Although it is a well-known fact that Anton Bruckner (1824–96) was very late to mature, and that his first few compositions date from his 40th year, it is often overlooked that he produced his first little organ pieces whilst staying with his godfather in Horsching at the age of eleven, and during his years as a village schoolteacher at Windhaag (1841–43) and Kronstorf (1843–45) he also brought forth a number of small-scale, mainly choral, compositions. All of these, however, like his earlier works from the second St. Florian period (1845–55), are of minor significance and of interest to the music historian only. But the Requiem in d minor, which he began in 1848 and completed on 14th March 1849, is a different matter. It is Bruckner's first major composition, the first in which he included an orchestra, and the earliest work which has a true musical validity of its own.

When Bruckner returned to St. Florian as a schoolteacher after those for him so unhappy years in Windhaag and Kronstorf, he rapidly made many friends. Foremost amongst these was the judicial actuary Franz Sailer, who greatly admired Bruckner's talents and particularly his organ-playing; in Sailer's home Bruckner was a frequent guest. Sailer owned a Bosendorfer grand piano which Bruckner often played and which was his own piano for many years. From this piano he began a past age (the very age of eleven), when he went through many of his earlier compositions, he did not reject the Requiem in its traditions, he grew up in Australia, where his love of this open, developing world became reflected in the clarity of approach and execution that has marked his career as a conductor. He stems from the schools of Eugene Goossens, Rafael Kubelik and Carlo Zecchi, and holds the Conductor's Diploma of the Paris Conservatoire, though he himself freely admits that the greatest influence on his musical development has been the friendship and encouragement which Furtwängler showed him.

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