



# The Bruckner Journal

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## BRUCKNER REVIEWED

We were asked recently for our recommended "best buys" of Bruckner recordings. Call it fence-sitting if you like, but perhaps this journal is really the LAST place for such tips. Our review pages, it is hoped, will always suggest the complexity of the task of assessing CDs. The large collections owned by numerous readers appear to confirm the difficulty - and possibly the undesirability - of naming an out-and-out first choice for each of Bruckner's works.

Reviewing involves both objective and subjective factors; it is not just a matter of giving marks out of ten. An experienced critic can be of considerable service simply by communicating in words the salient features of a musical performance. And if they are candid, reviewers will regularly signal the personal element that is bound up with any stated value-judgment.

To illustrate the aforesaid complexity of CD reviewing, consider the recordings of the Corydon Singers. When their box set of Bruckner Masses was issued, I offered it to a particular reviewer in the confident expectation that he would be delighted with it. To my surprise he damned it with faint praise. In the present journal, I have taken the opportunity to put a different construction upon one of the offending interpretations.

We have discussed balloting you for your own recommendations, but all that it would tell us for certain is the relative availability of the published recordings. And can one in justice ignore that huge Japanese market into which few Westerners have delved? For the time being, then, we are content to pass on a second selection from California of meritorious (and sometimes curious) Bruckner recordings old and new.

P.P.

**Te Deum**

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Chorus with Claire Rutter (soprano), Sally Bruce-Payne (mezzo-soprano), Gwyn Hughes Jones (tenor) and Matthew Best (bass), conducted by Jiri Kout  
 Poole Arts Centre, Wednesday 27 September 2000

BOURNEMOUTH Symphony Orchestra opened its new season with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, preceded by Bruckner's Te Deum - a successful and effective pairing. The Te Deum complements the Beethoven Ninth well, since it is substantial enough to fill the first part of a concert but is not too long.

Although the Poole acoustic is too dry, the opening with its pounding rhythmic vitality was extremely exciting. I suspect, however, that it sounded better at the performance which followed next evening in Southampton Guildhall. The music for the solo voices is quite different, tender and even pleading. The soloists proved to be a capable team; the bass was particularly imposing. Jiri Kout conducted with well chosen tempi and carefully shaped phrasing. It would be nice to think that the orchestra might invite him back to conduct one of the Bruckner symphonies. As a listening experience this Te Deum was awe-inspiring.

TERRY BARFOOT

**Mass in E minor, motets**

Anton Bruckner Choir and Anton Bruckner Orchestra, conducted by Christopher Dawe  
 St Dionis Church, Parsons Green, London, Saturday 14 October

BERNARD Shaw, when venturing out to Bow in east London to hear a performance of Purcell, claims to have taken a revolver with him for his safety. As I made the journey by public transport from Bow to the dark depths of south west London, I felt I should be similarly prepared, but immediately the Anton Bruckner Choir began to sing I was completely disarmed. This choir sounds heavenly.

Having performed a selection of motets, with one of the Aequale for trombones in the middle (this involved some rather disruptive shuffling of the choir back and forth), and the Stravinsky Mass, they embarked on Bruckner's Mass in E minor. The basses provided a wonderfully firm and resonant ground above which the women's voices seemed to rise and float towards another world. The tenors struggled manfully as tenors do. Christopher Dawe's conducting produced a finely proportioned performance with a heart-stopping opening Kyrie, and a strong and lively repeated Gloria around a dramatic and moving Credo. The following movements were all well characterised and properly paced towards the closing 'Dona nobis pacem' where, as Nowak wrote, music becomes prayer. The wind band played well, the woodwind very expressive, with brass not perfect but balanced to add glorious highlights to the musical palette.

Back in Bow I tried to recreate the experience, but - believe it or not - only an ancient LP performance conducted by Helmuth Rilling seemed to inhabit comparable territory. It left me wondering how a choir and orchestra of such quality existed in this country and I'd known nothing of them until now.

KEN WARD

**Paul Daniel, music director of English National Opera, stepped in for Christoph Eschenbach as conductor of Bruckner's Sixth Symphony with the LPO at the Royal Festival Hall, London, on Thursday 9 November.** Born in 1958, Daniel studied conducting with Adrian Boult and Edward Downes in England and with Franco Ferrara in Italy.

RARELY DOES one find a fully satisfying Bruckner 6. This has been achieved on disc by Inbal and Solti (more or less), Blomstedt and Celibidache (very much more), and Chailly (first movement only). Klemperer, though one of my heroes, misses out here. As I see it, the Sixth is the classical work in Bruckner's symphonic canon. Transitions and tempo relations are crucial to building each movement's edifice. The expression, while deeply felt, needs the tartness that comes of astutely balancing Bruckner's instrumental lines. Paul Daniel delivered as fine a performance of Bruckner in A major as I've heard.

With the London Philharmonic in splendid form, Daniel was alert to the symphony's chamber-musical scoring--the way that small details blend and balance. Having launched the morse-code idea at a virtually ideal tempo, he appreciated Bruckner's long phrases, and the exposition's three subjects emerged as an entity. Daniel was the epitome of Brucknerian perspective in seeing each movement as a whole. The secret was his masterly handling of transitions, as in the 'funeral march' of the Adagio. In an atmosphere pregnant with anticipation, Daniel unfurled the wondrous melody 'in tempo'; with crisp timpani in attendance, the music's heartache was fully stated.

The scherzo--vital, muscular, even a tad humorous--proved an admirable foil to the enigmatic trio. The finale, purposeful and bold, was enthralling.

COLIN ANDERSON

THIS WAS an impressive performance by the LPO. Paul Daniel took it briskly, but the rhythms were consistently well articulated and the orchestral sound was well balanced, so that we heard every strand. The work seemed very cogent, very tight, held together with consummate musical logic.

What we gained in coherence, however, we lost in expression. When the main theme of the first movement was inverted to become a soaring ecstatic string melody, it was not given time to sing. The kaleidoscopic unfolding of heavenly landscapes in the first-movement coda was too fast for us to fully acknowledge the scenery around us. The weeping oboe solo of the Adagio was a touch prosaic, and the flowing pace of the movement belied the tragedy of the funeral march. But the build-up to the climax, in which the oboe melody rings out on horns, was profoundly moving.

The scherzo and trio were fantastic in every sense, and the refusal to linger paid off in the finale. Critics often regard this movement as flawed. But, as Richard Osborne said (quoting Confucius), the way out is through the door. Paul Daniel headed straight through that door without mulling over the pattern on the wallpaper, and it all made wonderful sense. We had had laid before us a well constructed, supremely beautiful architecture, and the vitality of it sent us home much invigorated.

KEN WARD

**Bruckner: Symphony No. 9 (with Finale)**

Russian National Orchestra conducted by Robert Bachmann

Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Moscow, Monday 6 November 2000

IN FRONT OF 1,500 people in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, the Russian National Orchestra under Robert Bachmann played Bruckner's Ninth Symphony for the first time in a new edition by Benjamin Gunnar Cohrs which has just been published in Vienna as part of the Critical Edition. The concert also marked the Russian premiere of the performing version, by Samale-Phillips-Cohrs-Mazzuca, of the symphony's incomplete Finale. This is the completion which has proved to be the most soundly based philologically, and the concert caused a considerable sensation in Moscow.

The orchestral layout was a surprise. In contrast to the widespread American placement, the violins sat left and right on the platform, the violas, horns, Wagner tubas and timpani on the left, the woodwind in the middle, the tuba, trombones, trumpets, cellos and double basses on the right. Because of this, many problems of orchestral balance solved themselves. If at times the sound lacked amplex in depth, this may be ascribed to the hall, with its high, bare-stone ceiling over the stage. Moreover a tiered platform appears to be unusual in Russia, so that the sound tends to be thrown against the ceiling rather than into the hall.

The symphony began with a feeling of great peace, out of which an ever stronger sense of agitation could develop towards the end of the first movement. As a result, many almost hysterical episodes of this 'near to death' music became that much more vivid. The Scherzo unfolded in a measured tempo, taking on the weight of a demonic dance of death, an excellent timpanist contributing to the effect. The Adagio proceeded in a strict but pleasantly flowing tempo. The orchestra's relative unfamiliarity with Bruckner was a hidden asset, for the sentimental, dragging opening to the Adagio heard from some Western orchestras was absent here.

Bachmann brought out the part-writing clearly without letting the overall sound be thrown into relief in the process. Tempi were chosen in such a way that connections between the themes became clearly audible. In this manner the Finale, completed by foreign hands, not only fitted imperceptibly into the whole but became the true climax of the symphony. In brisk tempo, and with an unsurpassable sense of drama, the dotted rhythms of the first two themes and the broadly flowing triplets of the moving chorale theme fought out the final battle between life and death. With the return of the first movement's principal theme, Bachmann found the way back to its initial peace. The coda (largely drafted by Bruckner) thereby unfolded in majestic breadth. In the final, radiant D major measures the conductor achieved such a culmination in sound that the symphony appeared to end in an act of self-realisation.

Prior to the symphony, Benjamin Gunnar Cohrs made his international debut as a conductor in Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 8 in C (K.246). The Moscow public has scarcely been accustomed to strings playing almost without vibrato, and with a speech-like phrasing and articulation. The work took on a sculptural quality and was constantly light and graceful. The fine young pianist Alexander Gindin played Mozart's own realisation of the figured bass in the *tuttis*.

ROB VAN DER HILST (Utrecht)

**Symphony No. 9**

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Walter Weller

Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, Saturday 16 December

THIS PERFORMANCE of Bruckner's Ninth provided an excellent foil to Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1, in C major. The concert followed a discussion between journalist Stephen Johnson and radio presenter Lynne Walker, who explored the "curse of the ninth symphony" and viewed Bruckner's work in the light of other Ninths, notably those of Beethoven and Mahler.

The concert was conducted by Walter Weller, former Konzertmeister of the Vienna Philharmonic and leader of the Weller Quartet. His Viennese pedigree was demonstrated in the interpretation of both works. In the concerto he moulded the orchestral textures sympathetically and developed a rapport between the Philharmonic and pianist John Lill. In the Bruckner symphony he showed a firm grasp of both the small detail and the large-scale structure. There were memorable moments: the bitter-sweet lyricism of the second subject in the opening movement, the rhythmical precision in the scherzo, and the lacerating chords and wrenching dissonances in the Adagio. The orchestral ensemble was first-rate apart from one or two woodwind lapses midway through the third movement.

The elegiac coda of this movement, with its poignant reminiscences of earlier material in the symphony and of themes from earlier works, may not have been Bruckner's "last word", but Weller's sensitive interpretation of these bars provided an eminently satisfying conclusion. What a pity that the spell at the end was broken by some enthusiastic applause, a split second after the final pizzicato string chord!

Readers will have the opportunity of hearing this concert at some unspecified date, as it was recorded for transmission on BBC Radio 3. Let's hope that the applause is held back by means of skilful re-mastering.

CRAWFORD HOWIE

**MUSICGRAM SOLUTION AND WINNERS**

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 F R A N Z

Nobody claimed that our Christmas competition was too easy, but the first solution arrived almost by return of post. The lucky winners of the first two Bruckner recordings issued on the Eloquence label were **Brian Holland**, **Andrew Youdell** and--thanks to a bonus prize that was kindly despatched by Universal Music--**Bryn Parkhouse**.

## BRUCKNER REVEALED

by Colin Anderson

THE RECORDINGS included in this survey, and those by Boulez and Celibidache in particular, continue to inspire one to listen to new releases for fresh insights into the composer celebrated in this publication.

No matter how much he stretched music, **Sergiu Celibidache** rarely lost the plot, although in his final years in Munich he could go into a time-warp that left listeners unconvinced, exasperated, or speechless with admiration. I'm in the last category, usually overwhelmed and inspired by the aural illumination he sculpted over such unprecedented time-spans. While Munich has been EMI's province, Deutsche Grammophon has contented itself with **SWR Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra** recordings which document a younger Celi, one as acoustically fastidious but not so infinite in speeds. Following a box of Bruckner's last three symphonies (which includes a remarkable No. 8), DG now gives us Nos 3-5.

This set includes a 1980 Third, painstakingly blended and richly moulded, with dynamics compellingly attended to. The dance music in the Trio and the finale's polka has a lilt all of its own, while the splendour of the first movement's climaxes and the symphony's close is stunning. The 1981 Fifth (digitally recorded, and coupled with a dancing and elegant Mozart "Haffner" Symphony) is meticulously balanced between the symphony's majestic and mystic elements: the very cathedral of sound that makes Bruckner and Celibidache so compatible. Celi's very broad pacing of the slow movement is gripping--the pizzicato tread has a different weight and timbre on each note--and the lines of the finale's fugue are never obscured, nor is its growth. The earliest performance here is of the Fourth Symphony with the **Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra**, given in Berlin's Philharmonie in 1969. This is as translucent a "Romantic" as you could wish to hear. The sound is radiant and the structure seamless (Celi's penchant for diminuendos at the close of loud passages to segue into quiet ones may be thought brilliantly effective or mannered, according to viewpoint). The veiled start of the slow movement and the thrilling scherzo, which has an attractively languorous trio, linger in the memory. The finale swells to 24 minutes and culminates in a coda that grows from mystery to awe in the most astonishing way. The 4-CD set [DG 459 663-2] was produced by Christian Gansch, one of Celi's violinists in Munich.\* A 39-minute bonus CD features the finale of Bruckner's Fifth in rehearsal.

Celi avoids the heaviness in which the "Romantic" Symphony often gets bogged down. This has nothing to do with tempo; heaviness stems from a four-square approach allied to an "obvious" overall sound and an indiscriminate application of decibels. I'm not suggesting that **Franz Konwitschny** (1901-62) was an inferior Brucknerian--although I do find him variable--but simply that his "traditional" account of the Fourth falls into a groove. What is interesting is that, in 1952, Konwitschny broke through the 70-minute limit for this piece (think how quickly Klemperer was taking it). I mention this because speeds, not only in Bruckner,

\* Christian Gansch was also in charge of the Boulez disc in this survey

have tended to become broader since then. Konwitschny conducts a powerful and resolute performance. Best of all is the finale, which is inexorably charted. The expansive slow movement lasts 19 minutes and sounds too static to justify the pulse. The mono sound, while decent enough, tends to rob pianissimos of their ethereal qualities. An interesting document of the "old" **Czech Philharmonic Orchestra** and its distinctive tones, playing music not especially associated with it, for Maticic had yet to arrive [SUPRAPHON SU 3467-2 001].

True Brucknerian expectancy informs the opening of **Günter Wand's** latest CD of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony, this time with the **Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra** recorded at concerts between 19-21 November 1999. The close scrutiny of the opening string tremolandos gives way, 66 minutes later, to a slightly shrunken, more distant perspective, which doesn't expand fully for the culminating fortissimo. The whole plays for 66'40"--which, I suspect, is the longest Wand has taken in his recorded performances of this symphony. (RCA's stated 63'31" is wrong; movement one is 21'06", not 19'28", and the finale at 13'14" is a minute longer than indicated.) Here Wand conducts the most convincing account of the Seventh that I've heard from him, with more life and colour than before. The structural exposition is lucid, and I'm delighted by the cleanly balanced textures, which emphasize Bruckner's chamber-musical scoring. In his understanding of the work's scale and its emotional scope, Wand joins van Beinum (his Decca recording) and Harnoncourt, neither of whom overplays his hand in this music--there is no overblowing the rhetoric or making textures too thick. Wand remains faithful to the Haas edition, especially in having no percussion at the Adagio's climax. An outstanding achievement [RCA 74321 68716 2].

**Pierre Boulez** is not renowned as a Bruckner conductor but in his eighth decade is catching up with composers (Richard Strauss, Janacek, Scriabin, even Korngold) that have not figured in his repertoire up to now. Boulez may be a champion of modernism, to which he has contributed very distinguishedly as a composer, but he brings masterly understanding to Bruckner's score. With a fired-up **Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra** he conducts a performance of the Eighth Symphony, recorded in St Florian Abbey in September 1996, which has established itself in my affections for its wholly musical responses to Bruckner's "agony and ecstasy". Boulez's characteristic concern for instrumental clarity rewards the keen-eared. It's a swift account--76 minutes for the Haas edition--but never sounds rushed or impatient. The highlight is the slow movement, restless and emotionally charged. The scherzo is among the quickest renderings, and the finale is cohesive and concentrated, with a glorious coda [DG 459 678-2].

Boulez has recently conducted Bruckner's Fifth and Ninth Symphonies in Chicago. I hope Deutsche Grammophon was there too.

**The 1996 Bruckner memorial concert at St Florian is also available on a TDK DVD Video with a playing time of 95 minutes**

**Bruckner: Symphony No. 3** (1877 version, with 1876 Adagio)  
 BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Osmo Vänskä  
 Hyperion CDA67200

THE VERSION of Bruckner's Third Symphony recorded here is far from straightforward. But then, in its genesis the Third is the most complex of all Bruckner's symphonies: in his booklet notes, Stephen Johnson identifies no fewer than nine separate versions and/or editions. Suffice it to say that here we have essentially the 1877 or "second" version of the work (in Nowak's edition), but with the longer interim version of the Adagio, a version which may have been heard at the disastrous premiere under Bruckner's direction. However, Vänskä opts to include the coda to the Scherzo which Bruckner composed in 1878 but withdrew before the symphony was published that year.

The proliferation of editions and scholarly debate since the 1950s was expected to simplify or at least clarify matters. Instead it seems to be engendering a new pluralism, in which different versions of the same work offer conductors a whole range of performance options. A bewildering prospect--but surely only the most die-hard of purists are likely to find serious fault with this new recording.

Vänskä has already proved himself a conductor of real stature in Sibelius. Here he brings his gifts for pacing and balance to the first of what, I hope, will be a series of Bruckner recordings from this source. The recording is warm and resonant but also clear and well defined. Vänskä pays scrupulous attention to Bruckner's dynamics: only the timpanist seems unable to achieve a true *ppp* (as at the beginning of the first-movement recapitulation). A big plus throughout is the antiphonal placement of first and second violins. This makes an impact from the very opening and clarifies much of the part-writing. Perhaps the lower strings could be weightier, and the woodwind seem slightly recessed, but this is an involving and characterful performance.

The outer movements work well, having real momentum and excitement without losing the vital sense of space. The Scherzo, too, is thrilling; only the Trio seems wanting in Austrian earthiness. The Adagio, with its pivotal central section--later cut by Bruckner--still intact, is sensitively done. Even the cascading Tannhäuser arpeggios at the final appearance of the main theme sound convincing in Vänskä's capable hands.

MARK AUDUS

\* \* \*

Vänskä conducted the Third Symphony at the Proms a few years ago--a performance of nervous energy. The work has gained more poise and a heavier gait in this "studio" production set in a church with reasonably sensitive acoustics. Although the antiphonal violins are not always clear in trumpet-dominated tutti, the recording combines space and presence elsewhere. But I miss Vänskä's freewheeling Proms approach, especially in the slow movement (at its longest in 1876). Vänskä takes 21 minutes on disc, compared to 18 at the Proms; Tintner's recording for Naxos, although only a few seconds quicker, seems to find a more flowing expression in this movement.

COLIN ANDERSON

**Bruckner: Mass No. 2 in E minor; O du lieber Jesu Kind;  
In jener letzten der Nächte; Mass in C major**

Ludmila Kuznetzova (mezzo-soprano), Ludmila Golub (organ);  
Russian State Symphonic Cappella and Russian State Symphony  
Orchestra/Valeri Polyansky  
Chandos CHAN 9863

**Bruckner: Te Deum; Mass No. 1 in D minor**

Joan Rodgers (soprano), Catherine Wyn-Rogers (contralto), Keith Lewis  
(tenor), Alastair Miles (bass), Corydon Singers & Orchestra/Matthew Best  
Hyperion HYP650

**Bruckner: Motets (with Brahms Motets)**

Choir of St Bride's, Fleet Street/Robert Jones  
In: Choral Masterpieces Vol. 1, Naxos 8.505151, five-CD set

FOR MANY music lovers, the recent dilution of national characteristics in orchestral playing is regrettable. There may be a demand for a McDonald's to serve up the same fare in every city and town, but do all the symphony orchestras around the globe have to sound the same? Fortunately the human voice cannot be standardised so easily. None of the above choirs could pass itself off as a Viennese one, and the first could never be taken for anything other than Russian, but that does not prevent them from performing Bruckner with conviction.

The Russian State Symphonic Cappella has developed out of a Moscow students' choir started by Valeri Polyansky in 1971. Evidently their outlook has always been international, so that it comes as no surprise that they are regularly recording for Chandos, or that they have now added Bruckner's "Wind Mass" to discs of Glazunov's Tsar Judeskiy and Grechaninov's Missa oecumenica. Their marriage of tonal richness with expressive refinement is prodigious, and they sing with the fervour usually associated with Russian Orthodox Church music. In terms of pacing and weight, recordings of the E minor Mass have tended to fall into two categories - depending often but not always on the size of the choir and the location. At 42:16 Polyansky's interpretation stands in the monumental tradition of Rilling, Jochum and Barenboim, and to me it seems second to none for atmosphere. The orchestra (formerly the Soviet Philharmonic) was founded by Rozhdestvensky; I would gladly slap a preservation order on the gloriously exotic timbres of the wind instruments used here.

The Mass in C, sometimes known as the "Windhaag" Mass, was written by Bruckner while in his first post as a primary school teacher. This short work (12:27 on the CD) was arranged in the 1920s for a choir, horns, organ and string orchestra, but the recording abides by the original version for a solo singer accompanied by organ and two horns. Probably as a result of her Italian training, Ludmila Kuznetzova's warm and beautiful mezzo voice avoids that wide vibrato generally favoured in Eastern Europe. The Mass itself would not have disgraced Schubert. Of two other items performed by the two Ludmilas, the engaging O du lieber

Jesu Kind dates from circa 1845 but may not be by Bruckner: it is listed as a "Schullied". In jener letzten der Nächte has affinities with the Lutheran chorale.

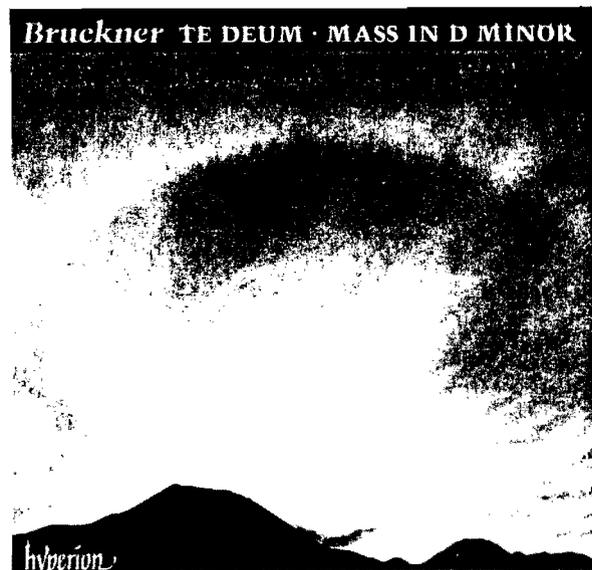
I'd like to quote Jeremy Siepmann's Chandos notes because of their relevance to the Hyperion disc as well. Siepmann writes:

Having first listened to the Mass from a purely musical point of view, the listener would derive great benefit from listening to it again, this time following the text and observing the ways in which the music amplifies the words harmonically, melodically, texturally and rhythmically...

This applies to all Bruckner's mature settings of the Mass, which Richard Roddis reviewed here [July 1997] in performances by the Corydon Singers. Especially successful, he thought, were their renderings of the Mass in D minor and Te Deum - now repackaged and available as a budget-price CD. Roddis did, however, criticise the choir for not putting more meaning into their words. Indeed, were it not for the fact that Matthew Best sings professionally, his approach could be taken for that of a typical orchestral conductor. But surely this (as it were) symphonic approach has its own validity, the meanings implied by the words being made explicit by the orchestra.

As Roddis noted, the recording balance between choir and orchestra in the Te Deum puts the former at a disadvantage. On the other hand the work's mercurial contrasts are skilfully caught, and the organ of Westminster Cathedral adds to the fire of the performance. This CD is worth a place on the shelves of any Brucknerian. Although the D minor Mass has not been over-recorded, it merits repeated hearing as the seat of Bruckner's real breakthrough to independence as a composer.

Finally, a shotgun wedding with happy consequences. The motets of Brahms and Bruckner, recorded by the professional singers of the Choir of St Bride's in London under Robert Jones, were previously released on two separate discs. Extracts from each make up the final CD of the Naxos "Choral Masterpieces Volume One", also featuring Vivaldi performed by the Schola Cantorum of Oxford with the Northern Chamber Orchestra, and J.S. Bach, Pergolesi and Mozart performed by various artists from Central and Eastern Europe. Confirmed Brucknerians will want the six extra pieces included on the original Bruckner CD (Naxos 8.550956), but the boxed set can be welcomed as a fine introduction to the composer's most consummate small-scale works. One caveat: the booklet no longer contains the Latin texts, but it still claims that Ecce sacerdos was written to celebrate the thousandth - rather than the hundredth - anniversary of the Linz diocese. This bloomer appears to have originated in the first edition of the Bruckner biography by Derek Watson, who has since rectified it.



PETER PALMER

**Richard Wetz: Symphony No. 2; Kleist Overture**

Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz/Werner Andreas Albert  
cpo 999 695-2 [from Select]

**Paul von Klenau: Symphony No. 1 in F minor; Symphony No. 5; Paolo und Francesca - Symphonische Fantasie für Orchester**

Odense Symphony Orchestra/Jan Wagner  
dacapo 8.224134 [from Select]

BOTH these composers have been called Brucknerian - hence their review here - and Wetz published a book on Bruckner in 1923 (Anton Bruckner: sein Leben und Schaffen). Fortunately neither of them is a Bruckner imitator, although his influence is evident in their broad symphonic structures and the steady unfolding of musical ideas. But I'm not sure that either of these composers really learnt the main lessons that Bruckner had to teach. I missed the short memorable themes and the confident underlying sense of harmonic movement he always supplies.

Richard Wetz (1875-1935) first made an impact in 1899 with the Kleist Overture. It was championed by Artur Nikisch but never led to greater things, possibly because of Wetz's retiring personality. In 1906 he was offered a post in the small city of Erfurt, and it suited him so well that he stayed there for the rest of his life. Although something of a musical backwater, Erfurt offered him the security he needed to go on composing undisturbed by contemporary developments.

Wetz's Second Symphony dates from 1919 but shows no sign of the upheavals of the time - it has been called his "Pastoral". The bucolic opening brings Dvorak to mind rather than Bruckner, and there are lovely moments. While the work as a whole is diffuse and over-long, this loving performance under Werner Andreas Albert (who has brought much little-known German music from the early twentieth century to light) makes an excellent case for it.

The Danish composer Paul von Klenau (1883-1946) was a life-long friend of Alban Berg, but he remained faithful to the Romantic style: the CD cover is reassuringly labelled "Late Romantic". He too worked for most of his life as a conductor in Germany, only returning to Denmark when encroaching deafness enforced his retirement in 1940. His seven operas include works based on the lives of Rembrandt and Elizabeth I of England, and a setting of Sheridan's The School for Scandal - a choice suggesting a lightness of touch which is absent from the pieces recorded here.

Klenau's F Minor Symphony is a young man's work. The slow introduction promises great things, but Klenau never quite delivers, and he sometimes imitates Bruckner's personal style in a way which Wetz carefully avoids. The hard, heavy sound of his orchestra is another drawback. The robust third movement is effective, but the slow final section of the last movement, beginning in saccharine style on organ, harp, and Wagner tubas, lets things down.

The much later Fifth Symphony has succinct themes, a deeply felt middle movement, and - at twelve minutes - the merit of brevity. The early symphonic poem inspired by Dante is by far the strongest work on this disc. Jan Wagner obtains warm playing from the Odense Symphony Orchestra.

DERMOT GAULT

We have included two "orchestra" sets from the USA because they include first issues of Bruckner recordings. Both these 10-CD sets are available direct from the orchestra. Since the previous listing we have noted a 4-CD set issued by Philips in their Dutch Masters series (Vol. 57) which features Eduard van Beinum conducting Symphonies Nos 5, 7, 8 and 9 (464 950-2). Recording dates are 3-59, 5-53, 6-55, 9-56. Although it seems to be only available in Holland, it did appear on amazon.com (UK).

**SYMPHONIES**

\* = new issue

- Nos 1-9 Jochum/Staatskapelle Dresden (Dresden 12-78, 7-80, 1-77, 12-75, 2/3-80, 6-78, 12-76, 11-76, 1-78) EMI CZS5 73905-2, nine CDs
- No. 2 \*Skrowaczewski/Saarbrücken RSO (Saarbrücken 10-99)  
ARTE NOVA 74321 77065-2 [59:02]
- No. 3 \*Vänskä/BBC Scottish SO (East Lothian, Scotland 6-00)  
HYPERION CDA67200 [62:36]
- No. 4 Barenboim/CSO (Chicago 11-72) DG ELOQUENCE 469 642-2 [63:42]  
Konwitschny/Czech PO (Prague 1952) SUPRAPHON ARCHIV SU3467-2 [70:18]  
\*Stein/Vienna Symphony Orchestra BERLIN CLASSICS 0017 102BC  
With Schubert Symphony No. 9 and Mahler's Symphony No. 5 (other conductors)  
Kabasta/Munich PO (Munich 6-43) MUSIC & ARTS CD1072 [62:08]  
With Beethoven Symphony No. 3 and Dvorak's Symphony No. 9
- No. 6 \*Eschenbach/Houston SO (Houston 1999)  
KOCH INTERNATIONAL C3-7484-2 [60:35]  
\*Bernstein/NYPO (New York 3-76) NYP2003, ten-CD set
- No. 7 \*Wand/BPO (Berlin 11-99) RCA RED SEAL 74321 68716-2 [66:40]  
\*Tennstedt/CSO (Chicago 1984) CHICAGO SO IN 20TH CENTURY, ten-CD set  
Knappertsbusch/VPO (Salzburg 8-49) ISIS 316 [62:24]  
-ditto- ARKADIA ICD78588
- No. 9 Schuricht/Bavarian RSO (Munich 3-63) ORFEO D'OR C548001B [56:57]  
Barenboim/CSO (Chicago 5-75) DG ELOQUENCE 469 667-2 [60:36]  
With Ruth Welting and the Chicago Symphony Chorus in Psalm 150 [8:45]

**CHORAL**

- Mass in C, \*Ludmila Kuznetzova, mezzo, Ludmila Golub, organ, Stanislav Davydov and  
Mass in E min Alexei Shanin, horns; Polyansky/Russian State Symphonic Cappella and Orch  
(Moscow 7-98, 2-97) CHANDOS CHAN9863 [12:27, 42:16]  
With O du liebes Jesu Kind and In jener letzten der Nächte

---

A **Requiem in memoriam Anton Bruckner** by the Vevey-born musician JEAN-CLAUDE BOSSEL was premiered in Switzerland in 1998. Together with music by César Franck, the Requiem has been recorded under the direction of Olivier Piguet. Material illustrating the work's stylistic links with Bruckner and its thematic working-up is included in the CD package. The performers are Ensemble Vocal Bis and the Orchestre du Collège et des Jeunesses Musicales de Saint-Maurice. For details, write to CDA-Production, Case Postale 6, CH-1028 Préverenges, Switzerland.

## F E E D B A C K

IAN BERESFORD GLEAVES (Great Malvern) writes:

The added percussion at the marvellous change to C major (key of Light) at the climactic point in the slow movement of Symphony No. 7 has been the source of some controversy. It is not clear whether it was intended by the composer, but the pencil marking on the manuscript "gilt nicht" (not valid) may not be in Bruckner's hand. Some performances include the extra percussion (triangle and cymbal clash, marked "ausklingen lassen", i.e. let it sound out), some do not. It seems reasonable to suppose that, since Bruckner uses extra percussion at the analogous point in the Adagio of the Eighth Symphony, he would not have objected to it here. Indeed he may have inserted the same effect in No. 8 after hearing how successful it was in No. 7, although it could be argued that such quasi-theatrical effects were foreign to his musical language and personality. The question remains: who was responsible for the percussion in No. 7?

The triumphant first performance of Symphony No. 7 was given in Leipzig by the Gewandhaus Orchestra conducted by Arthur Nikisch, then a relatively young man of 29. In later life he was admired by Mahler, Reger, Strauss, and Tchaikovsky, who particularly approved of Nikisch's rendering of his Fifth Symphony. In 1905 he gave the first performance in Paris of Scriabin's Third Symphony (the "Divine Poem"). Now it is interesting that in Yevgeny Svetlanov's recording of that work, cymbal clashes (not indicated by the composer) have been added to the score in the same way as the one in Bruckner's Seventh. Svetlanov being a conductor in line of descent from Koussevitsky, Safonoff and Nikisch, it occurs to me that Nikisch may have introduced the cymbal clash into both Scriabin's Third and Bruckner's Seventh. The fact that he conducted the premiere of both works suggests that the same man was responsible for this effect in each case.

\* \* \* \* \*

HOWARD JONES (Dronfield, South Yorks) writes:

Raymond Cox refers in the November 2000 Bruckner Journal to the notorious cuts that Klemperer made in his EMI recording of Bruckner's Eighth. There was an earlier broadcast performance with the Cologne RSO (Köln Grosser Sendersaal, 7 June 1957) that made it on to LPs in 1983, with CD reissues in 1989 and 1995. This was the complete "Nowak" 1890 version with no cuts. Its 1995 reappearance was on a 3-CD Frequenz set 051-054 along with Symphony No. 4 (5 April 1954, again with the Cologne RSO) and Symphony No. 7 with the Berlin PO

**F E E D B A C K**

from the Lucerne Festival in 1958. It was on sale in remainder shops at £3.99 (or less) for the set, some while back.

\* \* \* \* \*

JOSEPH LOBELLO (U.S.A.) writes:

Live performances of the Bruckner symphonies with the Munich Philharmonic conducted by S. Celibidache (EMI), recorded primarily during this last decade, end with applause from the audience only after a long and protracted silence. This is especially noticeable with the last two symphonies, which end with almost a minute of total and haunting silence. Celibidache also performed, live, the Beethoven cycle during this period of time, with the same orchestra and the same audience. These symphonies all end almost immediately with an outburst from the audience of joy and ebullience.

Why is this, and is there any significance in this difference? I believe there is. In Beethoven, the ending presents itself as a final paroxysm from a long symphonic struggle beginning with bondage and ending with emancipation and human freedom. There is triumph in it and the audience, at the end, shares in the celebration with instantaneous and unrestrained joy. In Bruckner, there is no comparable overcoming of darkness by light, since a Bruckner symphony is not a work revealing mundane struggles or human concerns. Bruckner's music is pure spirituality.

He never for a moment struggled with the belief in God; his music is simply the revelation and explication of the Divine in him. The darkness in his music (when it manifests itself) is nothing but the pain of his limited life and struggle to find peace in himself and with his God. The symphonies are the progressive disclosure of the Divine in his soul and the last eight minutes of the 8th, for instance, the apotheosis of that disclosure. In the end Bruckner turns the symphony into a wordless Mass... The solemn and transcendental ending is identical to what we experience at the closure to the "Agnus Dei" of the three glorious Bruckner Masses, which by their spiritual nature demand silence at their completion as well.

E-Mail: [LoBelloJ@nabisco.com](mailto:LoBelloJ@nabisco.com)

\* \* \* \* \*

ANDREW YOUDELL (London N10) writes:

You mentioned the concert in Leeds Town Hall in which Hindemith conducted the Munich Philharmonic [TBJ, November

## F E E D B A C K

2000, page 33]. The whole programme was his own Concert Music for Brass and Strings, the Clarinet Concerto (with Gervase de Peyer) and Bruckner 3 after the interval. From the powerful introduction through the marvellous themes in the slow movement, right to the Chorale/Polka finale, I was held spellbound by a new symphonic world. The conception was different, the orchestration was different, the themes were ravishing - and so it went on! (Later I saved up my pocket money and bought Philips A00273L: the Vienna SO under Volkmar Andreae.)

I was able to talk briefly to Hindemith after the concert when I got him to sign my programme. He seemed pleased and impressed that a teenager was at a fairly "heavy" concert (I was about 14 or 15 at the time). He gave me some very good advice - probably the best I ever received, and which you could apply to any subject: "If you find at first that you do not like a piece of music, go out of your way to hear it again." Note: not just listen to it again, but "go out of your way" to do so.

I have applied this to all new, old or difficult music ever since - and to other "difficult" subjects along the way. If only others would do the same, maybe audiences would be more appreciative of contemporary works, or spend a bit of time actually working at composers they might not be too keen on at first. It might be Bruckner, for example!

May I comment on the composer Herbert Windt, mentioned in connection with his score for Leni Riefenstahl's "Triumph des Willens" (1934). The music in the opening sequence of Hitler arriving by plane is indeed very similar to a Bruckner "chorale" type of theme, but closer hearing reveals it to be a funereal interpretation of the "Horst Wessel Lied"! Later the score includes various solemn Nazi anthems, some of them quite moving. Whatever one thinks of the film as propaganda, there is a first class composer at work.

Much of the impressive effect of Riefenstahl's "Olympische Spiele" (1936-38) is due not simply to the pyrotechnic editing of many sequences but to the magnificent and memorable themes which Windt provides. The title music and twenty-minute "prologue" make a veritable symphonic poem. In the early years of the war Herbert Windt contributed first-class scores (music in the Straussian manner) to many pictures, but I do not know what happened to him afterwards. I would be very grateful to learn from any readers what became of him.

Andrew Youdell can be contacted c/o The British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 2LN (telephone +44 (0)20. 7255 1444)

\* \* \* \* \*

**BRUCKNER JOURNAL CONFERENCE, Saturday 7 April 2001**

Arts Centre, University of Nottingham

Programme

LECTURE THEATRE 10am-1pm (interval 11.20-11.40am):

Duncan Hadfield on Wagner and Bruckner; Mark Audus on The Adagios of Bruckner's Third; Dermot Gault on 1889 - The Schalks and Bruckner; Paul Coones on Conducting Bruckner; Reviewing Bruckner - Robert McColley in Interview; Slides of St Florian

DJANOGLY RECITAL HALL 2pm-5.15pm (interval 3.30-3.50pm):

Crawford Howie on the Mahler-Krzyzanowski arrangement of Bruckner's Third; **Recital on Two Pianos** by Antony Clare and Clive Pollard; Peter Palmer on Early Composer-Conductors of Bruckner; William Carragan on Bruckner's Third - Performance History

Admission

Access is via the Music Department (a on the map opposite), which will be open from 9.30am. There is no advance booking. The conference is open to all on payment of £18 at the door, or £9 for the afternoon only. This fee does not include lunch, tea or coffee, which can be purchased in the restaurant (c). There are facilities for the disabled, including ramped access from the car park at the rear of the Music Department.

TWO FOR ONE OFFER. Subscribers to The Bruckner Journal may bring a non-subscribing guest who will be admitted free.

Accommodation

If staying overnight before and/or after the conference you must book your own accommodation. For our last conference in 1999 the Hylands Hotel in Beeston proved to be good value for money. They also provided special dining facilities for us on the Saturday evening and have agreed to do so again. Please state "Bruckner Journal" when booking, especially if you wish to take part in the post-conference meal (à la carte).

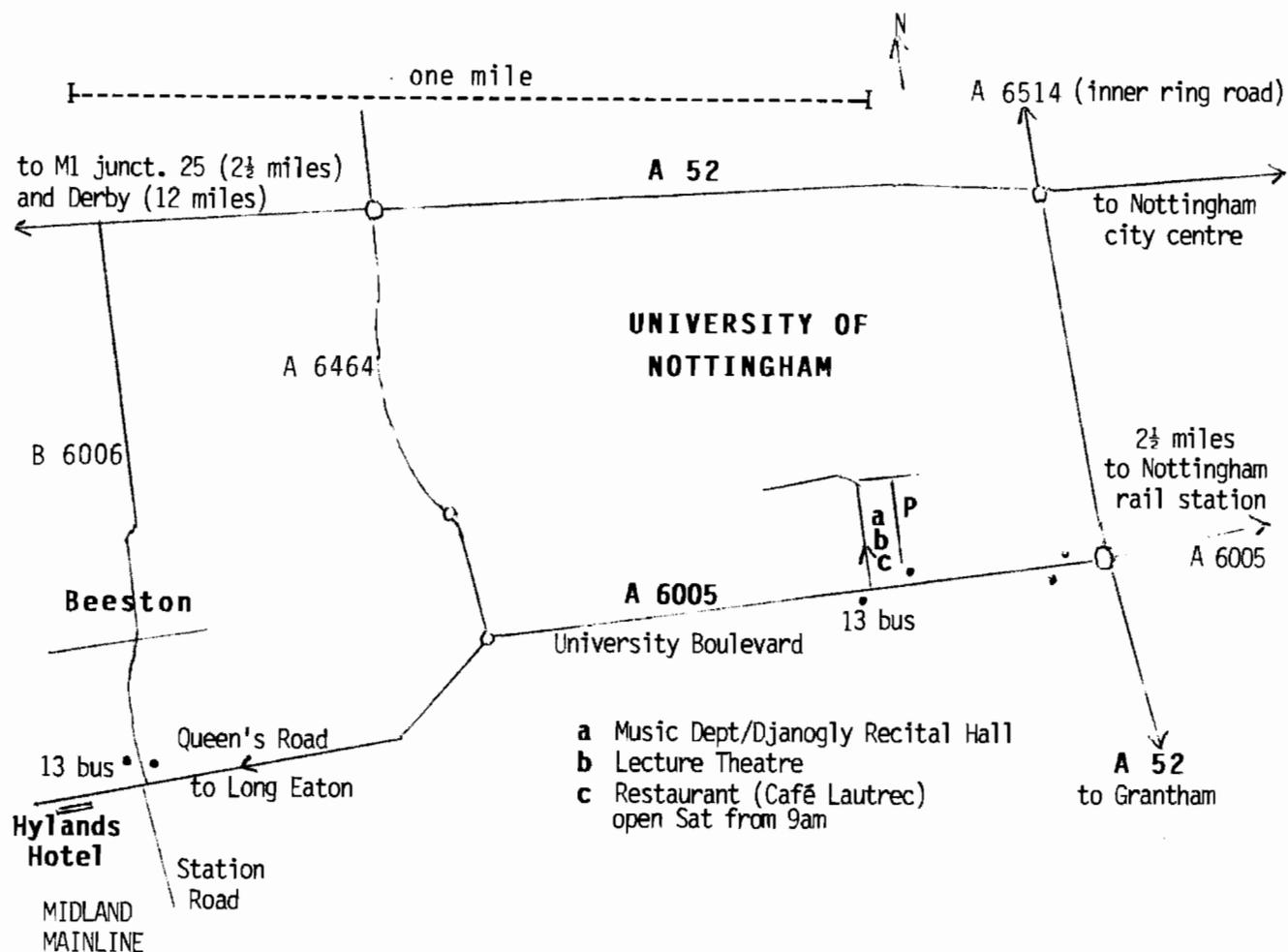
Hylands Hotel, 307 Queen's Road, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 1JB. To book, telephone 0115 922 5678 or fax 0115 922 5574. E-mail: Hylands.Hotel@telinco.co.uk If evening meal required, please say in advance.

Friday/Saturday rates: Single room £25-£40, Double room £50-£55. Licensed restaurant and bar. Special diets catered for. Easy parking.

Travel

Midland Mainline say that they have now returned to their normal timetable. Some trains between London St Pancras and Nottingham Midland station stop at Beeston station; do check in advance of your journey.

A green Nottingham City Transport No. 13 bus runs between the city centre and the University South Entrance, and on to Queen's Road, Beeston. From Nottingham station turn right, then left at the lights and continue past the next lights to the Castle Boulevard stop. The fare to the University is 90p (no change given).



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## SPOHR AND BRUCKNER

by Keith Warsop

BEETHOVEN, Schubert and Wagner are frequently cited in the literature on Bruckner when composers who influenced him are considered. Schumann and Mendelssohn also appear occasionally, especially in relation to earlier works such as the F minor Symphony. But Spohr (1784-1859) is hardly ever mentioned, although he was counted among the accepted "great" composers when Bruckner was growing up and his works appeared constantly in concert programmes.

Spohr's fellow composers seemed in little doubt about his stature. Mendelssohn wrote to Moscheles: "Even as a boy I had the greatest esteem for him in every respect, and with my riper years this feeling has in no way been weakened." Brahms said of Spohr's Jessonda: "I find the opera magnificent. Jessonda captured my heart." Moscheles referred to "the great qualities one knows and loves in Spohr: beautiful treatment of the subject, admirable modulation and instrumentation." Chopin commented that Spohr's Octet was "lovely, exquisite". Weber's tribute was: "A brilliant and renowned artist." Schumann ended a review of Spohr's Seventh Symphony with the inspiring call: "Let us follow him in art, in life... may he stand with our greatest Germans as a shining example." And Wagner said in an obituary tribute: "I am sorrowfully aware that we have now lost the last of those noble, dedicated composers whose youth was directly illumined by the radiant sun of Mozart... and if I seek to characterise in a word what spoke out of Spohr and made such an indelible impression on me, then I would put it like this: he was a scrupulous, honourable master of his art."

Bruckner, in fact, often mentioned Spohr to his pupils; and an account of his dream involving Spohr appeared in the November 1998 issue of THE BRUCKNER JOURNAL (p. 12). Bruckner undoubtedly knew some of his compositions, and Spohr's Ninth Violin Concerto was on the programme at the well-known disastrous premiere of Bruckner's Third Symphony in Vienna on December 16, 1877. So we should not be surprised to find that two of Spohr's most popular works provide a definite pre-echo of the Austrian master.

Spohr's Fourth Symphony, sub-titled Die Weihe der Töne ("The Consecration of Sound"), is based on a poem by Carl Pfeiffer, who died in 1831. The librettist of two Spohr operas, he had become a close friend of the composer. When Spohr took the cure at the spa of Nennstadt in 1832, he had with him a memorial volume of Pfeiffer's poems. "Die Weihe der Töne" deals with sound in all its manifestations--in nature, in love, the dance, the lullaby, in war, in

Louis Spohr. Self-portrait, circa 1806



celebration and in death. The slow finale of Spohr's symphony is headed: "Funeral music and consolation through tears." It uses the chorale Begrabt den Leib and opens with sighing figures on the wind instruments, accompanied by drum rolls. Then the cellos and clarinet have the chorale tune to a halting pizzicato accompaniment. Here the resemblance of the texture to Bruckner is so strong that it immediately brings to mind the slow movement of the latter's own Fourth Symphony. [Examples 1a/b]

Another piece that Bruckner would have known is the overture to Jessonda. The second subject consists of a dotted, dancing theme on the strings while the horns have a motif in longer notes marked con espress[ione]. In the opera the string theme is associated with the

Portuguese army (the "goodies", as it were) and the horn theme with the Brahmins (the "baddies"). Spohr had done something similar a couple of years before with the second subject in the finale of his Piano and Wind Quintet of 1820, where the piano has the lively theme and the winds the broad one. He must have realised that this was an ideal way to symbolise the two rival factions in his overture. The parallel is with the finale of Bruckner's Third Symphony, where a polka and a chorale are paired in exactly the same manner. [Examples 2a/b]

Finally, Spohr's Fifth Symphony of 1837 has a more general Brucknerian feeling to it, especially in the slow movement with its dotted rhythms and slow build-up to the climax, followed by that quintessential romantic coda: lowing horn calls from afar. The scherzo also has a stamping Brucknerian quality, and its main theme is from the same coop as Bruckner's "cock crow" motif in the scherzo of his Seventh Symphony.

Most Bruckner scholars have followed Robert Haas in arguing that the mature Bruckner had little in common with Spohr, Mendelssohn or Schumann. (When Wilhelm Altmann suggested that Bruckner's chorale themes might owe something to Mendelssohn, this was treated with scepticism.) On the other hand, Max Auer does mention Spohr twice in his Bruckner biography. He says of the ending to the lyrical second theme of Bruckner's First Symphony that "with its gentle chromaticism it is more reminiscent of Spohr than of Wagner." Of the orchestral introduction to the 'Benedictus' of Bruckner's D minor Mass, Auer writes: "The 'Tristan' sigh in the last bar cannot have been taken from that work because Bruckner did not know it at the time. Incidentally, in the Adagio of his Double Violin Concerto, Spohr uses this suspended note with its resolution upwards in exactly the same way as Wagner."

Of course, Bruckner developed such an individual style that it would be nonsense to pretend that Spohr was a major influence on him. It is, however, demonstrably true that Spohr was as much part of Bruckner's musical background and development as Beethoven or Schubert.

Keith Warsop is Chairman of the Spohr Society of Great Britain

Larghetto (♩ = 50)

Musical score for Ex.1a, showing orchestral parts for woodwinds, strings, and percussion. The score is in F major and common time (C). It consists of three systems of staves. The first system includes Clarinet (cl), Flute (fl), Bassoon (bn), Horn (hn), and Timpani (timp). The second system includes strings (str pizz.) and Horn/Viola (hn, vc). The third system includes a vocal line (Leib) and Horn/Viola (hn, vc). Dynamics include *pp*, *f*, *dim.*, and *p*. A choral instruction "(CHORAL: Begrabt den)" is present in the second system.

Above:

SPOHR Symphony No. 4 in F major, beginning of Finale

Below:

BRUCKNER Symphony No. 4 (1878), second movement ("chorale" in violas)

(Andante quasi Allegretto)

Musical score for Ex.1b, showing violin (vn pizz.) and viola (va) parts. The score is in F major and common time (C). It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes Viola (va) and Violoncello/Double Bass (vc, db pizz.). The second system includes Violin (vn pizz.) and Violoncello/Double Bass (vc, db pizz.). Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, *mf*, and *dim.*. A section marker 'D' is present at the beginning of the second system.

(Vivace) *pp*

vni *pp*

str pizz. *pp*

hn *p con espress.*

**Above:**  
SPOHR Jessonda overture, bars 103-111

**Below:**  
BRUCKNER Symphony No. 3 (1877),  
Finale (polka with chorale)

## Ex.2b

**B** *Etwas langsamer*

65 vni *p dolce*

vc, db pizz. *p*

hn *p cresc.*

*cresc.*

[Examples prepared and typeset by Mark Audus]

- 
- Q. What is your idea of perfect happiness?  
A. **Breathing.**
- Q. How would you like to die?  
A. **Walking the dog.**
- Q. Do you believe in life after death?  
A. **Only when I'm listening to Bruckner.**

From a questionnaire put by Rosanna Greenstreet to film maker Ken Russell  
in the Guardian Weekend

**"BRUCKNERTHON" 2000**

A second "Brucknerthon" was held in Carlsbad, California, to celebrate the composer's birthday two days in advance on Saturday, 2 September. Recordings of the symphonies were played in an informal setting, with intermissions between works and plenty of food and drinks. Once more, the devisers tried to come up not with a list of "best" recordings, but rather with a selection they believed to have special merits. In addition to Georg Tintner's recording of the first version of the First Symphony, the event featured an interview he gave to CBC Radio.

**Symphony in F minor**

Eliahu Inbal/Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt (47')  
May 1991; Teldec 72300

ELIAHU Inbal's Bruckner cycle is often overlooked these days, but it is important because of the texts chosen. Inbal made premiere or nearly premiere recordings of the first versions of the Third, Fourth, and Eighth, and he also recorded Bruckner's unnumbered symphonies in D minor and F minor. His recording of the latter is one of the few available. Inbal avoids extremes in tempi, with a performance that clocks in somewhere between Tintner's brisk reading and Rozhdestvensky's slow reading.

.....

**Symphony No. 1 in C minor**

Georg Tintner/Royal Scottish National Orchestra (55')  
31 August and 1 September 1998; Naxos 8.554430

THIS RECORDING has finally ended 65 years of frequent misunderstanding. When Haas first published the "Linz" score of this symphony, most believed it to be the original version, particularly in view of the 1865/66 designation given to the score by Haas and, subsequently, by Nowak. However, Haas' critical report tells a different story: the "Linz" version is actually a revision Bruckner made in 1877 while living in Vienna! The same report gives details of the true original version composed in 1865/66. During the summer of 1998, William Carragan created a score and parts based on Haas' report, which Tintner used for the present recording. The main differences from the usual, misnamed Linz version are to be found in the final movement.

This world premiere recording is a wonderful tribute to the great Brucknerian, Georg Tintner. At the 1999 Bruckner marathon he was hailed as the "greatest living Bruckner conductor". Little did we know that he would die exactly four weeks later. His legacy is now firmly established with the fine Bruckner symphony cycle he left us.

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## "BRUCKNERTHON" 2000

**Symphony in D minor ("Die Nullte")**

Hortense von Gelmini/Nürnbergger Symphoniker (42')  
 Early 1970s (first issued in 1975); Colosseum LP SM 558

UP TO THE 1970s there were few recordings of this symphony (and there are still relatively few when compared with the quantity of recordings of Bruckner's "big" symphonies). This recording has the distinction of being, as far as we know, the only studio recording of a Bruckner symphony by a female conductor. Von Gelmini enjoyed some success in Germany in the earlier part of her career with recordings of Bruckner and Shostakovich. Her recording of Bruckner's early D minor symphony is passionate and rather well conducted. In a world mysteriously shy of female Bruckner lovers\*, Von Gelmini's recording is a wonderful example of the way things ought to be.

Another claim to fame of the Nürnbergger Symphoniker is the only recording of Bruckner's Psalm 146 [with the Hans Sachs Choir and Teachers' Choir of Nuremberg on Colosseum LP SM 548]. This 30-minute work should be performed more often.

**Symphony No. 2 in C minor**

Franz Konwitschny/Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin (65')  
 14 January 1951; Berlin Classics 9173

KONWITSCHNY'S recordings of Der fliegende Holländer and Tannhäuser are perhaps the finest recordings of those operas. And, like many fine conductors of Wagner, Konwitschny was also a fine Brucknerian. His recording of the Second Symphony is one of the earliest extant complete recordings of this work, with only the wartime Georg-Ludwig Jochum release (in terrible sound) preceding it. This is one of the greatest recorded performances of the symphony. Of course since it is from 1951, before the publication of the Nowak edition, let alone Carragan's definitive scores, it is textually untidy. Konwitschny based his performances on the Haas edition, but he excluded all of the passages added by Haas with the exception of the recapitulation codetta in the Finale. But it is a fantastic performance with timpani (and one or two coughs from the audience) that will lift you out of your seat.

The orchestra is not the West Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra (now known as the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin) but the East Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. They do not play as well as their western counterparts, but the leadership from the podium is so outstanding that one easily forgets about any deficiencies. A wonderful reading in the grand old style.

\* I have had the pleasure of witnessing a performance of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony in Southwell Minster conducted by Andrea Quinn. Ms Quinn has appeared at the Edinburgh Festival and in televised performances with leading British orchestras, but it is to be feared that she corresponds not at all (being both young and female) to management stereotypes of a Bruckner conductor. - Peter Palmer

## "BRUCKNERTHON" 2000

**Symphony No. 3 in D minor**

Gennady Rozhdestvensky/USSR Ministry of Culture Symphony Orchestra (73')  
1988; Japanese BMG/Melodiya BVCX-38005-6

FROM 1983 to 1988, Rozhdestvensky recorded what is likely to remain the most complete Bruckner cycle for many years to come. All eleven symphonies were recorded, often in multiple versions. The sound of the USSR Ministry of Culture Symphony Orchestra seems, at first, to be completely wrong for Bruckner, especially in the brass, but with time the ears adjust and the uniqueness of the performances can come through. Many are simply "over the top".

The cycle includes not one but three and a quarter recordings of the Bruckner Third: the 1876 Adagio, the first printing of 1880 (probably Oeser's edition), the second printing of 1890, and - the recording we have chosen - Nowak's edition of the 1873 version. Rozhdestvensky's reading of the score is much more interesting than those by Inbal and Norrington, although not so monumental as Tintner's reading.

.....

**Symphony No. 4 in E flat ("Romantic")**

Rafael Kubelik/Wiener Philharmoniker (66')  
1 December 1971; Unitel Video, audio also available on CD on Japanese Fachmann FKMC DR-5

RAFAEL Kubelik's name does not come readily as a prime exponent of Bruckner's music, yet he conducted nearly all of the composer's symphonies with the world's greatest orchestras. Studio or live recordings exist with the Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, Concertgebouw Orchestra, New York Philharmonic and perhaps others. Kubelik had a special affinity with the Sixth Symphony, of which at least four recordings exist. This performance of the Fourth Symphony is taken from a 1971 concert at Vienna's Musikverein. It shows Kubelik's characteristic way with Bruckner, with urgent tempi and a sense of drive that he did not often display in studio recordings.

.....

**Symphony No. 5 in B flat**

Michael Gielen/SWF Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden (70')  
November/December 1989; Intercord 860907

CONDUCTOR and composer Michael Gielen recorded several of Bruckner's symphonies (Nos 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 - a rumored Sixth with this orchestra has not been confirmed) while he was music director at Baden-Baden. Of all these, it is safe to say that the Fifth is the most extraordinary, with the possible exception of a wonderful reading of the 1874 Fourth.

## "BRUCKNERTHON" 2000

Shunning the slow tempi to which this symphony has been subjected in recent years, Gielen gives us a performance of great intensity and drive, with a finale that displays an energy-level seldom heard in the mighty Fifth. Perhaps the only rivals are Botstein's recording of the Schalk edition, Welser-Möst's recording (both with the London Philharmonic Orchestra), and Furtwängler's wartime recording with the Berlin Philharmonic.

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**Symphony No. 6 in A**

Joseph Keilberth/Berliner Philharmoniker (56')  
1962; Teldec 8.43194 (Japanese Teldec WPCS-6052)

KEILBERTH'S Sixth is one of the earlier recordings of this often neglected work, and it is also one of the best. (Keilberth also made a commercial recording of the Ninth Symphony a few years before recording the Sixth.) The recording starts with a wonderfully broad reading of the first movement - which probably will not satisfy certain purists - followed by a relatively brisk reading of the Adagio. An unusual characteristic of this performance is the sound of the Berlin Philharmonic brass section, which sounds very East German. Nevertheless, this orchestra always played superbly for Keilberth, as evidenced in their other joint recordings, and the wonderful brass sonorities are quite appropriate for Bruckner.

.....

**Symphony No. 7 in E**

Sergiu Celibidache/Berliner Philharmoniker (86')  
1 April 1992; Sony 48352 (video soundtrack only)

RECENT years have seen the publication of several of Celibidache's Bruckner recordings. This has resulted in a clear picture of the evolution of his interpretation of Bruckner's music. While early recordings were not too far from the norm when it comes to tempi, his late recordings (mostly with the Munich Philharmonic) are in a class by themselves in showing Celi's individual style.\*

This recording derives from a concert at Berlin's Philharmonie in early 1992. It displays Celibidache's deliberate, almost eccentrically slow tempi and beautiful phrasing to an even greater degree than his commercially issued recording with the Munich Philharmonic. Celi challenges music lovers to a new conception of Bruckner's music - one that pays rich dividends to the patient and attentive listener.

.....

\* Celibidache's recorded - live - performances of Bruckner with the Munich Philharmonic were reviewed by Colin Anderson in our March 1999 issue. Reviewing the first instalment of Celibidache's Bruckner performances from the 1970s with the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra, CA observed [July 2000] that these "have conventional timings, but there's nothing ordinary about them".

## "BRUCKNERTHON" 2000

**Symphony No. 8 in C minor**

Eugen Jochum/Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg (83')  
January/February 1949; Deutsche Grammophon 449758

JOCHUM'S recording of the Eighth is the first commercial recording of this symphony (if one excludes Klemperer's acoustic recording of the Adagio from 1924). While Bruckner's Fourth, Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth Symphonies received more than one recording each during the 78-rpm era, the Eighth was first recorded comparatively late. Unlike the other recordings initially on 78s, Jochum's was initially recorded on tape.

One might expect this performance to be similar to the later stereo commercial recordings for DG and EMI, but this is not so. For one thing, the early Eighth uses the Haas edition of the score, and Jochum takes much longer to get through it. The Adagio alone lasts over 30 minutes - about five minutes longer than Jochum can maintain the focus. But, despite the later improvements, this early reading is a fascinating lesson in the recorded history of this great work.

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**Symphony No. 9 in D minor**

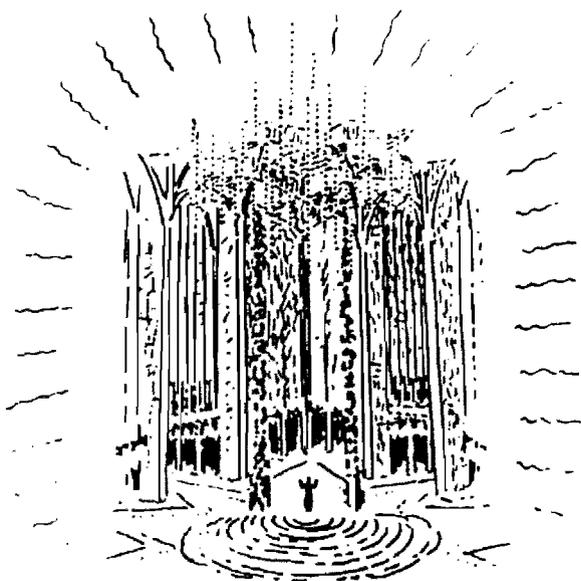
Herbert Blomstedt/Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (61')  
January 1995; Decca 458964

BLOMSTEDT has added this marvelous recording of the Ninth to his personal Bruckner discography since assuming the music directorship of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. (It previously consisted of recordings of the Fourth and Seventh Symphonies with Staatskapelle Dresden and of the Fourth and Sixth with the San Francisco Symphony.) Here is a performance on a grand scale, but with a sense of urgency that defies criticism. The Leipzigers support him well, and there is evidence of a significantly different sound from this orchestra, which used to exhibit the typical Eastern European sound on Kurt Masur's Bruckner cycle from the 1970s. Blomstedt and the Gewandhaus Orchestra, assisted admirably by the Decca recording team, take great care to bring out details that are obscured in many recordings, like the distinctive timpani rolls after the first phrase in the Scherzo. The treatment given to Bruckner's terrifying dissonant strings in the Adagio has seldom sounded so effective.

RAMON KHALONA & DAVID GRIEGEL

**JAPAN.** Günter Wand and the NDR Symphony Orchestra (Hamburg) performed Bruckner's Ninth Symphony on a visit to Tokyo last November. Other performances of Bruckner symphonies by Japanese and visiting orchestras were given during 2000 in Chiba, Fukui, Hiroshima, Ichikawa, Kyoto, Nagasaki, Nagoya, Osaka, Sapporo, Tachikawa, Tokyo and Yokohama.

**EIRE.** At the Wexford Festival in the Irish Republic last October, Lubomir Māti directed the Prague Chamber Choir in Bruckner motets as well as Brahms waltzes and Martinu's Mikeš of the Mountains.



L I N Z  
B R U C K N E R  
F E S T I V A L  
2 0 0 0 \*

EVENTS came thick and fast in the 27th Linz Bruckner Festival, which ran from 10 September to 1 October 2000. On the one hand these can be seen as an increasingly vital part of the broader theme of Art in Linz, summing up the city's cultural diversity during the later summer months. On the other hand, they were also a means of circumscribing the central subject of Bruckner from many different musical and social angles, up to the stylistic pluralism of the present. The festival motto Ohren spitzen ("Prick up your Ears") was symbolic of this.

The pattern of the Festival 2000 performances was determined not so much by the interpretation of works by Bruckner as by more indirect links, conceptual or stylistic, with the tutelary spirit. Themes included symphonic writing in general and the symphonies of Gustav Mahler in particular; programmes featuring the organ; the investigation of forgotten areas; music from Bruckner to the present day.

The performers - a notable number of native artists among them - could be relied upon to offer faithful and engaging interpretations of a quality befitting the occasion, and top-ranking ensembles provided festival highlights. Most of the concerts took place in the Brucknerhaus, Linz. Others were held in Linz churches with good pipe organs and in the intimate surroundings of Wilhering monastery church. The locations naturally included the monastery church of St Florian, which has its own special aura. The public response to these events varied widely. Audiences were influenced more by "great" names among the performers than by the attractiveness of the programmes.

\* \* \*

The opening ceremony on the morning of 10 September took a slightly different form from that in previous years. The speakers made some important spiritual points and some profoundly social ones - especially Karlheinz Böhm when talking about the "People for People" campaign in Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world.

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\* A German version of this article appeared in the December 2000 Studien & Berichte (Mitteilungsblatt 55) of the Internationale Bruckner-Gesellschaft

The music at the ceremony was played by the Linz Bruckner Orchestra, appearing here for the first time under its next principal conductor, Dennis Russell Davies. The standard of their performances of Beethoven, Bruckner and a contemporary work augured well for the future. The new work - a Brucknerhaus commission - was Monument, an imaginative homage to Bruckner by the Linz composer Axel Seidelmann (b. 1954). Comprising "music of mourning, epitaph and apotheosis" in one continuous movement, this clearly structured piece provided an appealing overture.

On the evening of the opening day, Mahler's Third Symphony displayed its many facets in the inaugural concert, held in conjunction with the Classical Klangwolke, which drew 20,000 people to the Donaupark. The Bruckner Orchestra was again in outstanding form under its chief conductor designate.

\* \* \*

The most popular Bruckner works formed the axis of the festival syllabus. Irrespective of the particular interpreters, these performances vividly illustrated the power, the grandeur and the inner depth of Bruckner's musical substance, and they also brought out the symphonic construction with its many subtle ramifications. The essence of these scores was best realised in the Brucknerhaus; the church acoustics at St Florian imposed their own restrictions. Symphonies, after all, are composed not for the church but for the concert hall.

The **Prague Symphony Orchestra** under **Max Pommer** played Bruckner's Fourth Symphony in the 1878/80 version. For these interpreters, Romanticism is indicative of a sentient being and creates a living world in the process.

The **Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam** played the Seventh Symphony under **Riccardo Chailly**. In keeping with this orchestra's long-standing Bruckner tradition, it gave a lucid performance with a calm mensural underpinning, featuring richness of detail and the build-up layer upon layer of large symphonic formations.

**Fabio Luisi** conducted the **Central German Radio Chorus and Symphony Orchestra of Leipzig** in the D minor Mass. The solo singers were excellent, and this performance in St Florian achieved a broad sound-palette with a palpable intensity and compactness. It was preceded by Karl Amadeus Hartmann's Symphony No. 1 ("Essay at a Requiem"), which similarly constitutes a very personal statement by its Munich-born composer. The work is an ardent protest against war and oppression.

The theme of the Symphony was underlined by several other major works in this genre, with roots that are partly retraceable to Bruckner. These included Mahler's Second Symphony, performed by the Central German Radio Symphony Orchestra under Fabio Luisi. The organisation of the massive sound-blocks was masterly, and the music's many aspects made an overwhelming impression. There were important contributions from soprano **Susan Anthony** and mezzo-soprano **Doris Soffel**.

For Mahler's Third, the **Linz Bruckner Orchestra** under **Dennis Russell Davies** was joined by **Hanna Schwarz** - a moving contralto soloist - and the excellent voices of the women of **Linz Theatre Chorus Concert Society** and **St Florian Boys' Choir**. This was an exciting and persuasive

performance, dramatic and full of detail. The performers all drew prolonged acclaim.

Riccardo Chailly conducted the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra in Deryck Cooke's performing version of Mahler's Tenth Symphony. A maximum of expressiveness was achieved in a very sensitive rendering, thanks to the conductor's sympathy with this work - which he brought to the Bruckner Festival as far back as 1982.

The **Vienna Philharmonic** under **Zubin Mehta** played Messiaen's Turangalîla Symphony: a highlight of the festival. With its cosmos of timbres, rhythms, colours and forms, this extraordinary work received a fascinating performance. Authenticity was ensured by the participation, as soloists, of the composer's widow Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen and her sister, Jeanne Loriod. The concert evoked memories of Messiaen's visit to Linz in 1991.

Max Pommer and the Prague Symphony Orchestra performed the Third Symphony of the Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara (b. 1928). The work is closely related to Bruckner's Fourth, and its musical language is familiar enough not to tax the audience. The composer attended the performance.

\* \* \*

After a longish gap the organ was once again featured in the festival. A four-part recital series devised by Wolfgang Kreuzhuber was conceived as a tribute to Bruckner the organ virtuoso, focusing on the art of improvisation and using transcriptions of symphonic movements to suggest how the composer himself might have performed on the organ. **Wolfgang Kreuzhuber**, who is the organist of Linz Cathedral, successfully illustrated this approach on the Rudigier organ (Mariendom, Linz) with Erwin Horn's meticulous arrangement of the Adagio from Bruckner's Seventh Symphony. **August Humer**, professor at the Linz Conservatory, played the only historically genuine Bruckner organ (Alter Dom). **Rudolf Meyer** from Winterthur performed in the Neuer Dom and **Jürgen Essl** from Lübeck on the great organ in St Florian. Each programme - stretching right up to the present in some instances - endeavoured to do justice to the subject of Bruckner and the organ.

\* \* \*

A concert performance of an opera has become a regular feature of the festival. This time the opera was Wagner's Götterdämmerung. Under the excellent **Roberto Paternostro** the highly motivated Bruckner Orchestra combined with first-class soloists in a powerful reading all round. **Luana DeVol** was an outstanding Brünnhilde, and the audience applauded vociferously.

Several works peripheral to the central theme had been carefully chosen. The **RIAS Chamber Choir of Berlin** made an overwhelming impact with their exemplary performance of Ernst Krenek's demanding Lamentatio Jeremiae Prophetæ of 1941. [The event attracted only about 130 people and was transferred from the larger to the smaller hall in the Brucknerhaus.] Christian Muthspiel, the Brucknerhaus artist-in-residence, pointed to two stages of a stylistic evolution under the title

1950 v. 2000. Here the past (in the shape of Milhaud, Sauter, Cerha and Stravinsky) was contrasted with contemporary forms of expression (K. Rennert, R. Jungwirth, C. Muthspiel).

Anonymous woodcut



A more relaxed affair was the coach outing to Windhaag near Freistadt, where Bruckner had his first job as an assistant schoolteacher. This recalled a largely unexplored aspect of the Master - the country dance fiddler - in the appropriate setting: a tavern with food and drink and dancing.

The supplementary programmes were extremely varied. They featured the Jacques Loussier Trio; a Lieder recital by Robert Holl; chamber music with soprano Christine Whittlesey; the Anton Bruckner Quartet of Linz; and the Academy of Ancient Music, Berlin.

There were additional events not actually organised by the Brucknerhaus, but with the accent firmly on Bruckner. **Erwin Horn** of Würzburg afforded insights into the world of Bruckner the organist at the Rudigier organ. With gripping virtuosity he played extracts from Wagner's Meistersinger, a Festmusik based on Bruckner's improvisation sketches (1891) and a Trauermusik in memory of Bruckner by his quondam teacher, Otto Kitzler.

Piano arrangements used to be regarded as a legitimate way of acquainting people with 19th-century orchestral masterpieces. This happened to Bruckner's Fifth Symphony when the Viennese pianist Heinrich von Bocklet (born 1850) transcribed it for eight hands at two pianos. It was played in the Alter Dom by the piano duo of August Humer and **Johannes Marian**, partnered by **Csilla Csonka** and **Karin Wagner**.

A model performance of Bruckner's E minor Mass was given in the Neuer Dom. A goodly number of Würzburg singers, consisting of conservatory students and cathedral choristers, formed a powerful ensemble with the **Linz Cathedral Choir** under the direction of **Anton Reintaler**.

FRANZ ZAMAZAL

With the performance of Bruckner's *Missa solennis* in B flat minor as part of the Whit Sunday service in St Florian abbey church (11 June 2000), many listeners were introduced to a rarity. The 30-year-old Bruckner wrote this work for the enthronement of his patron Friedrich Mayr as abbot in 1854; it was last performed at St Florian in 1945.

Under the direction of Augustinus Franz Kropfreiter, the performance overcame the difficulty of the music, which is often considerable. It opened up the traditional cut noted by Leopold Nowak in his Critical Report of 1977, whereby the whole fugue of the "Gloria" used to be sacrificed. In view of the fine achievements of everyone involved, one may hope that there will be another performance before very long. - F.Z.

Illustration from Elisabeth Maier, Anton Bruckner: Stationen eines Lebens, Linz 1996

**IN AT THE DEEP END?**  
PREVIEW - LINZ BRUCKNER FESTIVAL 2001

Bruckner the keen bather would surely have applauded the motto for this year's Linz Festival, which runs from Sunday 9 September to Saturday 29 September. "Take the Plunge!" [Eintauchen] is the motto, and contrary to the usual dress code, bathing suits are obligatory for a dramatised performance of Lewis Carroll's "The Hunting of the Snark" at the Parkbad (17 September).

The festival begins in more traditional vein with the Fourth Symphonies of Schubert and Bruckner, played by the **Stockholm Royal Philharmonic** under **Alan Gilbert**. Local product **Franz Welser-Möst** is to conduct Mahler's "Symphony of a Thousand" in the Neuer Dom (10 September). Taking part are the **Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra** with choirs from Prague, Vienna and St Florian. **Herbert Blomstedt** and the **Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra** will visit St Florian on 22 September. Their concert consists of Schubert's "Unfinished" and the three completed movements of Bruckner's Ninth.

On 23 September **Sir Roger Norrington** conducts the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment** in Bruckner's Sixth Symphony at the Brucknerhaus. **Bernarda Fink** will sing Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* with the orchestra. Bruckner's Seventh follows (27 September) in a performance by the **Linz Bruckner Orchestra** under **Dennis Russell Davies**, who also offer the Stravinsky Violin Concerto with **Tatyana Grindenko**.

Also in the Brucknerhaus, **H.K. Gruber** will conduct a concert performance of Kurt Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* with the Linz Bruckner Orchestra on 16 September. The **Wiener Virtuosen** play music ranging from Mozart to Lutoslawski (25 September), and the **Arnold Schönberg Chor** sing choruses by Schubert and Schoenberg, including the latter's "Peace on Earth" (28 September). **Sir Simon Rattle** and the **Vienna Philharmonic** will round off the festival with the First and Third Symphonies of Beethoven.

Other festival events include four performances of Britten's *The Prodigal Son* in the Linz Ursulinenkirche between 11-15 September. The **Anton Bruckner Quartet** will play string quartets by Beethoven and Shostakovich in Wilhering abbey church (21 September). Bassoonist **Milan Turkovic** joins them for a commissioned work by Augustinus Franz Kropfreiter. Organ recitals will be given by **Rudolf Jungwirth** (Alter Dom, 15 September), **Daniel Roth** (Neuer Dom, 20 September) and **Wolfgang Zerer** (St Florian, 24 September). Rudolf Jungwirth will be joined by soprano **Donna Ellen** and the flautist **Norbert Grlinger**.

In "Soundtracks of the Century" (Brucknerhaus, 19/20 September), a wide selection of film music is to be interspersed with the reading of extracts from Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. The **Ensemble Pro Brass** takes part in this mixed media production.

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++ Write to the Editor of TBJ if you are thinking of attending the Festival and would like to be put in touch beforehand with any like-minded readers.

## SPECIAL OFFERS

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**London Philharmonic Orchestra**  
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**Kurt Masur** conductor  
**Christopher Lamb** percussion

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## CALENDAR

ON ITS FIRST visit to Symphony Hall, Birmingham, the Dresden Staatskapelle will play Mozart's Prague Symphony and Bruckner's Third (1877) under Bernard Haitink on 3 March, 8pm. Box office tel. 0121 780 3333.

Heiko Mathias Förster is to conduct the Münchner Symphoniker in Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony and the four-movement version of Bruckner's Ninth at the Philharmonie, Munich, on 25 April. Bookings: Tel. 089-54 81 81 81, fax 089-54 81 81 54, or via: [www.muenchenticket.de](http://www.muenchenticket.de)

Bruckner's Eighth Symphony will be given by Lorin Maazel and the Philharmonia Orchestra at London's Royal Festival Hall on 3 June. Box office tel. 020 7960 4242, fax 020 7921 0821.

In association with Benjamin Gunnar Cohrs, the New Queen's Hall Orchestra hopes to tour England and Europe with a workshop and concert featuring the four-movement version of Bruckner's Ninth on period instruments in September 2002.

Meanwhile the NOHO under Martin André will give the world première of John Borstlap's Psyche: fantasy on a theme of Wagner at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester on 6 March 2001. This concert also features Amanda Roccroft singing Richard Strauss and begins at 7pm.

The Anton Bruckner Institut Linz is planning a conference on the history of Bruckner research, to be held in Gmunden between 4-7 October this year.

To amplify on a note in our last issue: PAUL HAWKSHAW and TIMOTHY JACKSON have both written on Bruckner in the latest edition of The New Grove Dictionary.

**Donations.** Donations are gratefully acknowledged from George Agafonoff, David Aldeborgh, George Banks, Malcolm Bennison, David Clement, Paul Coones, Kenneth Cooper, Richard Crowder, G.W. Gill, Douglas Godden, Roger Humphries, Robert McColley, Gerard Robello, James Savage, Dr Haruo Tomatsu, Robert Wardell and John Wright.

Cordial thanks to Gerry Robello ("Making my Day with TBJ") and all those readers who have sent comments with their subscriptions. We look forward to seeing as many as possible - here is your last reminder! - at our Nottingham conference on 7 April.