BRUCKNER

SYMPHONY N° 4
« ROMANTIC »

SCHERZO
(FROM SYMPHONY N° 0)

OVERTURE
IN G MINOR

LOVRO VON MATACIC
PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

Angel Album 3548 B (35359-360)

ANTON BRUCKNER

1824 – 1896

by Michael Rose

Born in 1926, Michael Rose was educated at Marlborough, studied modern languages at Oxford (Magdalen College), and served as an infantry officer during the war. In addition to writing about music and composing it, he has done special B.B.C. broadcasts and has contributed notes on operas presented at the Edinburgh Festival.

BRUCKNER?" said Brahms. "That's a swindle which will be forgotten a year or two after I'm dead." But Wagner: "There is only one composer whose ideas approach those of Beethoven, and that is Bruckner." Thus the two great protagonists of 19th Century musical conflict lend authority to a controversy which continues to this day; perhaps there is no composer whose art arouses sharper dissension upon slighter acquaintance. Other great controversial figures of the 19th Century – Berlioz, Liszt, even Mahler - inspire partisanship; but their music has status, is played, and cannot be ignored. Yet none of them arouses the apostolic reverence and devotion, or the contemptuous ridicule, which are lavished upon the seldom heard and, even now, little known music of the Austrian country organist – "half a Caesar, and half a village schoolmaster."

It seems strange that so simple and kindly a man should have aroused such antagonisms; but his position and function in musical history are curiously at odds with his character. Anton Bruckner was born September 4, 1824, in Ansfelden, a small village in Upper Austria, and evidence of his humble peasant background coloured his personality to the end of his life. At the age of 17, he took up the profession of his father and grandfather as assistant school-teacher in the tiny village of Windhaag. His first posts were humiliating and overworked; but when he was 21 he obtained a rather more congenial appointment at St. Florian, and kept it for the next ten years. For this little town he came to have the greatest affection; often in later life he would return to it for the peace he needed. For fifty years its tailor provided the singular clothes he always wore – the peasant's Sunday suit, of indefinable cut, short jacket, and broad shapeless trousers; and when he died his body was laid beneath the great organ of the Augustinian monastery. Upon this instrument Bruckner often played, before long as official organist; for music – particularly composition – occupied every moment not spent on professional duties. Even before coming to St. Florian he had found time to compose a little and to take hard-won lessons in piano, organ and harmony; his industry now may be judged by the fifty odd compositions,

mostly ecclesiastical, which he had to his credit when he left.

In spite of this evidence of musical talent, Bruckner, at 32, was still oddly uncertain of his true vocation. Only a year before, the question had seemed decided by his success in the final examination for high-school teachers; yet at the same time he was striving for membership of the Vienna Hofkapelle, and even for a totally different post as court secretary! The turning point came with a vacancy for cathedral organist at Linz. Bruckner's prowess on this instrument was already outstanding. It is characteristic of his musicianship in general that he was never a virtuoso, and always a poor sight-reader – but his technique was astonishing, and his improvisations overwhelming. Even so, humble and indecisive, he had to be pressed into competing for the vacant post – his friends begging him, in despair, to be sure that he removed his galoshes, and shawl, and overcoat with a button missing, before the official interview.

At Linz, Bruckner became a pupil of Schubert's teacher, the famous theorist Simon Sechter. There is something very touching in Bruckner's eager determination, at his age, to submit himself to Sechter's rigorous first principles; but his faith in the virtues of study, like his naive respect for the examinations which conscientiously punctuated his career, was deeply characteristic. At all events, Sechter's scholastic methods suited him curiously well, and left abiding traces (particularly harmonic) in his future work. His industry was such that even Sechter felt bound to warn him against overwork – and after five gruelling years the inevitable examination (upon which the pupil insisted) concluded with a comment from the board: "He ought to have examined us."

At Linz, too, Bruckner first heard Wagner's music. The importance of this revelation to a musician, who all his life had been startlingly ignorant of contemporary music, can scarcely be exaggerated. To say that he was influenced by it is true, but beside the point. He found in Wagner confirmation of all those tendencies, in his own musical instincts, which Sechter had suppressed; and the discovery at last released his creative imagination and gave it direction. After a development perhaps slower than that of any other comparable artist, at the age of 40 Bruckner was born as a composer. From this date, his music derives its peculiar individuality from the equation of his own instinct, prompted by Wagner, with the fundamentals of Sechter's teaching. For Wagner personally, Bruckner developed a reverence amounting to adoration. He could never be persuaded to sit in the Master's presence; he often stood for hours gazing at the windows of Wagner's house; and in Bayreuth and elsewhere he always carried a black tailcoat, into which he quickly changed if he saw Wagner approaching.

Sechter never liked his pupils to compose while they studied with him, but during his last six years at Linz Bruckner made up for lost time with some forty new works. Amongst these were the last Masses; for after Linz, with two notable exceptions, he forsook church music and confined himself to his nine symphonies, the official first of which was completed and performed before he left.

After Linz, Vienna. At 44, with all the old agonies and hesitations once again, Bruckner finally accepted the post at the Conservatoire vacated by Sechter's death, and moved to the city where he spent the last 28 years of his life. In 1868, Vienna was just beginning to feel the force of the greatest musical controversy of the century; before long, Bruckner was drawn unwillingly into the conflict. At its centre, stood the dreaded critic Hanslick, arbiter of Viennese musical taste, upholder of Brahmsian conservatism, and bitter opponent of Wagner. Oddly enough, Hanslick was

instrumental in getting Bruckner to Vienna; he approved of the traditional elements in Bruckner's earlier style, and hoped for an ally in this solid pupil of Sechter. Alas for Hanslick, he knew nothing of the later revelation, or of Bruckner's rebirth as the Wagnerian symphonist par excellence; but from 1872 onwards the series of Bruckner's symphonies proceeded to justify this title beyond any doubt. The Third Symphony was even dedicated to the arch-enemy; and, in Vienna, in 1875, Wagner pointed to its composer in public and said: "There's Bruckner. He's my man." Hanslick's pen turned against the new enemy, and poor Bruckner came to dread its judgments upon each successive work: "Everything flows, without clarity and without order, willy-nilly into dismal long windedness.... It is not out of the question that the future belongs to this muddled hangover style – which is no reason to regard the future with envy. For the time being, however, one would prefer that symphonic and chamber music remain undefiled by a style only relatively justified as an illustrative device for certain dramatic situations...." Notices like this soon transformed the critic into the very Devil in Bruckner's eyes; and at a Royal Audience he even begged His Majesty "to be kind enough to tell Mr. Hanslick not to write such bad criticism of my works."

Indeed, whatever its creative influence, Bruckner's devotion to Wagner cost him dear; for by it he was forced into a role for which he was almost comically ill-suited. His own feelings for Brahms were singularly modest by contrast: "He is Dr. Brahms, and my respects to him; but I am Bruckner, and I like my works better." He was easy enough to ridicule, this naive, old-fashioned musician; even Liszt who encouraged his music, found personal relations impossible with a man who habitually addressed him as "Your Grace, Mr. Canonicus." Though he eventually won respect as a teacher and, within limits, composer, his worldly

Bruckner's last Vienna residence in the Belvedere Palace Park.

success remained small by Wagnerian or Brahmsian standards; his friends were few. But his small following was very devoted; and in later years he took touching delight in the all too rare performances of his works, as well as deep satisfaction from the creation of new ones. Throughout his life he was a devout and pious Catholic: "When God finally calls me and asks: "What have you done with the talent I gave you, my lad? – I will show Him my scores, and I hope He will judge me mercifully." When he died in Vienna on October 11, 1896, he left his Ninth Symphony unfinished: it bore the dedication "An meinen lieben Gott" – to which was timidly added – "if He will accept it."

NOTES ON THE MUSIC

by Mosco Carner

Mosco Carner was born in 1904 in Vienna, where he was educated at the University and the *Neues Wiener Conservatorium*. He was conductor at the Danzig State Theatre, 1929-1933, and has led the London Philharmonic, London Symphony, B.B.C. Symphony and Philharmonia Orchestras. As an authority on Mozart, Schubert, Schumann and Dvorak, in addition to various modern composers, he has contributed to Grove's Dictionary, Chambers Encyclopedia and the "Master Musicians" series; he has also published a study of 20th Century Harmony and a brief history of "The Waltz".

SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN E FLAT, "The Romantic"

1. Ruhig Bewegt (Allegro molto moderato) — Side 1
2. Andante
3. Scherzo (Bewegt) and Trio (Gemächlich) — Side 2
4. Finale (Mässig bewegt) — Side 3

To discuss Bruckner with sympathy and understanding is often to adopt the role of defending counsel. For this Austrian symphonist stands accused of grave offences against what are regarded the sacrosanct laws of symphonic writing, laws which we derive from Beethoven and unthinkingly apply to all and every work bearing the title "symphony". That there are different concepts of symphonic writing, resulting in different stylistic features, is a fact we often forget, or accept but with reluctance. The Brucknerian symphony is a law unto itself, and to fit it to the Procrustean bed of the classical form is as appropriate as to measure, say, Goethe's *Faust*, or Tolstoy's *War and Peace* by the yardstick of the traditional drama and novel.

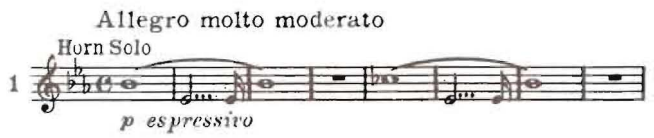
Bruckner's symphonic conception sprang from psychological roots wholly different from those which fed the symphonic Beethoven and his progeny in nineteenth-century Germany. Bruckner was non-intellectual, non-literary, naive and romantically irrational. If he had a predecessor and kindred spirit, it was another Austrian – Schubert. With Schubert a new feeling begins to invade the classical symphony – a feeling that is stronger than the composer, as often as not driving *him*, instead of itself being driven and coerced into the rationale of the Beethovenian form. With Bruckner this impression of an elemental force dictating the character and course of the music becomes the most striking feature of his symphonic style. Bruckner's "cosmic" explosions and his mysterious, often ominous silences before and after such passages would to a mind like Goethe's have presented themselves as the *ne plus ultra* of what the Weimar sage called "the daemoniac" in art. Bruckner's Goethean "daemons" had their habitat in two spheres – religion and nature. Possessed of a childlike faith and often visited by ecstatic visions, he saw the sole purpose and significance of his creative work in the glorification of his Creator. With the Catholic saints his motto was *omnia ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, symbolized in the chorale themes of his symphonies. Intimately linked with his deep-seated religious emotion was his instinctive closeness to nature: the majesty and wild grandeur of the Austrian Alps amid which, as a peasant boy and young village school teacher, he had lived the most impressionable years of his life. With Lord Byron, he might have said of himself:

> "I live not in myself, but I become
> Portion of that around me; and to me
> High mountains are a feeling".

Such were the springs of Bruckner's creative mind which conditioned content and form of his symphonies.

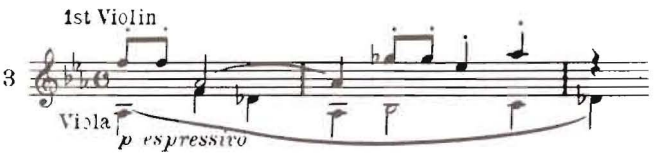
Having said as much, there merely remains to give a few facts about the Fourth and point to some of its salient features. It was written in 1873-74, revised between 1877-80, and first performed in Vienna on February 20, 1881 under Hans Richter. The composer called it "The Romantic" because at one time he associated it with a poetic program in which such romantic images as medieval knights, castles and forests played their part. Apart from the fact that every one of Bruckner's nine symphonies is romantic, we may discard this program as naive and irrelevant to the essence of the music. With the sole exception of the *Scherzo,* the Fourth is not descriptive but expressive – expressive of those emotional states we delineated in the introductory paragraph. It is the first of Bruckner's mature symphonies and his most popular, the reason for this being that there is a strong Schubertian air about it and that Bruckner's inventive felicities are here more immediately apparent than in the other works. It certainly is music in a rich romantic vein and possesses a sensuous appeal – if this adjective can at all be applied to a composer of Bruckner's type.

The first movement, most powerfully conceived, opens with a mysterious horn signal, a kind of motto, which will find its grandiose apotheosis in the finale:



Out of this grows the first subject with a typically Brucknerian rhythm:

The second subject provides lyrical contrast with a swaying pastoral tune containing in the upper part (1st violin) the suggestion of bird-calls.



This thematic material is subjected to expansion and development, the music rising several times to climaxes of imposing grandeur.

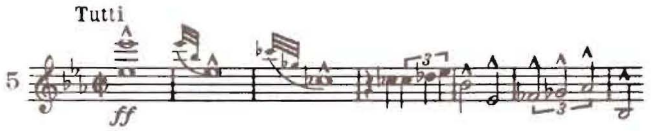
The *Andante,* in the key of C minor, recalls a funeral march. The mood is sombre and inward. Two themes alternate, the first of which, heard on the violincelli to a throbbing accompaniment of string pizzicato, shows the majestic sweep of Bruckner's melodic style:

The *Scherzo,* which has made the fortune of this symphony, is an inspired piece of program music evoking the atmosphere of the forest and of a hunt in progress:

The *Trio,* scored in the manner of a village band, takes us to the bucolic world of the Austrian country-side. It is a Ländler in all but name:

The *Finale* reverts to the grand design of the first movement but it is more rhapsodic in form and marked by more frequent outbursts such as

the "volcanic eruption" of the main subject:



The movement culminates in a majestic coda in which the motto (Ex. 1) is given out by the combined brass *ff, marcato*.

SCHERZO FROM SYMPHONY NO. "0"

The so-called *Nullte* or "Zero" Symphony, from which the Scherzo is taken, was to all appearances completed by 1869 and represents Bruckner's original Symphony No. 2. He subsequently discarded it in favor of what is now his No. 2 in C minor though he used the earlier work as a quarry for material for some other compositions of later date, especially the Symphony No. 3 in D minor, with which it shares the same key. In 1895, Bruckner moved to new apartments, placed at his disposal at Vienna's Belvedere Palace by the Emperor Francis Joseph, and before doing so he sifted a case of old manuscripts where he lighted on the discarded symphony. Although he inscribed the cover with the curious designation "No.0, quite invalid (only an attempt)", he yet must have thought it worth preserving for, unlike other early manuscripts which he committed to limbo, he bequeathed the autograph of the "Zero" Symphony to the Landes Museum at Linz. It was first performed there on October 12, 1924, on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the composer's birth.

Admittedly, No.0 is an uneven work betraying its immaturity in the weakness of its structure and thematic development but in its two middle movements, an Andante and a Scherzo, it contains music of characteristic and felicitous invention. The Scherzo especially bears the composer's unmistakable signature in its powerful rhythmic drive and vigorous orchestral language. Like every one of Bruckner's Scherzo movements, it conjures up the robust rustic atmosphere of some communal dancing on the village green. The tender waltz-like Trio (linked with the Scherzo by a tiny rhythmic figure) is in the vein of those pastoral idylls favoured by the Austrian symphonists from Haydn to Mahler.

OVERTURE IN G MINOR

Like the "Zero" Symphony, the Overture is an early work. Between 1861-63, Bruckner, then organist at Linz Cathedral, took lessons in orchestration and form from Otto Kitzler, at the time conductor at the opera. Kitzler was the first to introduce his pupil (who was his senior by ten years) to the scores of the German Romantics and it is therefore no wonder that Bruckner's 'prentice-work should contain essays in orchestral writing displaying the influence of his various models, such as this Overture composed between Christmas 1862 and January 22, 1863. Its form is that of a symphonic first-movement with a slow introduction. It is less in the actual themes than their general treatment that the thirty-nine year old composer reveals his fingerprints. The music unfolds with Bruckner's characteristic leisureliness and within a spacious design, the orchestra speaks with a massive sonority (with three trombones much in evidence) and there are several huge climaxes and contrapuntal theme-combinations. On the other hand, Beethovenian is the very opening with its emphatic tutti chord, somewhat Wagnerian the ensuing cello cantilena with its yearning appoggiatura, and Mendelssohn peeps out of the lively rhythmical theme with which the Allegro begins. Yet the broad tranquil melody of the contrasting second subject, its chromatic shifts and its scoring in the manner of organ-registration – all these are grown on *echt* Brucknerian soil.

The Overture was first performed at Klosterneuburg on September 8, 1921 and has since found its way into public concerts and broadcasts.

MUTATIONS OF SYMPHONY NO. 4

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"The story of this Symphony's genesis is more complicated than ever. Its gradual progress is best given in tabulated form .... :

"Version 1, composed 2nd January-22nd November 1874 (autograph only partly preserved).

"Version 2, composed 18th January-5th June 1880.

"Version 3, 1879-1880, with completely new 'hunt' scherzo and a new finale (all but replacing the original 'Volksfest' of 1874).

"The amalgamated version 2-3 (with the new middle movements) had its successful first performance in Vienna (under Richter) on 20th February 1881.

"Version 4 (final version) 1887-1888; first performed 22nd January, under Richter. This final Version 4 alone was published (Gutman, Vienna, 1889).[1.]"

"1. But the published version differs in many respects considerably from the autograph of the final version of 1887-8, which has been published only recently with the version of 1874 and the hitherto unknown finale of version 3 of 1879-80 in the Complete Edition, ed. R. Haas, 1936; reprint of the final version alone by Bruckner-Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1949, and (utilizing newly discovered source material) in Vol. IV, II of the Complete Edition, by L. Nowak, Vienna, 1953."

LOVRO VON MATACIC, born in Susak, Yugoslavia, in 1899, began his musical life as a member of the Vienna Boys Choir. From 1919 to 1937 he was conductor at the Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana opera houses. He was in Vienna, 1942-1945, returning to Yugoslavia after the war. During 1954-1955 he conducted in Munich and Stuttgart and recently has given concerts in Berlin, Salzburg and Holland. His American debut was made in 1956 at the San Francisco Opera.

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