

THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND SINGING-CLASS CIRCULAR

JANUARY, 1937

The Different Versions of the Bruckner Symphonies

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THAT the works of a great composer should undergo such extensive alterations as in the case of the Bruckner Symphonies, at the hands of some of his followers and best interpreters, is a unique occurrence in musical history. Moreover, it is incredible that until recently no one should have thought to do justice to Bruckner, though his musical legacy has been regarded with the reverence accorded to other masters. If a conductor feels himself compelled to adapt certain works for his own use, his *performances* of these works are subject to the criticism of the world at large. The work itself will not be endangered if the arranger admits his responsibility, however extensive his alterations may be—*e.g.*, the Rimsky-Korsakov revision of Moussorgsky's 'Boris Godounov.' But the case was otherwise when Bruckner's Symphonies were entirely remodelled, shortened, and then given as the composer's authentic works, while the original manuscript versions fell into oblivion. Prof. Robert Haas has therefore gained abiding honours in clearing up this unsatisfactory state of affairs, and, at the instance of the International Bruckner Society and the Austrian National Library (which possesses the majority of Bruckner's manuscripts), in undertaking the complete edition of the works

in their original form. Prof. Haas has performed his task in an untiring manner. He has made a strictly scientific investigation into all known sources, has analysed Bruckner's method of working and his musical development; and by a minute comparison of manuscripts he has been able to distinguish between the alterations made by Bruckner himself and those made by others. But, on personal grounds, the findings of Prof. Haas are disregarded by criticism, which still seeks fresh arguments to represent, as unfounded, the growing interest which is being taken in the authentic and original form of Bruckner's works. But did not Hanslick once go badly astray when he denounced Bruckner as a Wagnerite, for having most respectfully dedicated his third Symphony to the greatest of his contemporaries?

The most varied attempts have been made to prove that the alterations in the Symphonies were made by the composer himself, or at least with his consent; when this theory failed, all possible means were tried to justify such unwarrantable interference with his life's work. Arguments were based on the fact that Bruckner was a slow craftsman, and was often obliged to recast his works before they fulfilled his preconceived notions; it was further stated that

all existing alterations were genuine. In refutation it must be pointed out that Bruckner's own alterations were made gradually, as an organic result of his change of mood; whereas those changes and compressions in the music made by others are of a sudden, unsystematic and non-uniform character. A critical analysis of alterations made by alien hands shows clearly that they are foreign to Bruckner's style and to his musical outlook as a whole; comparison of autographs deprives them of any real foundation. An analogy has been drawn between the first Symphony—a work which was substantially reshaped thirty years after its composition, when the master had arrived at the zenith of his creative energy—and its successors in support of the contention that the extensive alterations in the later works were similar, intentional improvements made by Bruckner himself. But, as to this, no allusion is to be found in the diaries, which record all the processes of the master's thought; neither have any manuscripts been discovered to prove such recasting of original forms. Those acquainted with Bruckner's personality advanced certain characteristic peculiarities and habits of mind, intended to preclude, from the start, the idea of interference by foreign hands; but if we remember how deeply Bruckner's life was embittered by the hostility he encountered, and how coldly his works were received by his unintelligent contemporaries, it is evident that the master's power of resistance was finally broken, and his artistic force of will ceased to exert its influence. The fact that, in a few cases, Bruckner was compelled to agree to alterations made by others does not excuse these revisions; it merely renders them still less excusable. The publication of some of the Symphonies was not undertaken except with the proviso that they should be considerably shortened; and after Bruckner had complied with this condition, the Symphonies were curtailed still more. It was held that they were too long, and that "intelligent conductors had done well in abridging them" (Naumann, 'History of Music'). Shortly after Bruckner's death, Mahler wrote his gigantic eighth Symphony, which, in the size of the orchestra and the dimensions of the score, far exceeds the demands made by Bruckner's mightiest conception. Yet no one thought of abbreviating or editing Mahler's work, just as no one would dare lay hands on Schubert's 'heavenly length,' though this master, like Bruckner, was attacked in his day on the same ground.

Opinions thus vary as to the different versions of the Bruckner Symphonies; but research has already rectified several errors. I shall now refer to some of these.

Two early symphonic pieces, not included by the composer in the range of his Symphonies, must be mentioned here for the sake of completeness. They are the two Symphonies in F minor and D minor. The first dates from the year 1863 in Linz; it was a student's task, written when Bruckner was studying with Kitzler, and must be regarded as his first attempt at orchestral composition. That this attempt ensued so late is quite in accordance with

Bruckner's personal development, which was characterised by a lengthy reservation of power, ripening, after prolonged study, by slow degrees, and then suddenly reaching full maturity. This Symphony in F minor was never published. The second Symphony in D minor (published in score for reference only, as late as 1924) has given rise to some errors, from the fact that the autograph, now in the Linz Museum, was first catalogued 1869. In reality the work was composed in 1863-64, and before the year 1865 it was sent to Weinwurm for a formal opinion. It was discarded by Bruckner in 1895, and from that date was known as Symphony No. 0.

These two early works were followed by the Symphony No. 1 in C minor. The first, or Linz, version originated in 1865-66, and was most successfully performed in 1868, at Linz, with Bruckner himself conducting. In his biography of the composer Franz Gräßlinger quotes a passage from the *Linzer Zeitung*, which runs: 'All the movements received great applause from the select public present, especially the third movement, which is undoubtedly the most successful, and in the Trio contains many hidden beauties. . . .' In 1890 and 1891 Bruckner again set to work on this Symphony, making various alterations in detail, but without disturbing its general structure. Through lack of space it is impossible to enter more fully into the character of these alterations; in his introduction to the collected edition Prof. Haas has furnished an exact account of all sources and specified the corrected passages. The main features in the recast of the first movement related to points of orchestration which Bruckner considered necessary; the activities of the wind instruments were restricted and brought into closer connection with the strings. Some changes in thematic treatment and development were also carried out. In the Adagio new orchestral effects and harmonic strengthening were added; and in the Scherzo the short transition to the repeat was rewritten. On the other hand, in the Finale, the form itself was modified. In all four movements small alterations in scoring were effected—the doubling or transference of parts, for instance, the introduction of new parts and the elimination of existing ones; furthermore, the rhythm was tightened up generally, trombones were added, and the horn parts reinforced.

In the second Symphony in C minor we have to discriminate between alterations made by Bruckner himself and those not designed by him. The work was written in Vienna in 1871 and 1872. During the process of revision, in the years 1878 and 1879, the third variation of the theme was subjoined to the Adagio, and a 'New Movement (short)' was added to the Finale in the working-out section. Against the composer's wish, the printed edition of 1891 differs materially from the autograph score of 1878 in many places, thereby conveying a totally different impression. In the Finale, for instance, the development was greatly reduced; the re-entry of the principal subject from the first movement was entirely omitted; the

recapitulation confined to much narrower limits; a further shortening was effected by a cut, so that the sonata form of the last movement is damaged, and the similarity between the opening and final movements—so characteristic of Bruckner's Symphonies—is disturbed. In publication, the Adagio was turned into an Andante, and twenty-two bars were omitted from the first repetition of the opening theme-group, although, in the final version of 1878, Bruckner had developed this passage contrapuntally and instrumentally, as well as a further passage after the reappearance of the second subject. The third variation on the theme (12-8 time) added in 1878, in which the solo violin is made to 'play well out,' was completely rejected on publication, and the solo violin obliged to take a subordinate part. In the revised version the repetition of the first main section was struck out by Bruckner; in publication, it was retained. The first performance of this Symphony took place in Vienna in 1873, the composer conducting.

Owing to repeated abridgments, only a torso of the original gigantic proportions of the third Symphony in D minor remains. The first version saw the light in 1873; in 1874 it was improved, and in 1876 to 1877 (for the first performance, in Vienna, in the latter year, under Bruckner) the work was again subjected to revision. It was shortened in the printed edition of 1878, and reduced further in its ultimate form of 1890. The elimination of the Wagnerian quotations and of the system of general pauses (employed, subsequent to the second Symphony, to denote external separation between one section and another) had some compensatory effect. In 1878 Bruckner inserted the chorale for horn into the first movement; likewise the concluding verse in E major, with the theme in inversion. In 1878 and 1890 the Adagio was materially shortened; the first part of the repeat section was left out, the third principal subject appeared in a much reduced form, and was replaced in 1890 by a newly written transition passage. The 'Marienkadenz,' which occurred twice in 1878, made only one appearance in 1890. The Finale suffered the most marked alterations; the regular sonata form was again gravely disfigured; before and after the chorale, twenty-seven and six bars were deleted (1878); the brass instruments were modified at the announcement of the third main subject, and eliminated altogether in 1890. In the same year fourteen bars of the development section were cut where, in 1878, a new section had been introduced. Again, in 1890 the beginning and the middle section of the reprise were dispensed with, whilst the intermediate part of the epilogue was added afresh, and the final apotheosis changed.

Symphony No. 4 in E flat major—styled the 'Romantic'—originated in 1874 from the sketch of the autograph score. The definitive versions of the first movement, Adagio and Scherzo date from the year 1878; whilst the Finale, in its third setting, was not definitely fixed till 1879 to 1880, having been already revised in 1878 and called 'National Festival' or 'People's Fête.' The work was now subjected to any-

mous alterations and abbreviations, subverting Bruckner's purposes, so that here too the published edition differs widely from the original score. Josef Schalk is probably responsible for a considerable cut, which dispenses with the repeat section in the Finale, but deviates from the corresponding cut in the printed version. The many other differences which exist between the individual printed editions and the autograph are explained by Eckstein on the grounds that, later on, Bruckner confided the correction and publication of his works to his trustees. In the first movement, disparities between the first and final version are confined to matters of instrumentation and counterpoint. The repetition of the second subject on a pedal point, in the original version, is a new feature, not to be found in the earlier Symphonies; in the final form this was confined to the repetition of the skip of a sixth, denoting the call of the bird 'Zizibee' (the titmouse). Further, in the ultimate form of the work, the epilogue was spread out, the coda independently constructed; in the same final version, the development was shifted to the epilogue-coda and somewhat recast, so that only the formal framework obtained. The recapitulation was likewise enriched with effects of imitation and embellishments, the coda more ingeniously constructed, but the third theme-group shortened. In its ultimate shape, the Andante strikes a deeper and more subjective note, brought about by sundry omissions, changes in the scoring, and the rounding off of musical periods. The old Scherzo of the first version did not yet possess the essential features of the 'Hunting Scherzo' of 1878; the G flat major Trio, 'Dance-measure during the hunting meal' quickly comes to an end after a shortened *da capo*, whereas the first Scherzo was furnished with a long coda. The Finale, after being revised twice by Bruckner, suffered many abbreviations in the process of printing, and Prof. Haas points out that there are four versions to be compared. The setting of 1878 ('People's Fête') was not much altered, as it merely represents a miniature execution of the first version; whilst the score of 1880 records a complete transformation from the earlier high spirits into a gloomy, demoniac mood. Yet the point must be emphasized that the compressions—especially the elimination of the commencement of the reprise—in the published edition were certainly not in accordance with the master's wish. Hans Richter conducted the first performance of this work in 1881 in Vienna.

The foundations of the fifth Symphony in B flat major, which the composer called the 'Fantastic,' were laid in 1875; the work was elaborated in the two successive years. The bass tuba was not introduced into all the movements until 1877. Once again, in the act of publication (1896), many alterations were made, and even a new flute part was added. These alterations relate to orchestration, progression of parts, and to metrical and dynamic signs, Bruckner's typical expressions as to the latter being discarded and replaced by those in more general use—all of which had a compensatory though weakening effect. Cuts were made in

the Scherzo and notably in the Finale, which is curtailed in four places and to the extent of two hundred and twenty-two bars, the greater part of the recapitulation being further shortened by eighty-six bars. In order to preserve the sonata form Bruckner wished to avoid this compression, choosing, if necessary, rather to sacrifice the double fugue, which he marked with a provisional cut. But his wishes were not respected, and in publication both recapitulation and double fugue were shortened. In the printed version, moreover, Franz Schalk's introduction of additional double wind in the Finale was retained, although Bruckner had consented to all these alterations only for the first performance in Graz (1894) under Franz Schalk's conductorship. In fact, this fifth Symphony underwent so many changes that it is impossible to discuss them here in detail. Prof. Haas has incorporated the music of the original manuscript in the printed edition, and scarcely a bar remains unaltered.

The sixth Symphony in A major dates from 1879-81. Profiting by experience, Bruckner at once completed the work in the form he wished it to take; only one version, therefore, comes under consideration, the alterations undertaken by Mahler, after the master's death, being unworthy of the authentic Bruckner. And yet, when the work was published in 1901 inaccuracy and arbitrary editorial treatment defaced the original picture. Bruckner's pithy instructions were deprived of meaning; there was much interference with the notes; the scoring was altered, especially as regards the above substitution in the lower register. After W. Jahn had given a performance of the Adagio and the Scherzo in Vienna (1883), the whole Symphony was performed by Mahler in 1899, curtailed and rescored by himself. In 1901 A. Göllerich tried to give the work in Vienna, in its original form; to this end he followed the printed edition, but owing to the above-mentioned reasons failed to achieve his object.

The dates relative to the seventh Symphony in E major—which from its origin in 1881 was treated with great care—present but little difficulty. Two years elapsed before the score in autograph was ready, publication taking place in 1885. The corrections were undertaken very exactly by Joseph Schalk. The first performance took place in 1884, in Leipsic, under Arthur Nikisch; in Austria the work was given for the first time by Hans Richter in 1886.

The composition of the eighth Symphony in C minor occupied the years 1884-86; revision took place in 1889-90, and publication followed in 1891. In the first movement the differences between the first and last versions are of a minor character; they consist of small alterations in scoring, deletions of a few repeated bars, changes affecting the end of the reprise and extending from the finish of the development section to the recapitulation; the coda, too, was reshaped, the *fortissimo* climax for full orchestra of 1886 being slightly compressed. A much longer setting of this coda (to be found in the supplement) ended *pianissimo*. The Scherzo, standing next, was also very little

changed in the final revision; alterations were confined to small compressions and subordinate improvements in harmony and orchestration. The new Trio of 1889 alone was more ingeniously constructed than in the first version. It enters deeply into the spirit of nature-painting; the reprise is extended; the keys of E, C, E, modulating into A flat major are exploited; its title 'The honest German dreams of the countryside' affords a beautiful example of Bruckner's simple love of nature. The old manuscript forms of the Adagio and Finale served as models for the final version, and therefore exhibit no alterations worthy of mention. The first performance took place in Vienna, 1892.

The ninth Symphony in D minor (sketched in 1887, and composed in 1891-94) could never be completed; it is therefore beside the point to discuss Bruckner's own versions of this work. Three movements were finished; the rough draft of the Finale reaches to the recapitulation, and in the main structure may be considered entire. On his death-bed Bruckner wished his *Te Deum* to constitute the Finale. Ferdinand Löwe took charge of the publication in 1903, after having altered the score appreciably for the first performance of the work, which occurred during the same year. Prof. Alfred Orel has rendered an exact account of all that is worth mention with regard to this Symphony in his introduction to the ninth volume of the complete edition.* In order to approach Wagner's orchestral texture as near as possible—a process damaging to Bruckner's individuality—the scoring was altered throughout, and made similar to that employed in the other Symphonies. The body of strings was kept under, Bruckner's richly contrasted dynamic conception was generally weakened and changed by means of transitions. Löwe's fully marked arrangement is an excellent aid to interpretation, but reduces the work into too narrow limits. His rhythmic changes undermine Bruckner's characteristic writing, and he has suppressed some important thematic treatment on the part of the wind instruments. The general pauses are bridged over as formerly; actual melodic notes are changed, and cuts are made (especially in the Scherzo) that are prejudicial to the general purpose of the work.

Scientific research has restored the Symphonies of Bruckner to the form which he wished them to assume. The musical world has reflected; and with the last International Bruckner Festival (Vienna, October, 1936) has started to make reparation by giving the works in their original form. This is a great step towards the better understanding of Bruckner's personality, which was devoid of any mere cosmopolitan culture and influence derived from foreign sources. 'Hence the love the Germans bear this master is as easily understood as the reserve evinced by other nations' (Robert Haas, 'Bruckner').

(Translated by Edward Agate)

* 'Complete Edition of the works of Dr. Anton Bruckner,' Benno Fischer, Augsburg, and Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, Vienna.