarded him the Karl Amadeus Hartmann medal in January 2020; this set is BR Klassik's tribute to him. He also made live recordings of Bruckner symphonies Nos. 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9 with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, released on their own label; I have previously favourably reviewed those two; however, good as they are, I think these performances here might be superior. I have also previously reviewed Nos. 8 and 9 in the November 2018 and July 2019 issues of the *Bruckner Journal* respectively and found them both to be admirable, so I refer you to those reviews for more detailed responses.

I love the Third Symphony and am always immediately captivated by any good performance of that ostinato opening; Jansons captures its menace and tension admirably. The BRSO respond sensitively to his application of rubato within the framework of the "Bruckner rhythm" and produce sumptuous sound; the brass in particular are simply magnificent. That mood of taut concentration is sustained throughout, never letting the listener's attention flag. The lovely Adagio first flows like molten gold then the switch in tempo to three-quarter-time is deftly handled, as are the typical pauses, before the final section, with its alternation between orchestral carillons and moments of quiet repose, builds to a serene conclusion. The Scherzo is attacked *con gusto*, establishing just the right sense of suppressed hysteria, contrasting beautifully with the galumphing, rustic waltz of the Trio. The finale is a sure-footed joy from start to finish and the whole is a grand heroic account, entirely satisfying and among the best committed to record. The audience, which has been virtually silent throughout, roars its approval.

Building on the excellence of the Jansons' Third Symphony, his No. 4, recorded three and a half years later, is likewise very fine, even if it does not, perhaps, rival Karajan's and Böhm's. The late Terry Barfoot reviewed it admiringly earlier this year in the *Bruckner Journal*, but had some minor reservations regarding its sound quality in comparison with Jansons' Amsterdam SACD recording, also made in 2008, and suggested that "while this Bavarian performance is not as dramatic as some.... it remains an impressive testament by one of the great conductors of recent times." I broadly agree with his review and refer you to it for more detail. The opening is indeed as atmospheric as one could wish, the solo horn playing flawlessly over shimmering *tremolando* strings, validating its sobriquet 'Romantic'. This is a big, imposing, spacious account, usually characterised by momentum, but there are undoubtedly moments here when Jansons flirts with ponderousness. As a result, this is the slowest in the catalogue of recordings of this edition and for some will be a bridge too far with regard to tempi, but the coherence of the direction and virtuosity of the orchestral playing go a long way towards nullifying objections. There is plenty of spring and fluidity in the Scherzo, contrasting the martial brilliance of its outer "hunt" sections with the bucolic calm of the central Trio. The finale is especially thrilling and I approve of the illegitimate addition of the cymbal clash at the first climax simply because, vulgar or not, it lends tremendous drama. The whole movement packs an enormous punch and its conclusion is breath-takingly grand.

Given that Jansons generally favours steady tempi in Bruckner, his choice of speed in response to Bruckner's vague instruction of "Majestoso" is surprisingly quick and presents some kind of solution to the problem posed by it; he pushes ahead but ultimately his timing for this movement is only very slighter faster than those of Haitink and Karajan, for example, and it all hangs together. I have seen his approach variously described elsewhere as "propulsive", "muscular" and "visceral"; that seems right to me and the conclusion is electrifying. Where Jansons is again considerably swifter than Karajan by some three minutes is in the Adagio but he is only marginally faster than Haitink and there is no sense of undue haste. There is a lovely depth to the low strings underpinning the oboe solo lament and the whole orchestra plays with glowing, aureate tone. The *Gesangsperiode* here is as beautiful as any I know and the concluding two minutes are meltingly lovely, offering repose and consolation, the octave drop onto the thrice repeated tonic F chord is like a farewell kiss. Jansons' insistence on avoiding any indulgent lingering informs the driven march of the Scherzo and once again the extreme dynamic variation enhances its impact. In a pattern which reverses that of the Scherzo in the Fourth Symphony, it is the Trio here which uses hunting horns – again, flawlessly intoned. The finale keeps veering madly between a frenetic gallop and an ambling *Andante*; Jansons handles both with equal aplomb before allowing the lovely third theme, echoing the oboe lament of the second movement, to unfold gracefully; you feel that he is in complete command of every facet of this score and handles every change of mood and pace seamlessly.

I have heard Jansons' recording of the Seventh Symphony as "sumptuous" and I am disinclined to contest that adjective; the depth and richness of the playing are apparent from its opening bars. Slightly brisker speeds than some of the more celebrated versions offset any risk of "gluiness" and once again Janson's finely gauged graduation of dynamics create melodic light and shade. The famous opening tune which Bruckner described as a "complete, divinely given melodic whole" is given full romantic weight to contrast with the jaunty, almost aggressive octave theme and the conclusion to the movement attains full

“homage to Götterdämmerung” mode before the Adagio which is Bruckner’s extended tribute to “The Master”, again graced by two musical subjects of heart-rending emotion and executed here with deep affection, amplified by mellow Wagner tubas. Using the Nowak edition, Jansons permits the essential cymbal clash at the climax. The relationship between the pounding first subject of the Scherzo and the wistful Trio is judged to a nicety before an infectiously animated finale in which the orchestra’s virtuosity does not preclude their playing with raw energy. This is an account to match any other in the catalogue, including those by Karajan and Eichhorn, my firm favourites.

To my ears, the sound throughout this set is impeccable, replicating the resonance of the cathedral spaces beloved of Bruckner without sacrificing clarity; the audiences are silent and the only minor distractions are the faint and intermittent vocalisations from the conductor – which are nowhere near as intrusive as some other conductors’ singalong habits. Faithfully replicating the dynamic range and contrasts called for in Bruckner’s scores was one of Jansons’ fortes, and that gift emerges here with particular prominence, as the BRSO is so adept and playing softly.

Jansons’ Bruckner legacy might be only partial - the absence of a recording of No. 5 is especially regrettable - but what we have provides ample testimony to his gifts as a conductor of these magnificent symphonies.

Ralph Moore

Details:

*Symphony No. 3 in D minor WAB 103 (1889 version ed. Nowak) [56:19]
rec. 19 March 2005.*

(Not previously available separately)

*Symphony No. 4 in E flat major WAB 104 (1878/80 version ed. Nowak) [72:10]
rec. 16-28 November 2008.*

*Symphony No. 6 in A major WAB106 (1881 version ed. Nowak) [54:08]
rec. 22 & 23 January 2015. (First commercial release)*

*Symphony No. 7 in E major WAB 107 (1885 version ed. Nowak) [64:53]
rec. 4 November 2007, Großer Saal des Musikvereins, Vienna*

*Symphony No 8 in C minor WAB 108 (1890 version ed. Nowak) [80:08]
rec. 13-18 November 2017.*

*Symphony No. 9 in D minor WAB 109 (1894 Originalfassung ed. Nowak) [57:10]
rec. 13-17 January 2017.*

All live recordings made in the Philharmonie im Gasteig, Munich, except for No. 7.

BRUCKNER: Symphony No. 9, with finale completed from original sources
arranged for organ by Gerd Schaller

Performed on the Eisenbarth organ of the former Cistercian Abbey Church of Ebrach
Gerd Schaller, organ

Profil (co-production with **BR Klassik**) **PH21010 2CD** (36:58, 48:27)

An arrangement for organ of Bruckner’s Ninth Symphony – I confess I approached this CD with trepidation. Is it necessary? Could I bear to listen to it? Part of the problem I envisaged was that, however wonderful an organ sounds in recital in a vast ecclesiastical setting, importing that organ into one’s living room for over 80 minutes might be hard to endure. Bruckner’s Ninth is for orchestra, and while transcriptions for piano can clarify aspects of the structure of the music, an organ arrangement recorded in the reverberant Ebrach Abbey would surely risk being a muddy travesty of Bruckner’s intended score.

I need not have worried: for me, this arrangement, performance and recording has been an addictive source of insight, and immense pleasure. Right from the very opening the performance revealed itself to be something of a miracle, as Bruckner’s *Feierlich, misterioso*, a low rumbling pedal for the tremolo and quiet tones of the opening horn motive entering above, was immediately spellbinding, as solemn and mysterious a sound as you could imagine. The recording, even with the volume turned high, somehow preserves a distance, as though the sound were coming from afar, and there is space for the music to breathe and for the mystery to grow.

What soon becomes apparent is the wealth of different colour and sounds of which this instrument is capable, some of the sounds quite extraordinary, an evocative range of flutings, sirens, rich and rounded tones, grunts and rumblings and much else. Often high woodwind or trumpets parts sound as though they are from some other planet, far from the main action, rather like a commenting chorus in a Greek tragedy. These distant voices help to give to the music an almost infinite sense of space, of distant horizons.

Gerd Schaller, in his interview in the CD booklet, says, “I chose my registration to generate a symphonic organ sound, though not a sound directed at imitating an orchestra.” I think this is an important clue towards how to listen to this arrangement: there’s no point in comparing it to Bruckner’s orchestral writing and bemoaning all the time how it doesn’t sound like the orchestra, how you can’t hear this or that feature – often, for example, the trumpet line doesn’t pierce through like it does in the orchestra. But what Schaller has created from Bruckner’s 9th is an ‘organ symphony’ – not as a poor substitute for the real thing, but as a work to be considered in parallel to the original. The notes – as many as possible for two hands and two feet to play with clarity - are Bruckner’s, but it is Bruckner transformed, transfigured by the shining of a different light.

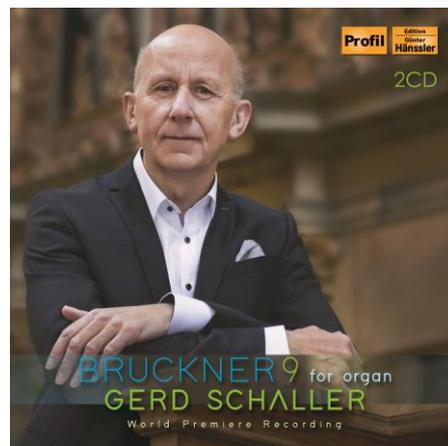
I was surprised at how effectively the arrangement and performance deals with lyrical passages. The first movement first theme group having been powerfully presented, though with an element of restraint because there are greater things to come in part two of movement, I was taken aback by the expressive quality of the second theme group, *Gesangsperiode*, where the quaver (eighth note) rising and falling figure is played at a beautiful steady *Andante*, mixing melancholy and momentum. The Trio of the Scherzo movement is particularly magical, so different from the sound of strings, but transformed into something that seems to come from a spectral fairground. In the opening of the *Adagio*, the leap of the ninth doesn’t have the stress and angst and hint of a slide of violinists leaping along their fingerboard; it is more as though a simple switch is flicked and the note changes frequency and colour, the musical quality somehow purified. Schaller’s choice of registration for the whole theme as it moves to its aspirational rise has been carefully chosen, with some subtlety, less contrasted than the trumpet and high strings of the original, but welding the motivic elements into a unified and powerfully sculptured whole. The descending chorale, the *Farewell to Life*, steals in quietly, an inward, prayerful meditation, and the second theme is beautifully played, the contrapuntal voices particularly clear.

In the more strident passages, the Scherzo for example, although the last ounce of attack is not available to this instrument and acoustic, and there are no timpani hammering away, it is nevertheless a massive, stirring and colourful, if somewhat macabre, dance. When it comes to the climax of the *Adagio*, that seething, turbulent and massively discordant passage, suddenly it sounds as though this maybe the actual sound Bruckner had in mind, that his orchestra at this point was trying to be the St Florian organ: it is absolutely riveting, cataclysmic, totally shattering – due in no small part to Schaller’s grip of the structure of the movement as a whole.

The *Adagio* ends in great peace, without any anxiety as to whether the horns and tubas will be able to hold their E major chord, or the pizzicato strings maintain their ensemble. If you are one of those who has no truck with attempts to provide a completed finale, then you need to be nimble with your CD player controls: the rumbling pedal G that opens the finale begins almost *attacca* – as I’ve always felt it should: there needs to be no time for shuffling and coughing in the quiet transition from the *Adagio* to *Finale*.

In addition to this being a new arrangement for organ, Gerd Schaller has taken the opportunity to revise his completion of the finale, now for the third time. (Other noted completers have also over time found it good to revise their work, and it is, after all, a very Brucknerian activity!). I haven’t studied and compared the scores, but in a brief exchange of messages Maestro Schaller confirmed that he had changed the coda and cut a few bars from it, and also told me that he had cut some bars and made revisions in some of the ‘gaps’ where Bruckner’s manuscript is incomplete, and that thereby had used proportionally more of Bruckner’s own material, had made the work more concentrated, and even simplified, with less figurative additions to the second theme, *Gesangsperiode*, and a new solution to the Fugue, entirely now retrieved from Bruckner with no additional Schaller.

I have always wished to hear the music Bruckner had written for his finale, and have always felt that the work needed a fourth movement to fully encompass the dimensions Bruckner conceived. It must always feel somewhat unsatisfactory because you cannot help but know for sure that it isn’t what Bruckner’s Ninth



would have been had he finished and revised it. Suffice it to say that there is much wonderful and intriguing music by Bruckner in Schaller's completion and organ arrangement. Bruckner's strangely repetitive and unsettling first and second themes are given convincing rendition, and the great chorale thunders its assertion of faith over the troubled landscape. The melodic trumpet line does not sound brightly above the harmonic blocks, but the passage is no less powerful. Indeed, it is a characteristic of the arrangement and performance of the whole symphony that I was made more aware of great shifts in the harmonic foundations of the music's progress, massive crunching chords moving rock-like beneath the melodic or figurative superstructure, than I have been at orchestral performances.

Come the end, the second wave of the coda rises indomitably, and Gerd Schaller blesses us with plenty of blazing D major, as Bruckner surely would also have done. For me it comes as a gift, an unearned blessing, rather than the reward of some epic struggle and victory in the course of the finale or the symphony as a whole – and maybe that's as it should be. Whatever one's view of how this work should be completed, or not, it is a triumphant close to an extraordinary endeavour, this massive symphony performed by one player, with immense control of the structure and an always illuminating choice of colour and dynamic in the arrangement. In his interview Schaller says that conducting had limited his activities as an organist, but this performance sounds like a virtuoso achievement.

Over the years since 2010 of Maestro Schaller's continuing recorded cycle of performances of Bruckner's works there have been many intriguing surprises, especially in choice of editions, but without exception they are performances of integrity and humility, many of which rank among the best. The same great virtues shine from this mighty performance of the Ninth as a symphony arranged for organ. Is it necessary? Somehow the question doesn't seem relevant any more.

Ken Ward

Another take...

Bruckner 9 for Organ [85:25]

Gerd Schaller, organ

rec. 2-5 November, 2020: Abteikirche, Ebrach, Upper Franconia, Germany.

PROFIL PH21010 [36:58 + 48:27]

Prominent Brucknerian conductor and organist Gerd Schaller here performs his transcription for organ of Symphony No. 9 in D minor and includes a fourth movement based on his 2018 revised orchestral version of the finale. There are of course precedents for such arrangements; other successful such projects include Matthew Giesen's recording of the organ transcription of the Fifth Symphony made in St Florian and released on the Gramola label, which was also very favourably reviewed.

Maestro Schaller is keen to emphasise that this recording is not some kind of makeshift or stop-gap imposed upon him by the exigencies and deprivations of the current lockdown, but rather the realisation of his long-standing desire to transcribe and perform this great work and on Bruckner's own instrument. The organ is Germany's "Instrument of the Year 2021" and Schaller has a great attachment to the Eisenbarth instrument used here, which inevitably enhances the meditative and aesthetic qualities of this performance, recorded in the magnificent venue of the former Cistercian Abbey Church of Ebrach. According to the notes, which are a transcription of a conversation between him and freelance writer on music Andrea Braun*, his aim was to reveal "the essential...core of the work". There have also been piano transcriptions of the Ninth, as per the arrangement for two pianos included as a bonus to the recording of René Ballot's live performance of the same work, but the organ was the instrument dearest to Bruckner's heart and is in many ways better suited to transcription. However, Bruckner left no major compositions for organ, so in a sense a performance of this nature fills a gap.

Gerd Schaller seeks to exploit the organ's "wealth of tone colours" which are so different from those of an orchestra but he does not attempt to reproduce orchestra textures. Rather, while retaining the original notes and harmonies, he tries to find the appropriately pared down sound which still conveys the majesty of the music in the form of an "organ symphony". His aim is considerably assisted by the construction of an organ permitting so many permutations of sound, which Schaller describes as possessing both "a Baroque character and a Romantic character", enabling a unique combination of clarity and richness.

His tempi are very similar to his orchestral recording; overall, this organ version is only a couple of minutes shorter than that and the bulk of that discrepancy resides in the slightly briefer finale. Otherwise, there is no denying that this transcription transports us into a very different sound-world from the orchestral original. The spare modernity of Bruckner's harmonies and dissonances is heavily accentuated by the leaner

textures here, so that first impressions of the music, necessarily played devoid of tremolo, are almost shockingly stark, whereas the grandeur and majesty of Bruckner's rhythmically powerful main themes are underpinned by the sonority of the organ's bass capability. Indeed, listening to this performance unfold constitutes a surprising journey; sometimes the variety in Schaller's registration is so striking as to make the listener wonder whether this is really the same piece that we are used to, yet at other moments there is such a consonance between the two versions that the organ sounds entirely right and natural. There is no denying the aptness and ingenuity of Schaller's invention; nothing is done for cheap or gimmicky effect – which is why, for example, as he explains in the notes, he avoids over-use of the swell box, which would render the music trite and flashy – never qualities associated with good Bruckner playing.

Having said that, I find the Scherzo here to be the least successful of the four adapted movements, not through any fault of the transcription or its execution, but simply because a wind-powered pipe-instrument cannot hope – nor in any sense is designed – to reproduce the snap and bite of strings and timpani. The effect is rather soft-grained, a comparative deficiency accentuated by the success of the jaunty, flowing triplets of the Trio, in which the organ sounds entirely at home.

Conversely – and perhaps entirely predictably – the celebrated and enigmatic Adagio is more obviously suited to the solemn, hieratic and otherworldly compass of the organ and Schaller frequently employs a higher, flutier registration to suggest a heavenly choir. The magical change of key at 15:55 is all the more effective for being couched in a new, consolatory voice as if God the Father suddenly chose to speak and the climactic, dissonant dominant thirteenth twenty minutes in is staggering in its impact before a wonderfully serene coda.

The numerous completions, reconstructions, re-imaginings – what you will – of the finale continue to be controversial in the relatively exclusive world of Brucknerian scholarship and appreciation of them can be a divisive topic. Given that this transcription will already be a bridge too far for some purists, I cannot see that the inclusion of Gerd Schaller's own recreation is especially contentious, as once the premise of transcription has been accepted, the fourth movement is an entirely natural adjunct to this adventurous undertaking. Speaking as one who thoroughly enjoys that finale in its orchestral form, I am delighted to encounter it here where, if anything, it seems even better suited to its arrangement for organ; I find it grand and thrilling. Schaller plays with enormous brio and there are no instances of dull "note-spinning"; he sustains momentum and propulsion throughout nearly twenty-four minutes, constantly building tension and eliciting glorious sound from his instrument. The final few minutes are momentous.

The engineering here is first-rate, always suggesting the of the amplitude of the abbey without obscuring detail, although allowance must be made for the faint but constant background noise of the blower.

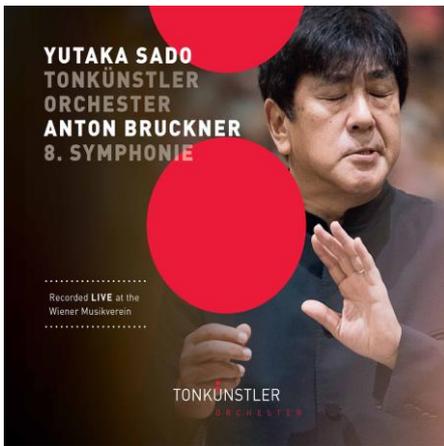
It has to be said that the audience for this release must be quite selective in that it must comprise of listeners who love both Bruckner and the King of Instruments – but both are honoured here with consummate skill and musicality in a decidedly unusual repertoire.

Ralph Moore

**[Ed Note: An interview with Gerd Schaller follows the "Reviews" section]*

BRUCKNER: Symphony No. 8 in C minor (1887/90 mixed version ed. Haas) [85:07]
Tonkünstler Symphony Orchestra / Yutaka Sado
rec. live composite, 25-28 October 2019, Wiener Musikverein
TONKÜNSTLER TON2011 SACD & Download [2 CDs: 58:27 + 26:40]

I had previously glowingly reviewed the Ninth by the same forces in the same venue, so had similar expectations for this new release when it arrived. I was not disappointed; it seems that Sado is a true and natural Brucknerian who, working in consort with a fine orchestra, secures great weight and depth of tone in order to present this music Old Style – no apologetically tripping the light fantastic with etiolated forces here; instead, we have Bruckner with hair on its chest. The first big climax nearly five minutes in is hammered home by some ferocious timpani, the ensuing trumpet call to arms over urgent pizzicato strings is full of tension, then the strings caress the singing second subject lovingly. Yes, just a few minor blips and imprecisions in the brass indicate that this is not perhaps one of the world's top orchestras but otherwise their playing is mightily impressive and in the hushed conclusion to the movement, Sado generates just the right degree of bleak beauty required.



The Scherzo is both menacing and animated; kudos once more to the timpanist for his contribution. Tempi are fleet and flowing to contrast with the deliberate, melancholy trudge of the central Trio. Sado's timings are conventional in the first two movements, but the Adagio and finale are daringly slow compared with standard catalogue recommendations. However, they never drag. That Adagio is ethereal and otherworldly; pauses are marked but momentum is sustained by a long-breathed lyricism and legato – and once more, as in the first movement, climaxes are never undersold. I do wish, however, that I could not hear the conductor singing along somewhat tunelessly as he does, for example, most prominently at six minutes in for a full thirty seconds. In this age of top-quality digital recording, it really should be curbed. The first great climax at eleven and half minutes in is grand but still sufficiently restrained to indicate tacitly

that a greater apogee is to come at 21:35 – and that does not disappoint. Sado's preparation for it is painstaking; he gradually ratchets up tension then pulls back only to re-launch his orchestra on an inexorable path towards apotheosis then serenity.

The finale is riveting; it starts off as a cavalry charge and our friend the timpanist yet again makes his mark before we pause for sombre reflection in the second subject song. Sado takes an immensely dignified, even portentous interpretative approach to this music but it is all of a piece. The central section is grand and steady but when the battle cry sounds again we spring forward at a gallop. The C major coda concludes magnificently and after a decent pause the applause is deservedly enthusiastic.

As with the recording of the Ninth, the live sound is absolutely first rate with no distractions. I concede that some might find this manner of playing too “monumental” but this is my kind of Bruckner and the second time I have been bowled over by a Sado performance. His approach is the sort which makes this long symphony just slip by in one great, arching sweep and whereby the listener is never conscious of any kind of artifice or point-making – just a wholly coherent overview which declines to undersell the courage and majesty of Bruckner's “Victory Symphony”. This makes me eager to hear another recording from the same source; indeed, although we are now hardly short of complete sets, the quality of this recording makes me hope that it will eventually form part of an entire cycle.

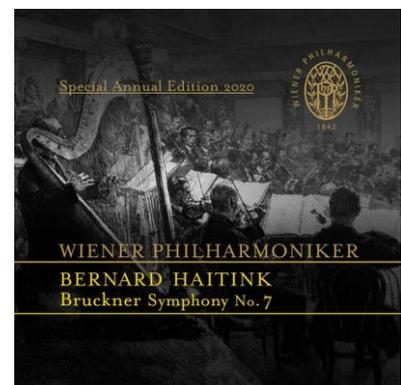
Ralph Moore

BRUCKNER: Symphony No. 7 in E major (1885 version ed. Nowak) (1881-3)
Wiener Philharmoniker / Bernard Haitink
rec. live 30 August 2019, Großes Festspielhaus, Salzburg
VIENNA PHILHARMONIC CD WPH-L-BH-2020 [71:30]

Bernard Haitink has conducted this symphony scores of times over the last sixty years and made nearly a score of recordings, three with this same orchestra, always using the Nowak edition with the cymbal and triangle clash in the Adagio. We might therefore reasonably conclude that he both loves the work and has reasonably firm ideas born of vast experience about how it should go. I admit to not always having been Haitink's greatest fan but I was very impressed by his live Sixth from 2017 with the BRSO; this Seventh makes a fine sequel of even greater distinction.

This is a live recording marking both the conductor's ninetieth birthday and his last performance at the Salzburg Festival. It is one of the longest in the catalogue, exceeding by a full ten minutes his 1966 recording on Philips with the Concertgebouw. That difference between a conductor's earliest and latest work is hardly unusual; as conductors age they tend to become more expansive, but it is also in line with the trend for taking a more leisurely and reflective approach to Bruckner's symphonies and is comparable to some classic recordings from Karajan, Chailly, Eichhorn and Giulini.

We hear applause both before and after the performance, the latter erupting rapturously only after a prolonged and decent interval, so anyone averse to its inclusion has plenty of time to turn it off. At the beginning, the audience brouhaha has hardly died down before Haitink launches into the broad, sweeping



melody which begins the symphony. The sound of the VPO is breathtakingly rich and beautiful; indeed, the whole recording is exemplary – I was going to write “for a live event” but these days live recordings are often as immediate and beautifully balanced as studio productions and here the sheer depth of sound is extraordinary. Haitink’s direction exudes confidence and his shifts in tempo are ideally gauged with no abrupt gear changes. I love the way he applies *rallentando* in the pulsing build-up to the first, grand, brass chorale six and a half minutes in and despite the massiveness of the orchestral sound much of the playing is detailed and transparent, showcasing the virtuosity of the individual VPO instrumentalists. The upper strings gleam, the double basses growl and purr, the woodwind sing, the brass declaim triumphantly and the timpani thunder; this is stellar orchestral playing. The concluding bars are so overwhelming that the listener must doubt whether there will be sufficient reserves of power to sustain three more movements, yet the *Adagio*, Bruckner’s tribute to Wagner, is sublime. At its famous climax, rather than engineer a percussive explosion, Haitink creates a sustained, ringing paean, daringly elongating the note values and giving the timpani its head – stunning. The *Scherzo* is slower and more deliberate than most, a brooding behemoth, trampling all in its path; once again, the sonority of the VPO’s bass instruments enhances its sense of menace – and that heaviness makes the melody of *Trio* sounds less comforting than usual, entirely in keeping with Haitink’s overall conception of the symphony. The finale is as satisfying as the three preceding movements; energy levels are maintained and the VPO brass are simply monstrous. The inexorable progress towards the triumphant conclusion is riveting throughout until catharsis is complete.

I can imagine that some not wedded like me to the statelier mode of delivering Bruckner might wish for just a little more propulsion at certain points, but the magnificence of the sound and Haitink’s grasp of both structure within, and the interrelationship between, the movements makes this entirely convincing. This is typical of the glorious Indian summer to Haitink’s career and is now my favourite recording of this masterwork.

(This is a recording in the VPO’s “Special Annual Edition” series issued on their own label here:

<https://www.wienerphilharmoniker.at/en/shop/article/special-annual-edition-2020-haitink/32992>

Unfortunately, it does not currently appear to be on sale in the regular commercial outlets. There are also Unitel DVD/Blu-ray issues of the performance of the same symphony given the day after this recording.)

Ralph Moore

BRUCKNER: Symphony No. 3 in D Minor (1889 version, ed. Nowak)

Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra / Tadaaki Otaka

rec. live composite 16, 17 & 21 January 2020, Festival Hall (16 & 17) & Suntory Hall (21) Tokyo

FONTEC CD FOCD 9837 [54:02]

This is a swift account of the version of this symphony most frequently played and recorded before the 1877 and, more recently, the original 1873 versions came into favour. I say “swift” but the speed of the introduction is instantly so urgent and pressing as to rob it of all mystery and sets off alarm bells in my head; rushed and perfunctory Bruckner is anathema to me and this is the antithesis of the approach implemented by the likes of Celibidache or Sanderling. The descending second theme is given short shrift by strings none too sweet. Finally, we have to endure a phenomenon which has become all too common these days and is exacerbated by the clarity of digital recording: a highly audible and none-too-musical vocal obbligato from a conductor who is neither concerned that his contribution is unmannerly nor discouraged by his producers from making it.

As ever, tempo is not the only issue; phrases are too sharply delineated and truncated in a breathless manner which generates more anxiety rather passion. The crescendo leading to the great brass choral climax at 10:30 could hardly be more crudely applied. A second brass climax at 14:09 is equally strident and grating; this is to Bruckner playing as painting by numbers is to great art. Otaka then proceeds to punctuate every rhythmic stab with little feral grunts. The final bars are very loud and not much else.



The Adagio has no finesse at all; I first listened slack-jawed as the Osaka Philharmonic plonked out phrases like a grumpy dinner-lady doling out mashed potato. The timbre of the woodwind is sour, there are some coordination issues among the brass, and there is some insecure intonation coupled with rough string playing. The conductor obliges us with more vocalise. A consolation is that this movement is over more quickly than in many a recording. As I have often previously observed, Bruckner's Scherzos are largely bullet-proof and this one survives unscathed because Otaka's bombastic manner chimes with its combination of manic drive and the wooden-legged waltz of the Trio, but it is hardly the last word in refinement and yet again you may intermittently hear Otaka singing along. The finale picks up on the scramble of the opening and proceeds in jolly, tripping fashion before making an unsubtle transition towards a pounding conclusion invariably underscored in its less-blaring passages by you-know-what...

The last two movements are decidedly superior to the first two but I have rarely been less enchanted by a recording and suggest that for all his gifts and accomplishments, Mr Otaka has no affinity with Bruckner. I am glad that he enjoys the music but would advise him either to reconsider his penchant for vocal embellishment of the music he is conducting or to retrain for the operatic stage – which, given his seniority is probably no longer an option.

Ralph Moore

The Essence — or: Understanding Bruckner
An interview with Gerd Schaller
by **Andrea Braun**

Herr Schaller, it is as a conductor that you are best known. In recent years you have been intensively engaged with the symphonies of Anton Bruckner and have recorded all his symphonies in your project BRUCKNER2024 with your orchestra Philharmonie Festiva, often in versions that are very seldom played. Now you have prepared and recorded your own organ transcription of Anton Bruckner's Ninth Symphony. What prompted you to do this?

The reason for this transcription was simply that – once again – I had been busy with the Ninth, this time with the intention of arriving at the essence of the work: I wanted to understand Bruckner even better, come to grips with the architecture of his symphonic thought. And that led automatically to the idea of making an arrangement for a keyboard instrument, because when you tackle that, you are practically compelled to limit yourself to the essence of a work.

Why the organ in particular — when there are already piano transcriptions of his works?

Because the organ is Bruckner's instrument, which stayed with him all his life. Even as a boy, Bruckner was fascinated by his father's organ playing. Later, during his teacher training, he played the organ himself in small rural churches. After his return to the Augustine abbey of St. Florian he became its organist, then cathedral organist in Linz and finally the Emperor's organist at the Hofburgkapelle in Vienna — of which he was very proud. The organ kept Bruckner company, then, right up to his death.

Or even beyond, strictly speaking? He's buried in the crypt under his organ in St. Florian.

Yes, if you like, even after his death. Throughout his life, Bruckner was celebrated for his improvisation at the organ, giving concerts at home and abroad. He also played for church services and was Professor for organ at the Vienna Conservatory. The organ was always an integral part of his life.

And yet he left no great self-contained organ work. The works that we have are just exercises. Why?

Bruckner wrote no concertos. Nor did he add to the solo literature for the organ. Why? I believe it is because he saw his life's work as writing symphonic music. That was the way in which he was able to express himself artistically. Apart from that I think he basically had no interest in writing a concerto as a vehicle for a virtuoso soloist. Maybe he found that too superficial.

But you have now combined the two and transcribed the Ninth...

Because Bruckner was so bound up with the organ, and because there are so many elements in his symphonies that are specific to the organ, I could see the sense of an organ version. And I simply rose to the challenge!

We essentially know you, as I say, as a conductor — where does your affinity with the organ come from?

From my earliest youth, the organ was as much a part of my life as the piano. I have played a great deal of organ music. My work as conductor did push the organ into the background a bit, though.

And what fascinates you about the instrument?

Its wealth of tone colours.

But you have those in the orchestra as well.

But not in this form. I have never seen the organ as a substitute for the orchestra. And so when I wrote my transcription I was not at all interested in transferring orchestral effects to the organ. I don't think that would work, anyway. What I wanted to do was filter out the essence of the Ninth and apply it specifically to the organ. That also meant, of course, that I had to concentrate on certain things and ignore the rest. Ultimately I was creating an independent organ work.

You said just now that your transcription would bring out the essence of the symphony. How did you distil this essence?

I sought to concentrate on what was essential, on the core of the work, and on what could be heard. As I see it, it makes very little sense to take account of the umpteenth orchestral part in a transcription if you can scarcely identify it in the orchestral sound. Incorporating such a supporting part in an organ transcription could be fatal, in fact, because on the organ a relatively insignificant part could suddenly emerge in the foreground and take the status of a principal part. That would pull the whole musical fabric out of true. In any case the work as a whole would be overloaded, and in the end you wouldn't see the wood for the trees, so to speak: that is to say, you'd miss the really important voices because there were so many unimportant ones. So it's important to separate the essential from the dispensable and take one or two hard decisions. Which was not always easy for me, because I love every single note of Bruckner and was loath to sacrifice any of them!

So you can't just transfer the sound world of the orchestra to the organ on a one-to-one basis.

No. The organ may often be described as the king of instruments, but there are certain orchestral effects that are simply not applicable to the organ.

For example?

Well, the string tremolo, say. If you tried to transfer that gentle undulation to the organ, the result would be unsatisfactory, not to say weird. Some orchestral effects just have to be avoided, which need not mean a net loss.

Then your transcription is actually more of an arrangement, isn't it?

In a certain sense, yes. Needless to say, I don't alter any notes or harmonies. A transcription is more than a mere transfer of the original score, though, because another major step has to be taken: after the strictly artisan transcription comes the actual artistic part. And that consists of taking into account the specific potential of the organ as an instrument, without changing the essence of the score.

As we know, Bruckner was not able to complete his Ninth. You have nevertheless recorded the work in four movements. Why, and with whom?

It is a fact that Bruckner planned his Ninth Symphony in four movements. True, the tale began going the rounds shortly after Bruckner's death that three movements were enough, that the work was complete in that form. But the many surviving sketches and drafts made by Bruckner himself unequivocally show that this is not the truth. That is why I saw it as logical and sensible to include a fourth movement as well — in my own completion, which I had previously performed and recorded with the orchestra. The fourth movement contains an amazing number of toccata-like elements, and it is this very movement that I found so thrilling and so well suited to the organ.

Is there a chance that when playing the work on the organ, you noticed a difference between the first three movements and the fourth, which you completed yourself? You did say you were looking for the essence of Bruckner. In the fourth movement, though, that was at least partly your own essence, wasn't it?

Well, it is more than my concentrate, it is above all a concentrate distilled from Bruckner's musical notation. My completion of the final movement is overwhelmingly drawn from music written down by Bruckner himself — in the sketches and drafts I mentioned. So, no, there really is no difference.

When you made your transcription, were there other composers or genres that gave you points of orientation?

In many ways, my work was guided by 19th-century French organ composers: Alexandre Guilmant, Louis Vierne and Charles Marie Widor, all of whom wrote wonderful organ sonatas and symphonies for the instrument. Of course there is a difference between writing a symphony primarily for the organ and thus not for orchestra, and taking a symphony originally intended for orchestra and making an organ work out of it.

All the same, if you are familiar with the symphonic organ works of the 19th century, with their organ-compatible compositional technique, it helps enormously in lending a certain acoustic to your transcription. And finally it was my intention to create a finished organ work that can essentially be performed as an organ symphony. Above all, though, it should give pleasure to plunge into the cosmos of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony on the composer's lifelong instrument, the organ.

That brings us to your recording itself. It was made on the organ of the ancient Ebrach Abbey church, a Gothic cathedral of the 13th century, with cathedral acoustics. What sort of an organ is that?

An organ? Just one? To be precise there are three of them! Alongside the main organ there are two Baroque choir organs by Frankfurt organ builder Johann Christian Köhler, which have been preserved almost unaltered: the Epistle organ of 1753 and the Gospel organ of 1759. They are located under arches in the nave on opposite sides of the choir and are integrated into the early Classicist choir stalls.

These weren't the organs on which you recorded the Ninth, were they?

No, I just mentioned them in passing, to honour this exceptional triad of Ebrach organs. My recording was made on the main organ. That organ, created by the Passau organ builder Wolfgang Eisenbarth, is an imposing instrument of highly individual character.

In what way is it individual, what is so special about it?

It is built around a Baroque organ, or rather, the reconstruction of a Baroque organ. This is the historical background: in 1743, the Würzburg court organ builder Johann Philipp Seuffert made a prestigious organ for the Ebrach Abbey church with 32 stops. Towards the end of the 19th century, there was increasing dissatisfaction with this organ — and so the Oettingen organ-building firm of G.F. Steinmeyer & Co. installed a new 34-stop cone-chest instrument in 1902 in the old Baroque organ case. Happily, Steinmeyer took over more than 800 pipes from almost all the stops of the old Seuffert organ. From today's perspective that was a huge stroke of luck, because from about the 1960s onwards, there was increasing interest in historic organ tone. When in 1984 the Passau organ workshop of Wolfgang Eisenbarth was called upon to rebuild the Ebrach organ, original Baroque pipework really could be used for the purpose. This was then the basis for the reconstitution of the Seuffert organ, the former Baroque organ. Eisenbarth augmented the two Baroque departments on the first and second manuals with two further organs, a Romantic *Schwellwerk* and a *Bombardwerk*. The specifications of these departments were so chosen that they would be suitable for Romantic music while also serving Seuffert's Baroque instrument, allowing a homogeneous overall sound. Thus the Eisenbarth organ now boasts 56 stops on four manuals and pedal — and in my view is admirably suited to Bruckner's Ninth.

Why is this?

It offers so many permutations of sound. The main organ at Ebrach possesses a Baroque character and a Romantic character, which allows an organist to bring out to the full both the symphonic splendour and the polyphonic transparency of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony.

Can you go into a little more detail about the soundscape?

There are the highly diversified Baroque string voices and tremulants, for example, or the clearly defined Principals in the first two manuals. The dimensions, or scales, of these stops are typical of the South German organ sound. Then there is the *Schwellwerk*, played on the third manual and offering many of Steinmeyer's Romantic stops like Aeoline or Vox coelestis along with characteristic solo stops such as a "free-reed" Klarinette oder a French Hautbois — and then, all the beautifully voiced mutation stops. Finally there is the *Bombardwerk* with its horizontal trumpet stops not visible from outside and the *Kornettwerk*, played on the fourth manual and ensuring those moments of symphonic triumph.

What registration did you give to the Ninth, then, what was your guiding principle?

I chose my registration to generate a symphonic organ sound, though not a sound directed at imitating an orchestra. Every symphonically planned organ does of course have stops similar to the timbres of individual orchestral instruments. But it is and remains impossible, in the end, to reproduce the breathing tones of a horn or a clarinet on the organ. I have now specifically placed great emphasis on the tone colour of the various registrations. If one's starting-point is orchestral sound, then some things may sound somewhat unusual — or even quite different from how they do in an orchestra. But that is a quite deliberate choice: I wanted to express the polyphonic structure and the contrast or concord of the various voices in a registration of many different colours.

Did you do a lot with the swell box, then, in this late Romantic music?

No — it may sound strange, but actually I used it very little. But when I did, it was for a specific purpose. It's all too easy in Romantic music to be seduced by the swell box, using it for a constant ebb and flow of sound, as we are familiar with it from the orchestra in this repertoire. But I found again and again that this temptation should be resisted, because the effect soon tires the ears of its audience.

Bruckner himself played a fundamentally Baroque organ in the abbey of St. Florian, didn't he?

Yes, he played on the great organ of Franz Xaver Krismann, dating from the end of the 18th century. And it is this Baroque element that I find so important — on the Ebrach organ in particular — because it helps to express the structures even more clearly, going beyond a foundation-tone registration and bringing out the interwoven lines of music, the counterpoint.

On the CD one doesn't hear a Romantic blend of sound but something more polyphonic.

That is correct. As I said: the essence. That explains why I was so much at home on the Ebrach organ. And also, by the way, because it is such an individualist: you hear at once that it is this organ and not any other. That was another aspect.

And of course you have performed the greater part of your symphonic Bruckner cycle in Ebrach and recorded it there. So listeners to your CD can make a direct comparison: How did he do that with the orchestra, how does he play it on the organ CD?

Listeners can do that, of course. Although I can promise them here and now that it will sound completely different!

The interview was conducted by Andrea Braun, who works as freelance author, translator and journalist for various specialist and general publications, for several ARD (German public service) radio stations and Deutschlandfunk. It appears in the booklet accompanying the CD release of this recording and is published here with permission.



NEW AND REISSUED RECORDINGS

November 2020 to February 2021

Compiled by Howard Jones

The listing includes a further instalment of DG's Nelsons cycle with the LGO and reissues include multiple SACDs of Wand's recordings with the NDRSO from Altus and Sony.

**First Issue*

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- Nos. 2 & 8 *Nelsons/Leipzig GO (8/12/19 & 6/9/19) DG 2 CD set 4839834 (58:10 & 81:57) with Wagner Die Meistersinger Prelude.
- No. 3 Knappertsbusch/Vienna PO (Vienna, 1-3/4/54) GRAND SLAM CD GS 2216 (53:49).
- No. 3 Knappertsbusch/Munich PO (Munich, 16/1/64) ATS CD ATS 923 (60:01) with Strauss Tod und Verklarung.
- No. 3 *Andreae/Vienna SO (5/1/55) LEGENDARY ARCHIVES DOWNLOAD LA 022 (46:41).
- No. 3 *Otaka/Osaka PO (16-21/1/20) FONTEC CD FOCD 9837 (54:02).
- No. 3 *Jochum, L G /Frankfurt RSO (1/7/65) LEGENDARY ARCHIVE LA 045 on Bandcamp (53:28).
- No. 3 *Thielemann/Vienna PO (28 & 29/11/2020) SONY MUSIC SICC 30575 Blu-spec CD 2.
- Nos. 3 & 8 Wand/NDRSO (23/2/85 & 30/4 to 3/5/00) ALTUS 2 SACD set PAL TSA 023 (53:29 & 88:15).
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- No. 4 *Leitner/ Orch. Nat. de l'ORTF (8/4/74) SPECTRUM RECORDS CD & LP CDSMBA-069.
- Nos. 4 & 6-9 *Strub/Christophorus SO, Stuttgart (3/12/09, 25/6/13, 25/6/03, 5/12/17 & 11/10/97) Orch. CDs (70:11, 59:67, 64:32, 86:50 & 61:55).
- Nos. 4 & 5 Wand/NDRSO (11-13/10/96 & 8-10/9/95) ALTUS 2 SACD set PAL TSA 025 (68:05 & 73:41).
- No. 4 Wand/NDRSO (28-30/10/01) SONY MUSIC SICC 40038 (73:02).
- Nos. 4 & 8 Asahina/New Japan PO (8/3/79 & 15/4/77) TOKYO FM Multi-SACD set (67:34 & 87:00).
- Nos. 4 & 6 Klemperer/RCO (4/12/47 & 12/6/61) MUSICAS 24 SACD set 669026 (54:21 & 54:03) 'Otto Klemperer conducts the Concertgebouw Orchestra, legendary Amsterdam Concerts, 1947/1961', with works by 18 other composers.
- No. 5 *Konwitschny/Leipzig GO (Vienna Festival, 16/6/60) LEGENDARY ARCHIVES DOWNLOAD LA 009 (74:00).
- No. 5 *Schuricht/Vienna PO (25/10/58) ANDROMEDA ANDRCD 6004 (70:05).
- No. 5 Zander/Philharmonia Orch. (Watford, 8-10/1/09) BR KLASSIK CD 900190 (53:48).
- No. 6 Bernstein/NYPO (27/3/76) URANIA CD CP131532 (56:04).
- No. 6 Horenstein/Göteborg SO (5/1/68) PRISTINE AUDIO PASC 615 (53:46) with Bach Brandenburg No. 1.
- No. 6 Jansons/Bavarian RSO (22-23/1/15) BR KLASSIK CD 900190 (53:48).
- No. 6 *Keilberth/Cologne RSO (30/11/62) WEITBLICK 4 CD set (56:51).
- No. 6 *Konwitschny/Leipzig RSO (26/4/60) LEGENDARY ARCHIVES DOWNLOAD LA 036 (54:51).
- No. 7 *Stenz/Stavanger SO (7/18) Orch. LP and CD SSO- 1201 and Download (59:43).
- No. 7 *Geiger/LJO Bremen (10/4/2010) Orch. CD (58:56).
- No. 7 *Solti/Vienna PO (Tokyo, 21/2/69) FACHMANN FKM -CDR 575 (63:37).
- No. 7 *Celibidache/Munich PO (Budapest, 15/2/90) SAINT LAURENT STUDIO CD VSL-1184 (79:14).
- No. 7 *Karajan/Berlin PO (Lucerne, 1/9/82) SAINT LAURENT STUDIO CD YSL-1087 (63:29).
- Nos. 7 & 9 Wand/NDRSO (18-21/4/99 & 5-7/4/98) ALTUS 2 SACD set PAL TSA 027 (62:31 & 64:45).
- No. 8 *Matacic/RAI Turin RSO (18/11/83) RAI 'Auditorio' Cassette.
- No. 8 Karajan/Berlin PO (Amsterdam, 16/6/66) ATS 2 CD set ATS 926 (84:34).
- No. 8 *Sado/Tonkünstler Orch. (Musikverein, live: 25-29/10/19) Orch. CD TON 2011 & Download (85:03).
- No. 9 (arr org)) *Schaller, arr. Schaller (Ebrach, 2-5/11/20) PROFIL 2 CD set PH21010 (36:58 + 48:27), with Finale.
- No. 9 (arr org) * Muster, arr. Klotz (St. Martin, Dudelange, 11-13/3/19) Organroxx CD 16 and Download (61:41).

VOCAL & INSTRUMENTAL

- Te Deum Rilling/Soloists/Stuttgart Gachinger Kantorei & Bach Collegium (7/9/96) HANSSLER CLASSIC 4 CD set HC 20071 & Download (25:32) with Te Deo by 6 other composers.
- 9 Motets *Ahmann/MDR Leipzig Radio Choir (2/20) PENTATONE CLASSICS Hybrid SACD PTCS 186868 (61:52) with works by Michael Haydn.

Mass No. 3 Iimori/Yamagata SO (15-16/2/2020) EXTON SACD OVCL-00730.

DVD & BLU-RAY

Sym. No. 8 Karajan/Vienna PO (Vienna, 11/88) SONY MUSIC BLURAY SIXC 36 (83:46).
Sym. No. 9 *Barenboim/East-West Divan Orch. (Berlin Philharmonie, live:10/19) C MAJOR DVD 803608 & KING INTERNATIONAL DVD KKC 9627 (62:43) with Beethoven Triple Concerto.
Sym. Nos. 1-9 Thielemann/Dresden SK (6/12 to 2/19) C MAJOR 9 Bluray set 757504 (51:00, 61:40, 61:22, 70:20, 82:44, 72:00, 70:12, 82:32 & 62:51).

WORLD-WIDE CONCERT LISTING

March - June 2021

Compiled by Michael Cucka

“An abundance of caution” should be the mantra for the concert-goer currently. Although Germany seems to be leading the cause of maintaining as many concerts as possible, most other countries have significantly downsized or eliminated programs – particularly concerning the length required for the average Bruckner symphony. It is worth noting there are **NO** concerts listed in the UK and USA. Even for concerts that have not been already cancelled or postponed, many of those listed here – especially in April and beyond – are notable for not making tickets available currently “just in case” those performances might require a last minute change or cancellation. *Caveat emptor...*

*Considerable effort is made to ensure these listings are accurate -
however, readers are advised to confirm with the venue or performers to be fully confident*

AUSTRIA

11 April 11a: Großes Festspielhaus, Salzburg

Wagner: Rienzi, Overture

Bruckner: Symphony No. 3 in D minor
Mozarteumorchester Salzburg / Michael Sanderling

8, 9 May 7:30p: Montforthaus, Feldkirch

Walton: Violin Concerto (Maxim Rysanov)
Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major
Symphonieorchester Vorarlberg / Leo McFall

23 May 9:15a: Hofburgkapelle, Vienna

Bruckner: Mass No. 1 in D minor
Members of the Vienna Philharmonic / Erwin Ortner

31 May & 1 June 7:30p: Großer Saal, Konzerthaus, Vienna

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 1 (Piotr Anderszewski)
Bruckner: Symphony No. 7 in E major
Wiener Symphoniker / David Zinman

BELGIUM

9 April 8p: Concertzaal, Concertgebouw, Brugge

Faure: Requiem
Bruckner: Motets
Stravinsky: Symphony of Psalms
Orchestre des Champs-Élysées / Philippe Herreweghe

CROATIA

15 April 8p: Koncertna dvorana Lisinski, Zagreb

Odak: Nokturno
Mendelssohn: Piano Concerto No. 2 (Jasminka Stančul)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 3 in D minor
HRT Symphony Orchestra / Aleksandar Marković

CZECH REPUBLIC

1 April 7p: Dum kultury, Teplice

Novák: Piano Concerto in E minor (Tomáš Víšek)
Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major
Severoceska filharmonie Teplice / Petr Vronský

25 May 8p: Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague
(*Prague Spring Festival*)

Bruckner: Motets
Fiala: Regina coeli laetare
Górecki: Totus Tuus
Janáček: Otcenas
Czech Phil Choir of Brno / Petr Píala

FRANCE

17, 18 & 23 March 8:30: Grande salle Pierre Boulez, Philharmonie, Paris

Ravel: Pavane pour une Infante défunte
Bartók: Piano Concerto No. 3 (Kirill Gerstein)
Bruckner: Symphony No. 9 in D minor
Orchestre de Paris / Klaus Mäkelä

30 April 8p: Opera Nice Cote d'Azur, Nice

Bruckner: Symphony No. 8 in C minor
Nice Philharmonic Orch / György G. Ráth

6, 7 May 8p: Auditorium, Bordeaux

Bruckner: String Quintet in F major, Adagio
Sibelius: Violin Concerto (Matthieu Arama)
Brahms: Symphony No. 2

Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine / Joseph Swensen

[21 May 8p: Grande Salle, Auditorium Maurice Ravel, Lyon](#)

Wagner: Wesendonck Lieder (Iwona Sobotka)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 3 in D minor

Radio France Philharmonic / Marek Janowski

[26 May 8p: Burghof, Forbach](#)

Brahms: String Quintet in F major

Bruckner: String Quintet in F major

Ulrike Hein-Hesse, Christoph Mentzel, vln; Benjamin Rivinius, Helmut Winkel, H; Mario Blaumer, vc

GERMANY

[20 March 7:30p: Kulturhaus, Aue](#)

[22 March 7:30p: Eduard-von-Winterstein-Theater, Annaberg-Buchholz](#)

Brahms: Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra (Rosa Wember, vc; Sebastian Fritsch, vc)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 in Eb major, "Romantic" Erzgebirgische Philharmonie Aue

[27 March 8p: Großer Saal, Die Glocke, Bremen](#)

Grieg: Piano Concerto (Lucas Blondeel)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 3 in D minor

Deutsches Ärzteorchester / Alexander Mottok

[12, 13 April 8p: Mozartsaal, Rosengarten, Mannheim](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 5 in Bb major

Nationaltheater-Orchester Mannheim / Antonello Manacorda

[15, 16 April 8p: Philharmonie, Berlin](#)

Messiaen: Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum

Bruckner: Symphony No. 9 in D Minor

Berlin Philharmonic / Zubin Mehta

[15, 16 April 8p & 17 April 7p: Philharmonie, Gasteig, Munich](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 5 in Bb major

Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks / Christian Thielemann

[23, 26 April 8p & 25 April 11a: Mendelssohn Hall, Tonhalle, Düsseldorf](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 8 in C minor

Düsseldorfer Symphoniker / Asher Fisch

[25 April 11a & 26 April 8p: Großer Saal, Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg](#)

Hosokawa: Violin Concerto (Veronika Eberle)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 7 in E major

Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg / Kent Nagano

[25 April 1p & 26 April 8p: Grosses Haus, Staatstheater, Karlsruhe](#)

Chin: Cello Concerto (Isang Enders)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 in Eb major, "Romantic"

Badische Staatskapelle Karlsruhe / Georg Fritsch

[1 May 8p: Graf-Zeppelin-Haus, Friedrichshafen](#)

[2 May 8p: Kultur- und Kongresszentrum, Weingarten](#)

[3 May 8p: Kulturhaus, Dornbirn](#)

(*Lake Constance Festival*)

Vivaldi: Mandolin Concerto in D major (Avi Avital)

Sollima: Mandolin Concerto (Avi Avital)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 2 in C minor

Bruckner Orchester Linz / Bruno Weil

[7 May 10p: Gemäldegalerie, Berlin](#)

Zemlinsky: 2 movements from String Quintet

Bruckner: Intermezzo in D minor

Smetana: String Quartet No. 1 in E minor, "Aus meinem Leben"

Uta Fiedler-Reetz, Bertram Hartling, vln; Henry Pieper, Anna Bortolin, vla; Claudia Benker-Schreiber, vc

[7 May 8p & 8 May 7:30p: Stadtpark Schützenhof, Herford](#)

Mozart: Concerto for 2 Pianos and Orchestra in Eb major (Enrica Ciccarelli, Antonio Chen Guang)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major

Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie / Markus Huber

[9 May 5a & 10 May 1:30p: Georg-Friedrich-Händel Halle, Halle](#)

Wagner: Lohengrin, Prelude to Act 1; Siegfried, Waldweben; Tannhäuser, Prelude

Bruckner: Symphony No. 7 in E major

Staatskapelle Halle / Mario Venzago

[11 May 8p: Beethoven-Saal, Liederhalle, Stuttgart](#)

Rodrigo: A la busca del mas alla

De Falla: Noches en los jardines de Espana

Bruckner: Symphony No. 2 in C minor

Stuttgarter Philharmoniker / Rasmus Baumann

[15 May 5p: Carmen Würth Forum, Künzelsau](#)

Beethoven: Egmont, Overture

Dvořák: Violin Concerto (Shlomo Mintz)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 2 in C minor

Würth Philharmoniker / Oleg Caetani

[20, 21 May 8p: Großer Saal, Alte Oper, Frankfurt am Main](#)

Schumann: Cello Concerto (Truls Mørst)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 9 in D minor

Frankfurt Radio Symphony / Manfred Honeck

[20 May 8p: Großer Saal, Volkshaus, Jena](#)

Adès: 3 Studies from Couperin

Britten: Les Illuminations (Sara Hershkowitz)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 2 in C minor

Jenaer Philharmonie / Leo McFall

[26 May 8p: Alter Budesrat, Bonn](#)

Mozart: String Quintet No. 4 in G minor

Bruckner: String Quintet in F major

Ieva Andreeva, Anna Putnikova, vln; Martin Wandel,
Christian Fischer, vla; Ines Altmann, vc

[3,4,5 June 8p: Philharmonie, Gasteig, Munich](#)

Gubaidulina: Violin Concerto No.1, "Offertorium"
(Baiba Skride)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major
Bavarian Radio Symphony Orch / Andris Nelsons

[4 June 8p & 5 June 7p: Großes Haus, Theater, Cottbus](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 8 in C minor
Philharmonisches Orchester der Staatstheaters Cottbus
/ Alexander Merzyn

[9 June 8p: Kiliansdom, Würzburg](#)

(*Mozartfest Würzburg*)

Reinvere: NEW WORK (UA)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major
Bamberger Symphoniker / Thomas Dausgaard

[10 June 7p: Joseph Keilberth Saal, Sinfonie an der
Regnitz, Bamberg](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major
Bamberger Symphoniker / Thomas Dausgaard

[21, 22 & 23 June 8p: Großes Haus, Stadttheater,
Bremerhaven](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 7 in E major
Philharmonisches Orchester Bremerhaven / Marc
Niemann

[20 June 11a: Alfried-Krupp-Saal, Philharmonie, Essen](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 7 in E major
The Management Symphony (non-professional) /
Tomás Netopil

[20 June 11a & 21 June 8p: Großer Saal,
Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg](#)

Dvořák: Symphony No. 9 in E minor

Berg: 3 Orchesterstücke

Bruckner: Te Deum
Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg / Markus
Poschner

[22 June 7:30p: Ruhrfestspielhaus, Recklinghausen](#)

[28 June 7:30p: Großes Haus, Musiktheater im Revier,
Gelsenkirchen](#)

[30 June 7:30p: Konzertaula, Kamen](#)

Weber: Oberon, Overture

Strauss: Horn Concerto No. 2 (Carsten Carey Duffin)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 in Eb major, "Romantic"
Neue Philharmonie Westfalen / Rasmus Baumann

[28, 29 June 8p: Philharmonie, Köln](#)

Haas: Concerto for Soundwork and Orchestra

Bruckner: Symphony No. 5 in Bb major
Gürzenich Orchester Köln / François-Xavier Roth

[28 June 3p: Basilika, Ottobeuren](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 5 in Bb major
German Radio Philharmonic / Manfred Honeck

HUNGARY

[18, 19 March 7:45 & 20 March 3:30p: Béla Bartók
National Concert Hall, Budapest](#)

Schumann: Piano Concerto in A Minor (Anna
Vinnitskaya)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 9 in D minor
Budapest Festival Orch / Iván Fischer

[30 May 11a: SWR Studio, Kaiserslautern](#)

Mozart: String Quintet No. 4 in G minor

Bruckner: String Quintet in F major

Ieva Andreeva, Anna Putnikova, vln; Martin Wandel,
Christian Fischer, vla; Ines Altmann, vc

ITALY

[25 March 7:30p, 26 March 8:30p & 27 March 6p:
Santa Cecilia Room, Rome](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 5 in Bb major

Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia /
Herbert Blomstedt

JAPAN

[13 March 7p & 14 March 3p: Yamagata Terrsa Hall,
Yamagata](#)

Mozart: Three Marches, K 408

Haydn: Piano Concerto No. 11 (Misako Mihara)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 0 in D minor

Yamagata Symphony Orch / Norichika Imor

[16 April 7p: ACROS Fukuoka Symphony Hall,
Fukuoka](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 8 in C minor

Kyushu Symphony Orch / Kazuhiro Koizumi

[17 April 2p: Kanagawa Kenmin Hall, Yokohama](#)

Puts: Symphony No. 2

Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 in Eb major, "Romantic"

Kanagawa Philharmonic / Kentaro Kawase

[11 June 7p & 12 June 2p: Suntory Hall, Tokyo](#)

Liszt: Les Preludes

Sato: Bass Clarinet concerto (MUSO)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major

Japan Philharmonic Orch / Junichi Hirokami

[16 June 7p: Takemitsu Memorial Hall, Tokyo Opera
City, Tokyo](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 5 in Bb major

Tokyo City Phil / Ken Takaseki

[27 June 2p: Muza Kawasaki Symphony Hall,
Kawasaki](#)

Reinecke: Harp Concerto (Xavier de Mestre)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 7 in E major

Tokyo Symphony Orch / Bertrand de Billy

LUXEMBOURG

[19 March 8p: Grand Auditorium, Philharmonie,
Luxembourg](#)

Berg: Violin Concerto, "Dem Andenken eines Engels"
(Renaud Capuçon)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major

Luxembourg Philharmonic Orch / Gustavo Gimeno

NETHERLANDS

[27 March 8:15p: Grote Zaal, Muziekcentrum Frits](#)

[Philips, Eindhoven](#)

Wagner: Lohengrin, Prelude to Act 1

Diepenbrock: Hymn for Violin and Orchestra (Isabelle van Keulen)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major
Philharmonie Zuidnederland / Hartmut Haenchen

[11 April 11a: Kleine Zaal, Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam](#)

works by: **Bruckner**, **Franck**, others

Ere Lievonen, Fokker organ

[23 April 8:15p: Grote Zaal, Concertgebouw,](#)

[Amsterdam](#)

Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 3 (Nemanja Radulović)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 in Eb major, "Romantic"
Noord Nederlands Orkest / Dan Ettinger

NORWAY

[18, 19 March 7p: Concert Hall, Oslo](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 5 in Bb major

Oslo Philharmonic Orch / Herbert Blomstedt

RUSSIA

[28 May 7p: Great Hall, Moscow Conservatoire,](#)

[Moscow](#)

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5 (Emmanuel Ax)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 1 in C minor
Svetlanov Symphony Orch / Vladimir Jurowski

SLOVAKIA

[30 April 7p: Koncertna sien SF, Bratislava](#)

Bruckner: Motets

Čekovská: Three fragments from Stabat Mater

Martinů: Romance of the Dandelions
Slovak Philharmonic Choir / Jozef Chabroň

SPAIN

[14 April 7:30p: Auditori, Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia,](#)

[Valencia](#)

Rachmaninoff: Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini
(Valentina Lisitsa)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 in Eb major, "Romantic"
Orquestra de Valencia / Ramón Tebar

[20, 21 May 7p: Teatro Cervantes, Malaga](#)

Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 in Eb major, "Romantic"
Malaga Philharmonic Orch / Nicholas Milton

[17,18 June 8:30p: Gran Teatro, Cordoba](#)

Mozart: Symphony No. 6

Bruckner: Symphony No. 6 in A major
Orquesta Cordoba / Carlos Domínguez-Nieto

With gratitude to **Mr. Tatsuro Ouchi** whose website www.bekkoame.ne.jp/~hippo/musik/konzertvorschau/bruckner.html is the source for much of the concert listing information



www.bachtrack.com

A recommended web-site for worldwide concert listings and reviews

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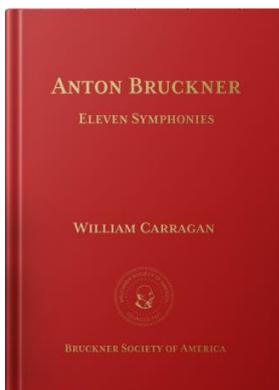
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This may consist of concerts attended, performances online, audio or video recordings – physical media, such as CDs, DVDs, BluRays – live streaming online – archival performances.

There is a vast trove of Bruckner performances available that would be of interest to our readers, and sharing reviews with others enhances the experience of us all!

Interested parties are encouraged to contact me: editor@brucknerjournal.com

In some cases, physical media can be provided to those interested in reviews



Anton Bruckner: Eleven Symphonies

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William Carragan

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- William Carragan

The book is published in a limited edition in support of the Society. Costing \$50.00, purchase of the book also includes a one-year membership in the Bruckner Society of America. Signed copies are also available for \$100.00. Overseas patrons will cost extra due to international postage expense.

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BRUCKNERTAGE

14 - 22 August 2021

BrucknerTage 2021*

The Quint_Essence of Experiences

Sunday 15 Aug

Presentation of the renovated Bruckner grand piano (Bösendorfer, 1848)

Keynote lecture: **Elisabeth Maier**

OPENING CONCERT

"950 years St. Florian Boys' Choir",
works by: Bruckner, Kropfreiter, others

Markus Stumpner, dir & **Franz Farnberger**, pno

Monday 16 Aug

"Brucknerflügel": Inaugural concert of the restored Bruckner Bösendorfer piano

Wolfgang Brunner, pno

works by: Schubert, Sechter, Kitzler, Bruckner

Tuesday 17 Aug

ORGAN NIGHT VII

Beat Heimgartner, Luzern/CH

"Toccatessque - from Bach to Bohemian Rhapsody"

Björn Wiede, Potsdam/D

"Organ Symphony"

Tina Christiansen, Odense/DK

"Organ and Saxophone"

Peter King, Exeter/GB

"Choral and English organ music"

Franz Hauk, Ingolstadt/D

Bach and Reger

Wednesday 18 Aug

OPERA NIGHT

Excerpts from: Wagner, Halévy, von Weber, Berlioz, etc

Matthias Giesen, Bruckner pno & **Michael Wagner**, bass

Thursday 19 Aug

JAZZ CONCERT

"Sketches on Bruckner"

Rudi Berger, vln & friends

Friday 20 Aug

SYMPOSIUM – *Bruckner-Dimensionen*

Benjamin Korstvedt, USA / **Kyra Waldner**, Vienna /

Felix Diergarten, Freiburg

SYMPHONY CONCERT

Bruckner: Symphony No. 4 (v1888, ed. Korstvedt)

Altomonte Orchestra – **Rémy Ballot**, cond.

Saturday 21 Aug

"WANDERUNG"

Hiking along the Bruckner symphony path

SYMPHONY CONCERT – 2nd PERFORMANCE

As Fri 20 Aug programme

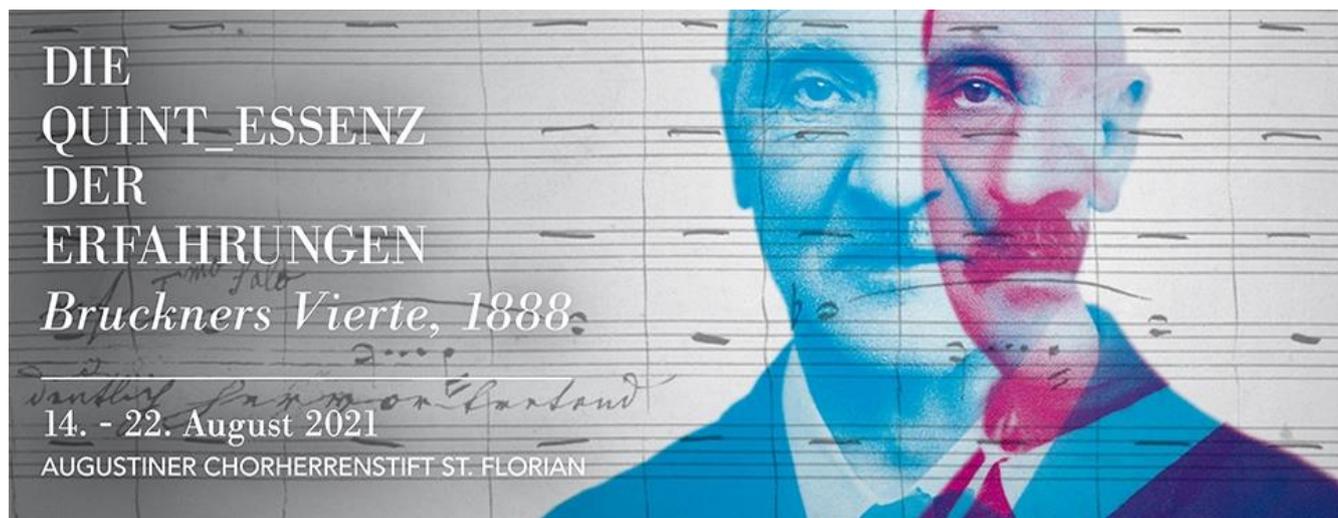
Sunday 22 Aug

BRUCKNER BRUNCH

More information on ticket sales, discounts and festival passes at:

www.brucknertage.at

***Preliminary Schedule** – due to the fluidity of the *Corona Virus* situation globally, readers are encouraged to confirm with the venue prior to making ticket purchase or travel plans.



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To that end, the Journal has always welcomed all manner of contributions. All of us with a passion for Bruckner are fortunate to share in a community where the occasional concertgoer can have experiences as unique as the most seasoned researcher.

Readers are encouraged to share their enthusiasm with other Journal subscribers in the form of an article, short essay, concert/CD review, or comments on previous Journal content and letters to the editor.

All contributions are welcome and considered



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