

To most music-lovers, Anton Bruckner (1824-96) is represented in the main by nine symphonies and, possibly, the *Te Deum* (1884), the *String Quintet* (1879), and the three great *Masses* (1864-68). It is not so well known, however, or often overlooked that none of the music which we now know as the 'great Bruckner' was composed before his 40th year and that it was preceded by endless studies and a great deal of early music. To come to an understanding of his first symphonic work, the so-called *Study Symphony* in F minor, it is necessary to recall the arduous path which Bruckner had to tread before reaching his symphonic goal.

Although music formed an integral part of his life from earliest childhood, it had not been the ambition of his youth to become a musician. His training had been that of a school teacher, and as in Austria in those days the duties of a village teacher were usually coupled with those of village organist it is understandable that, throughout his training, organ playing as well as composition of a minor nature played an important part. Even when, after his first two teaching appointments in Windhaag and Kronstorf, in 1845 he returned to the St. Florian of his school days, it was as a teacher, and perhaps the first important dates in the life of Bruckner the Musician are 1849 and 1851: 1849 when with his *Requiem* in D minor he achieved his first major composition, and in 1851, when he received the official appointment as organist at St. Florian. But there has hardly been another composer who felt so strongly the need of instruction and of 'qualifications' which is the reason why, in 1855, he embarked on more than six gruelling years of study with Simon Sechter, the famous Viennese professor of counterpoint. During these years Bruckner hardly composed anything worth mentioning, as Sechter was an academic disciplinarian who enforced the ruling that free composition was only permitted once his pupils had completed their theoretical studies. Meanwhile Bruckner had left St. Florian at the end of 1855 to take up an appointment as organist at the Cathedral and the *Pfarrkirche* in Linz, so that it was only in his 32nd year that we can speak of a true transition from Bruckner the Teacher to Bruckner the Musician—just as the move to Vienna in 1868 was to mark the transition from Bruckner the Organist to Bruckner the Symphonist.

Having completed his studies with Sechter in 1861 (and having received another diploma!) he made friends with the Linz Theatre *Kapellmeister* Otto Kitzler and set out on yet another course of studies: musical form and orchestration. Whereas Sechter can justly be described as a 'Dr. Dry-as-Dust', Kitzler based all his teaching on live music, on Beethoven and Weber, and on contemporary composers of the day such as Mendelssohn and Schumann. Under Kitzler's guidance Bruckner had his first real taste of freedom in composition and made his earliest attempts in the purely instrumental field: the *String Quartet* in C minor and the *Four Orchestral Pieces* of 1862, the *Overture* in G minor of 1863, and with the *Study Symphony* in F minor (also of 1863) he entered for the first time into that realm which he was to make so exclusively his own: the Symphony.

It is generally accepted that Bruckner's maturity as a composer dates from 1864 and the completion of the *Mass* in D minor, the first of the three known as the 'Great' *Masses*. This was followed in 1866 by the *Symphony No. 1* in C minor which opens the canon of the nine symphonies, but it is seldom realised that this official first symphony was preceded by two earlier attempts. The first of these is the *Study Symphony* under discussion, and in 1864 he wrote yet another Symphony in D minor (at least it was fully sketched out in that year, but has only been preserved in a revised score dated 1869). Much later in life he looked through the scores of these two symphonies and no longer acknowledged them, but whereas he rejected the *Study Symphony* outright, he merely wrote on the score of the D minor Symphony the remarks 'rejected' and 'not valid'—and at the same time ascribed to it the now celebrated 'No. 0', thereby still granting it at least some measure of validity.

According to Bruckner's own notes on the score, he commenced the *orchestration* of the F minor Symphony on 15 February and concluded it on 26 May 1863, but according to Kitzler the actual composition in

short score had been completed a good deal earlier. This is of utmost importance, because on 13 February 1863 Kitzler conducted the first performance in Linz of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, and as this was Bruckner's first contact with Wagner's music, it is obvious that this earliest symphony was composed before any Wagnerian influence could make itself felt. For this reason alone the *Study Symphony* is of the greatest interest to anyone whose preoccupation with Bruckner and his music is more than superficial, for the work indubitably contains moments which presage the Bruckner of later years and which have often been ascribed to Wagner's influence. The tag of the 'Wagnerian symphonist' has been attached to Bruckner very persistently, and it cannot be stressed emphatically enough that, despite the admiration (bordering on adulation) which he felt for the Master of Bayreuth, he was never a Wagnerian at heart. During his formative period and the years of study his roots became immutably fixed in the music of Bach and the great polyphonic era before him, in Beethoven and Schubert, in Mendelssohn and Schumann—and Wagnerian harmonies and orchestration only added the last gloss, the final spice. Bruckner never understood (and never bothered to try to understand) the plots and texts of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and above all he was the only composer of his era whose romanticism is entirely spiritual, entirely free from the erotic—whereas Wagner was perhaps *the* supreme sensualist in music.

The F minor Symphony, scored for large Beethoven orchestra, is in the customary four movements. Obviously this earliest attempt cannot yet be described as 'typical' Bruckner. Nevertheless, there are already many moments which point to the later years of maturity: the block-structure of the wind scoring, the sequences (particularly of the quaver figurations), the protracted syncopations, the unconventionally sudden dynamic contrasts. The very beginning of the first movement—first violins, *pianissimo*, without any accompaniment—is an embryonic form of that *tremolo misterioso* which ushers in most of his later symphonies; the opening of the second movement (*Andante*), for strings only with an interjection by the first horn, already has the flavour of the 'true' Bruckner—and at the end of the same movement the tonic-dominant notes of the timpani are as an omen of the end of the slow movement of the 4th Symphony. The peasant character of the *Scherzo* with its *Ländler*-like Trio is a worthy forerunner of the later Bruckner *Scherzi*, and there is an undeniable similarity between the opening of the *Finale* of this *Study Symphony* and the *Finale* of his Symphony No. 1.

By contrast the *Overture* in G minor, although preceding the *Study Symphony* by a few months (it was completed on 23 January 1863) appears a much more mature work. This may in part be due to the fact that Bruckner at that time was less inhibited by its more concise form, whereas he did not yet feel himself up to the demands of composing a full-length symphony. In principle the *Overture* obeys the then traditional lines, opening with a slow introduction followed by the main section in sonata form. But what we now consider Brucknerian characteristics are much more predominant in this *Overture* than they are in the F minor Symphony: the opening subject, the full orchestral chords followed by semi-quaver runs, the second subject with its large interval leaps could not have been conceived by anyone but Bruckner.

In the case of many of Bruckner's works there are endless arguments regarding the 'versions', but happily these do not apply in the present instance. There is only one autograph score in existence of both the *Overture* and the *Study Symphony* (which latter contains a few pencilled corrections and alterations by Kitzler), and according to Alfred Orel these scores were in Bruckner's own possession until he gave them to Cyrill Hynais together with the score of the early *Four Orchestral Pieces*. Eventually the City of Vienna acquired these scores from Hynais for the Music Archives of the Municipal Library. To date, only the *Overture* (edited by Josef V. Wöss) and the second movement (*Andante*) of the F minor Symphony have appeared in print (Universal Edition), but at the time of writing (March 1972) the score of the *Study Symphony* is in an advanced state of preparation under the editorship of Leopold Nowak and will be issued shortly in the Complete Edition of Bruckner's works.