

Musings on the ninth symphony and its *finale*

By Martyn Becker

Anton Bruckner's ninth symphony remains a strange hybrid of enigma and paradox. In the unfinished form that it has come down to us, it is undoubtedly one of its composer's triumphs exhibiting as it does a further enhancement of the symphonic form that showed itself to be so spectacularly heaven-storming in the eighth. But here in the ninth, there are fundamental differences. Yes, the huge bi-partite structure of Bruckner's unique post-sonata form first movements is there, and even more grittily hewn than previously, but there is something else too: a fear, an uncertainty, a lack of surety about the musical direction that had always been there in his previous symphonies; hence the potential paradoxes. We will see where this may have come from as we progress. But of course, what marks this symphony out from all its fellows is that fact that Bruckner did not on the face of it, complete it – or at least if he did, then it has not come down to us in that form. Hence the enigma – was it finished but we no longer have access to all of its materials? And if 'completion' based on the extant materials is acceptable, then how close to the actual sound of Bruckner do any of the completions really get? When the late Malcolm MacDonald orchestrated an aria from Havergal Brian's opera *The Tigers* in 1975, he did so assuming that the full score had been lost. When the full score turned up just a couple of years later, Brian's actual scoring of the aria was so different to MacDonald's that the latter was immediately withdrawn. Granted, the *finale* to Bruckner's ninth has a clear ground plan and many orchestrated stretches, so that perhaps more assumptions can be made. We will come to this in good time.

So: what about the portions of the ninth that were fully complete in their first versions? I stress 'first versions' because with only the exceptions of the sixth and seventh symphonies, every mature symphony was revised at some stage, and for some reason. It is therefore more than likely that once complete, the ninth may well have been revised also. Given the quality of what remains, this then is perhaps not a comfortable thought! Composition was begun on the ninth symphony within two weeks of the completion of the first version of the eighth in 1887, and it occupied Bruckner off and on for the last nine years of his life; more semi-continuous work than for any other of his previous symphonies. Hermann Levi's rejection of the first version of the eighth symphony had precipitated almost a revision fever in Bruckner that resulted in immediate and extensive revision of the eighth,

followed by further work on the first and third symphonies. These revisions occupied a significant proportion of his time from 1890 until 1892, and were additional to the preparations for the Gutmann publication of the fourth symphony.

All the while, Bruckner was composing continuing to compose motets and choral settings. His beautiful setting of *Psalm 150* for chorus and orchestra dates from 1892 while his largest secular choral setting was undertaken the following year, when Bruckner fulfilled a commission to set August Silberstein's poem *Helgoland* for the Vienna Mens' Choir. Scored for male voice choir and a more normal-sized late-Romantic orchestra, the orchestration included cymbals: only the second time that he had scored for these instruments of his own volition, the first time having been in the eighth symphony. If we accept the ninth symphony as being incomplete, then *Helgoland* was Bruckner's last completed orchestral work.

The unsettling effect of Bruckner's almost constant revising process alongside the continuation of composition at this time must have taken undue toll on his mental processes and religious beliefs, because the struggle that was much in evidence in the eighth takes on almost a three-dimensional quality in the ninth. Towards the end of his life, Bruckner was finding it more and more difficult to concentrate on his composing and frequently became confused, a situation exacerbated by physical frailty. The ninth however remained an overriding obsession with Bruckner and he expended huge amounts of effort on it; he was still working on the composition of the *finale* on the morning of his death, on October 11th 1896, although the last dated entry on the music was August 11th of that year.

The eighth symphony had seen Bruckner standing astride the symphonic world in mastery: the ninth now took a metaphorical leap into interstellar space. The musical and formal expansion that had culminated in the composition of the eighth was still capable of producing music that was externally-focussed, in the sense that at no time does the listener feel that the music is 'about' anything to do with its composer. There was a process of exploration and discovery at work in the eighth; but it was not a personal discovery. Here in the ninth though, we can detect a deep and disturbing introspection and deep personal unease right from the outset. There are intrinsic dissonances, harmonic sideslips and a sense of weirdness that pervade the music throughout the completed movements. Gigantic intervals are part and parcel of the fabric of this last symphony. These points all indicate a subtle if sub-conscious change of direction for Bruckner. This was clearly different to that between the fifth and sixth symphonies: the change of direction there was intentional and experimental.

The harmonic language in the eighth had been becoming more daring, but here in the ninth Bruckner was treading a lonely path towards a dissonant abyss with the spectre of atonality not that far over the horizon.

Design

That Bruckner fully intended to complete his ninth has never been in doubt. Even so, the first three movements stand alone very well indeed; they do not appear to need the resolution of a *finale* since the sublimity of the *adagio*'s coda almost appears to need no following. This is only an illusion though; the previous three movements appear complete because they have always had to: there has been no complete *finale* to round it all off. However it is obvious that Bruckner intended the sort of huge *finale* that had been provided for the eighth because a large amount of music exists for it, dating from the last two years of his life. It may be that Bruckner, with one eye on his mortality may have designed the music such that the tensions set up in the earlier parts of the symphony may not have needed resolution in the *finale*, if it transpired that it did not get completed. By itself, this indicates that maybe Bruckner was not as mentally frail as many have assumed.

If this was the case though, then why did he then suggest that the *Te Deum* of 1883 could be used as a *finale*, if the music itself did not get completed? This surely must have been something of a conscious red herring on Bruckner's part since the key structure, harmonic trend and musical logic just would not be satisfied by this approach - not to mention the change in musical language that had occurred in the elapsed time since the *Te Deum*, and the differences in orchestration. Given the sense of *non sequitur* that would be obvious from the performance of a C minor work as a finale to a D minor symphony, it is understandable that very few conductors would appear to have taken this suggestion up. Herbert von Karajan came close to it in 1986 when he performed the incomplete ninth followed by the *Te Deum* in the succeeding concert, at that year's Salzburg Easter Festival.

As we shall see from the discussions on the *finale* that follow, the music that remains for that movement forms at the very least the basis of a very coherent set of ideas on how the music was to have been. A very clear perspective has been put on this by Australian musicologist John Phillips, who was commissioned by the Leopold Nowak and the International Bruckner Society in the early 1990s to work on the extant material of the *finale* with a view to its inclusion in the complete Bruckner Edition. Phillips' perspective is that

what remains are not ‘sketches’ at all, but the remains of a draft complete ‘emerging’ first score with parts of it missing. Bruckner’s compositional methods have been described elsewhere by authors such as Paul Hawkshaw and Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs as well as Phillips himself, such that it is not necessary to repeat them here. However, it is clear from their studies that given Bruckner’s methods, a first-draft continuous score likely did exist at some point prior to his death.

It has been speculated elsewhere that the music of the *finale* perhaps appears to be at a lower level of inspiration than that of the first three movements, but this is surely moot. The level of invention remains high in the *finale*, but it continues to move away from the traditional Bruckner model in the same way that the rest of the symphony does. And there are clues to what was driving this thought process in the fabric of the music, which we will come to presently. Of course, it is also possible that rather than just drying up as far as inspiration was concerned as a number of writers in the past (including Robert Simpson) have intimated, that the compositional task he had set himself was just too great; but the circumstantial evidence from the fully-scored sections do not seem to bear this out. Bruckner undoubtedly saw the resolution of this symphony in his mind’s eye but it has not come down to us like that in complete form.

There is no doubt that Bruckner’s physical condition was placing a great deal of strain on the compositional process. Indeed, the struggle, the terror that exists within the completed music of the ninth symphony itself was perhaps too much for its composer to handle. Whilst we can conjecture theories of why the music may not have come down to us in a complete written-down form, it seems that Bruckner himself *did* know how it was to finish. Bruckner’s personal physician, Dr. Richard Heller indicates as much in his memoirs. Dr. Heller even says that Bruckner played him parts of a projected complete *finale* on his beloved Bösendorfer that was to culminate in a hymn of praise to his ‘Dear Lord’ based as it was stated to be, on the ‘alleluia from the second movement’. This reference is a little confusing since there does not seem to be any heavenly aspect whatsoever to the infernal second movement: quite the reverse, in fact. Or was the great *adagio* originally to be placed second? Or did Heller mishear Bruckner, who may have meant the second movement of the eighth symphony? There are certainly a number of melodic candidates in that movement that would fit the bill, and these have been potentially identified by more recent scholastic efforts. Or perhaps the reference was more wishful thinking than actuality on Bruckner’s part with regard to the

'hymn of praise', for the music of the completed movements appears to say something entirely different, as we will see.

The ninth as it stands (including the *finale*) is scored for strings, triple woodwind, brass including eight horns (four doubling Wagner tubas in the *adagio* and the projected last movement), a bass tuba and timpani.

i) Feierlich: misterioso

The first movement is dreadful, in the truest sense of the word. There is a sense of fear and foreboding right from the outset of this enormous edifice that is built as a huge unit hinged in the middle between statement and counter-statement, in the same way that we saw previously in the eighth. The music itself opens with a baleful portent of doom on eight horns, sung *mezzo forte* in unison over *tremolando* strings, following the woodwinds' intonation of a quiet D minor chord. It is a doleful, inhuman moan that seems to blow from the gates of Hell itself. Strangely, this opening *motif* of six notes describing a rising and then falling minor third has resonances in many of Bruckner's previous symphonies. The melodic shape is the same as that found at the start of Henry Purcell's sacred motet 'Hear my prayer, O Lord', with an added introductory grace note on the tonic. Did Bruckner know Purcell's music? Very possibly, given his extensive career as a church and cathedral organist. If so, did the sentiment of Purcell's motet strike a chord of hope in the composer? Again, possibly - but we shall come to this discussion. Then there is the slow rhythm which is a slight variation of the rhythm that opened the eighth symphony, but in this case there is a flatter, less questing edge to it. It is almost as if it is a statement to which there is no possible reply rather than the opening of a symphonic argument.

The musical build-up or *forhoftechnik* rears up into a slow, deliberate *crescendo* with the orchestra racing furiously but statically in all sections over a rapid downward-moving four-note semi-tonal shape, until the main theme crashes out in stunning unison, *fff*. This main subject group contains many thematic elements which all play a part in the *statement* section of this massive bi-partite movement. The huge orchestral unison *tutti* delivers a monolithic D minor theme that is truly gigantic and awesome, and contains the first of the wide intervals that are such a feature of this symphony. The orchestra in unison slams down three downward octave leaps within the space of a few bars, ending with an upward-moving brass shape that will form a crucial feature at the end of the coda. There is a kind of *terce-de-Picardie* which

then fades into a tense quiet over rapidly fading *tremolo* strings, now in the major – or a version of it. Already, we are aware of the tension and agitated nature of the music. Raindrop *pizzicati* transport us back to the minor key and to the second subject *gesangsperiode*, whose troubled and supplicating nature on massed strings does nothing to calm the tension created by the first subject. High violins plead uselessly as the movement begins to gather irresistible momentum, and mysterious horns and woodwind lead over *tremolando* strings, to the third subject group that has been a continuous feature of Bruckner's sonata-form structure. To call this huge process 'exposition' is simply not enough in this context. The classical sonata design of Haydn or Mozart is as far from this creation as a seagull is from a pteranodon. *Tutti* strings and brass over timpani thunder underline the feeling of uneasy terror that is building inexorably, with dissonant flute octave drops over horns and strings. A dangerous lull modulates around a tense horn/flute interchange within which a development process is obviously working.

The *counter-statement* then begins with a vast elaboration of the introduction that is metamorphosed in Bruckner's re-invented sonata form almost unrecognisably into a nightmarish reflection of itself. The unison theme with its octaves is re-stated, but over a feverish activity in the strings that run up and down the scale as if trying to find an entry point into the huge edifice that is being presented in the brass. The woodwind restate the *gesangsperiode* over dogged *pizzicato* strings and the music moves onwards as if hypnotised: it is being drawn onwards like the jungle pig that falls prey to the hypnotic movements of an anaconda. The inevitability of the process is both obvious and terrifying: it is the way of things.

The music heaves and boils like a cauldron and the unison main theme is upon us again, vast and tortuous, with *ff* strings shrieking wildly in rapid chromatic scalic descents. Dissonance crashes against dissonance with a terror and ferocity hitherto unparalleled in Bruckner; not even in the eighth. There is a pause for breath and then a dogged ascent to a terrifying climax begins, which is topped by high trumpets that ultimately plunge over a precipice into the chasm of a huge and fearsome minor tenth. The *gesangsperiode* reappears, beautifully ornamented; but this cannot allay the demons that have been awakened. The violins again cry out but are swallowed by lushly harmonic brass as the final climax of the counter-statement rears its dissonant head.

Forlorn brass introduce the massive coda that ultimately rears at us, vast, black and unforgiving. It unleashes a unison declamation, followed by dotted figures on horns and low brass that drive relentlessly to a trenchant bare-fifth howl on the trumpets: a musical black hole into which the movement vanishes.

ii) Scherzo: bewegt lebhaft. Trio: schnell

The *scherzo* that follows is a world away from those of its kind that preceded it, even that of the eighth; hardly the ‘light relief’ that *scherzi* are usually supposed to provide. Flickering chromatic wraiths in the woodwind based around a dissonant second underpin nervous *pizzicato* strings. A *crescendo* propels the unnerved listener into a demonically stamping *scherzo* motto after the pause of just a heartbeat in what is the start of a foreshortened sonata-type structure. The noises in the whole orchestra suggest not so much the bucolic cavorting of dancing feet as a war-dance of subterranean demons. It is dissonant, modulatory, fearsome and contains absolutely nothing of the pleasant rusticity of earlier *scherzi*. That world seems universes away. Strings meander upward providing a different key base in virtually every bar, until the demons’ cackling is heard again. The oboe tries to provide some light relief with a simple tune but it is hurried away by frightened violins, until a pause delivers us back into the stamping bacchanale.

The 3-8 *trio* breaks with Brucknerian tradition in actually being substantially faster in pulse than its surrounding *scherzo* and it consciously tries to inject some levity into the proceedings with its miniature free rondo. Grave strings introduce a note of caution but warbling woodwind over a robust chromatic cello line thumb their noses at it. The original sketches for this section indicates that Bruckner’s original intention was actually for a slow central section dominated by a solo viola, but there is no doubt that the later inspiration is the more telling. Then the demonic *scherzo* returns in a literal repeat of its first appearance and all is chaos once more.

iii) Adagio: langsam, feierlich

The *adagio* that follows is not the grief-torn document that is the *adagio* of the eighth: rather it seems to embody the grave acceptance of a hopeless fate, although the music itself is by no means simple or resignatory. Founded on a basis of sonata form, the *adagio* opens with

desperate searching for a tonality. A tortured upward ninth on the strings (pre-dating a similar opening in the slow movement of Mahler's ninth symphony by over a decade) leads chromatically to a bright D major brass arpeggio, which dissolves into mist. Ruminating cellos lead us through a magical modulatory passage fronted by the woodwind until one of the most astonishing and beautiful of all of Bruckner's orchestral passages shimmers into the soundscape. Short, fragmentary fanfares on antiphonal horns and trumpets shine out over dissonant *tremolando* strings and thundering timpani, *ff*, producing a vision of eternity that itself seems timeless. Twice it sounds, and then gives way to a four-note descending motif on the quartet of Wagner tubas and a pair of horns over bare string accompaniment. Bruckner marked this passage in the manuscript '*lebwohl*' - "farewell to life" which in fact derives from a passage in the *finale* of the eighth. Here however, it is comfortless music that dissolves into apologetic fragmentary figures on tubas and strings.

Elegiac strings expound a beautiful, noble theme (related to the *Miserere* and *Gloria* from Bruckner's Mass in D minor) and the woodwind extend it into a development full of beautiful but barren harmonies. Cellos take up the eulogy followed by violins and then brass in chorales over *pizzicato* strings, but it is all forlorn. The acceptance of fate casts a shadow on the entire proceedings; things are indeed as they appear to be. There is a pause and the opening is recapitulated, but this time without reaching the eternity music. It is as if Bruckner is saying that eternity is not the way forward here – that we must look for something else. In its place, we hear a flute inversion of the opening theme over strings, themselves un-inverted which produces weird dissonances. Again, this is an inspired moment.

A hollow march breaks in, like an overblown funeral *cortège*. The trumpet figure is very reminiscent of the final tonic/dominant/tonic motif at the end of the third symphony – except that the final tonic is elevated by a semitone, and then followed by a tonic on the next octave up. This shadow of the third symphony (which he was revising at around this time) is repeated and extended until there is yet another pause. Bruckner could here have been parodying his own inability to control this music such as he had been able to do in the past. Then, belatedly, the eternity music returns as if in some kind of redemption, but the music in the major fades out into meanderings in the minor, unfulfilled. There is here a sense of hopelessness regarding the direction that is necessary to be taken. The oboe reminds us of the '*lebwohl*' and then the ascent to the movement's climax is on.

Some kind of hope should theoretically be in sight now, because Bruckner's slow movement climaxes have always cadenced into the major, towards salvation. Sure enough, we get feelings in the brass chorale that maybe we are indeed going to get a transition into the major but the question is how, because in reality salvation seems a million miles away. The ascent speeds up and the brass heave. Woodwinds meander on a high plateau and radiant strings shine an unexpected beam of light into the gloom. Stubborn dissonant woodwind underpin chromatic sideslips in the cellos, and the elegiac second subject returns over a purposeful bass.

The vast peak of the climax looms and hope builds: but then there is an unexpected tonal wrench sideways and the orchestral build-up rushes headlong not into a bright major resolution, but into utter catastrophe at its peak. The orchestra blares not salvation but a gigantic, fearsome negating chord that exposes seven dissonant notes from the chromatic scale, including a 'missed octave' of C sharp to C natural. It is violent, implacable, terrifying; and the music thunders shakenly and fearfully to a standstill. Doom now seems assured; but out of the carnage comes a strangely peaceful, benevolent ending to the movement. The ascent that took us to the initial vision of eternity appears again, making us think that eternity will appear yet again to cap this glorious yet fearsome movement – but Bruckner fools us again: it is not to be. The strings wriggle chromatically down to a calm and serene D major acceptance of things as they are, punctuated by very Schubertian horn interjections. So ends a movement that finally recalls allusions to themes from not only the eighth symphony, but from the opening of the seventh as well.

Reception

Bruckner's pupils Franz Schalk and Ferdinand Löwe could not leave what they knew of the master's music alone and in 1903 produced an edition of the completed three movements that falsely recasts much of the music, producing a version that was sanitised for public consumption. The work's dissonances were toned down, especially that of the third movement's climax that was muted into a more usual minor seventh chord. The publication of the original score edited by Alfred Orel in 1932 and the subsequent performance in Vienna under Clemens Krauss showed how daringly original Bruckner's own harmony was at this point, and what the world had been missing for thirty years. The edition by Orel (later re-edited by Nowak in 1951 and limited mainly to typographical errors, later by Hans-Hubert

Schönzeler and then most recently by Benjamin Gunnar Cohrs in 2000) underlined the vindication of the vision of Bruckner's original, setting it in its place alongside the other symphonies. Indeed it was the back-to-back performance of both versions, the 'old' Löwe score and the new Orel side-by-side in a semi-private concert in 1932 by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Siegmund von Hausegger that encouraged the International Bruckner Society in Vienna to authorise a Complete Edition of authentic scores for all of Bruckner's symphonies.

As an appendix to his 1932 score, Orel also cast what was known of the extant music from the *finale* into a more-or-less continuous four-stave short score so that its design could be studied. Imperfect though the existing movements may be (and bearing in mind the fact that Bruckner would surely have revised the original draft), it stands as his deepest testimonial to human life in general and his life in particular as he saw it. It was the culmination of his composing career that he must have known was to go no further.

Finale

Bruckner did not live to complete the *finale* to his massive last symphony and as such the work remained one of music's greatest shipwrecks for many years. That this *finale* entailed an enormous mental struggle on the part of its composer is sometimes implied from what on the surface could be viewed as the sometimes-pedestrian incompleteness of the extant material, and the relatively long space of time that Bruckner devoted entirely to its composition - nearly two years.

The question must be asked though; does it only appear that way because Bruckner – and specifically the music that he was composing - was again in transition? As noted above, and following the majestic triumph of the fifth symphony, Bruckner changed direction somewhat in the sixth. Tools that he had used in the fifth such as the brass chorale were rested in the sixth, which itself was altogether more energetic and enigmatic. Here in the ninth, we can discern the same kind of process, although it is fascinating to contemplate what kind of change that Bruckner could have been thinking about in his declining years. To be sure, the construction – and re-construction – of the eighth symphony must have taken its toll on Bruckner. And in any case, what could possibly come after the apocalyptic eighth, which *soubriquet* has come to be attached to that symphony? We have already seen how the term

‘apocalyptic’ has become associated with the eighth – some recordings even carry this word inaccurately as the symphony’s title – but we need to evaluate why this is.

With the two possible exceptions of the fourth and eighth symphonies, there is precious little to suggest that Bruckner ever considered his music to be ‘inspired’ by any specific literary or visual source. His waning health was obviously playing on his mind in terms of his mortality; the ‘farewell to life’ on the Wagner tubas in the ninth symphony’s *adagio* has already been alluded to. That specific motifs and rhythms held particular significance for Bruckner must be obvious to any Brucknerphile: the repeated reference to tonic-dominant-tonic, the duplet/triplet ‘Bruckner rhythm’; these devices appear almost unbidden throughout his *oeuvre*. So while the composer may have been attempting to court popularity by assigning tentative programs to some of the symphonies (just like Franz Schalk and Ferdinand Löwe did by sanitising the scoring after Bruckner’s death), the real meaning of what the music meant to him was left to the unspoken programmes that he wove into the musical fabric, one symphony to the next.

This matter crystallises in the unfinished *finale* of the ninth in a way that shows how Bruckner was searching for a way out of the monster he was unwittingly creating. Is it fanciful to think that in the *finale* of the ninth symphony, the composer was trying out shapes and fragments from previous symphonies, to see if there was something that would help him transfigure the nightmarish visions of the earlier movements into the kind of transcendent glory that he had achieved at the end of the eighth? No more fanciful I think, than the postulated religious associations that some commentators have in the past made with reference to the music. Indeed, one of the forces behind one of the major performing versions of the ninth’s *finale*, John Phillips has likened the *adagio* and *finale* to ‘death and transfiguration’, or perhaps the ‘death and purgatory’ of Catholic belief. One of Phillips’ erstwhile SPCM reconstruction colleagues, Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs has also even gone so far in his 2005 paper on his revision of the Phillips’ team’s completion, to give a very fanciful interpretation of the *finale* as representing Christ on the cross, resurrection and eternal glory, even to the extent of ‘identifying’ a four-note motif that he interprets as representing the cross. A Dutch commentator, Aart van der Wal makes the same assertion. While I wholly admire Cohrs’ scholarship and almost impeccable sense of direction in his latest revisions, I cannot agree with his programmatic assertions that assign overt religious symbolism to the unfinished *finale* – especially when there seems to be ample evidence in the tortured stretches

of the music itself, that Bruckner was having severe doubts about his faith. Not only did the composer himself not make any programmatic references to the *finale*, but that it would have been completely out of character for him to do so. Bruckner's doctor, Richard Heller speaks of the composer saying that he was bringing back the 'Hallelujah from the second movement' to crown the *finale* with praise – but then Bruckner would say that, wouldn't he. If the faith that you had held all your adult life was slipping away in the face of your mortality, would you not assign a major composition to the Dear Lord, as something of a backstop? All of his symphonies ended with strenuous affirmation of some kind or another, and the evidence suggests that the ninth would have been no different.

Which brings us to – what exists in the *finale* that shows us what Bruckner's true inspiration might have been? As indicated, the religious symbolism is surely fanciful and seems to have little basis in evidence – but the music itself surely gives the lie to where his inspiration was coming from. If we remember that Bruckner had been working on revisions of earlier symphonies during the construction of the ninth, then maybe it is not surprising to find some notable allusions. But here in the *finale*, we have more than allusions. We see direct quotations from earlier symphonies, perhaps one of the most obvious being the *adagio's* 'farewell to life' that derived from a passage in the *finale* of the eighth. This *lebwohl* became transfigured in the ninth's *finale* but it was not alone in its appearance, because there are obvious references to the sixth (a passage from the *finale*), the third (the shape and harmonic treatment from the first movement) and most obviously and extensively, the very opening of the first numbered symphony.

The monothematic nature of the ninth's *finale* has been stated to be obsessive by Bruckner scholars but I believe that the key to the thematic construction of this movement is not the downward-moving opening motif itself but the upward-moving clarinet response that immediately answers it. As well as almost being very close to a literal retrograde inversion of the opening flourish, this response has the exact shape, melodic and rhythmic content of the opening string *motif* of the first numbered symphony. Not only that, it is repeated again and again often enough throughout the movement to indicate that it must have had substantial meaning for the composer. We know that he had a special place in his affections for his first symphony (Bruckner never really counted his F minor *studiensinfonie* as his true 'first'), so what might have been more natural in trying to bring this most difficult symphony of all to closure, than to use the germ of his first symphony to try to achieve it? The basis of the

finale's exposition was laid out at the end of the 1880s when Bruckner was still relatively fit and healthy, so that its inclusion here cannot be dismissed as the meanderings of a sick old man. It was a clear point of focus.

The extent to which the first symphony influenced the ninth's *finale* will be seen when we analyse the music more closely.

What remains of the finale

The final emergence of Bruckner's late symphonic style as presented in the seventh, eighth and ninth symphonies had taken on a form and significance that was unequalled in symphonic music since Beethoven, and one that Bruckner himself was perhaps not fully equipped to handle in the last year or so of his life. The remnants of the final movement of this last symphony present testimony to the compositional paradox that Bruckner had himself created.

The surviving completed movements of the ninth point the way to a ferociously complex *finale* that was to have been pivoted at its centre in the same way as the first movement had been. At the end of his life, Bruckner may have been less capable of supplying the kind of mental focus necessary at this point in his life in order to complete the music as he had probably originally envisaged it in his mind's eye. If we had access to the continuous evolving score that is likely to have existed at one time in the evolution of the *finale*, we would of course know better what the ultimate intent was. In context though, the task would have taxed a completely healthy man to his very limits. The work may have indeed been irreconcilable in normal Brucknerian fashion even then; hence the use of the first symphony's motif in attempting to bind it all together.

Taken at face value then, what we know of the musical draft may not on the surface have seemed to indicate a *finale* of a quality similar to that with which he had imbued the first three movements - but we must use caution here. Is the music as we see it simply uninspired, or is it deliberately spare and single-minded, awaiting revelation at the conclusion? Is it the conscious change of direction that we have already discussed? We must not forget that the music of the *finale* was very much a first version 'work in progress', and that what exists now may not even have been what finally appeared even as a first complete score. Unless and until the continuous score of the *finale* re-appears, we just cannot know. What we may perhaps see

in the extant musical bi-folios, is Bruckner working to get the structural proportions right in terms of harmonic and rhythmic dimension before filling in other ‘smaller’ details; such as perhaps the melodic interest.

It must also be stressed that in all likelihood, the finished first-version symphony would have been completely revised *in its entirety* had Bruckner lived long enough, since that was what he had been doing in the main since the rejection of the first version of the eighth symphony in 1887. If as is likely the *finale* of the ninth did in fact reach a complete continuous score form, then Bruckner would have identified any unintentional shortcomings that he may have thought that it had, and substantially re-composed it; indeed there is evidence in the *finale*'s re-workings of the *statement* exposition that he had already started doing this. Here we are again assuming that what exists represents inferior musical thought, which may not actually be the case as we shall see. The music therefore represents comprehensive *first* thoughts on how this huge symphony *might* have found its conclusion. Note the emphasis.

What have actually survived from two years of struggle with the music are some 550-plus bars of occasionally fully-scored manuscript bi-folios, and sometimes some single harmonic lines. They display some fascinating ideas based around the musical subjects being built from much the same thematic idea. That it is a move away from the contrasting style of previous symphonies is very clear, but it is not unusual within the context of this symphony's musical content. For example, the *gesangsperiode* of the first movement was not the song-like interlude that we have heard in the past, but a restless and striving quest.

During a BBC broadcast of 1974 where the scored fragments plus others prepared by Hans-Hubert Schönzeler were played, Bruckner scholar Paul Hamburger called the music of the *finale* ‘obsessive’; the same word that has been used in the context of the ‘Bruckner rhythm’ in the fourth and eighth symphonies. If it is obsessive though, this could be the obsession to maintain the philosophical thrust of the music's construction – or maybe there is a different process to think about here. I have already suggested that the opening *motif* of the first symphony is critical to the thrust of this *finale* and there are other echoes of the first symphony to be found in the music of the ninth, especially in the *adagio*. It is a possibility that in this *finale*, the main falling theme of the movement is deliberately and retrospectively constructed from the *motif* in inversion, to create the opening shape. The second subject of the *finale* is clearly derived from the first and is ostensibly a pale shadow of it in the minor;

almost as if the lack of transcendent vision that we might have been expecting at the climax of the *adagio* is still nagging away at the composer. If the first and second subject groups were derived from the main theme of the first symphony in reverse then this would explain why the entire movement is generated in the way that it seems to be. In other words, perhaps the theme's extension into the *gesangsperiode* was a deliberate ploy to begin the musical development even earlier than he had done previously: so potentially it may have been a further prototype development of the statement/counterstatement/coda model into something that would become ever more distant from the models of Mozart and Beethoven.

The main musical idea of the opening of the *statement* consists of two pairs of notes spread out over the enormous interval of a tenth repeated over and over, this idea then invading the second subject. Past opinion has had it that if the completed movement was to have been based on the material that has survived, Bruckner's mental condition at the time means that perhaps it is just as well that it was not completed. In this condition, the *finale* would have been a disappointment after the imperfect but stunning first three movements. Is this really the case, though? Spare, yes: tortured, definitely – but then, other composers who were near death did strange things in their music – just look at the parallel case of Tchaikovsky who turned his symphonic process on its head with the stunningly original *Pathétique*. The lie to what may have been in the back of Bruckner's mind might be indicated by those clarinet responses to the first utterings of the theme which trace the exact shape, melody and rhythm of the opening theme of the first symphony of thirty years previously. It is really not too fanciful to think that a composer aware of his mortality and very prone to quote himself in any case, consciously brought in allusions to his favourite 'cheeky minx' (as he fondly called his first) in this *finale* as well as in the preceding *adagio*. In the composer's characteristic late telescoped and hinged sonata form then, the *finale* might therefore have perhaps attempted to transform the '*lebwohl*' theme of the *adagio* (which itself derived from the *finale* of the eighth) through the medium of the first symphony into a redemptory chorale for the brass and may have thus brought the whole work to an affirmatory conclusion.

The material that is extant actually indicates most of the way towards achieving this goal. What exists within the fragments that came to light in the more distant past and indeed more recently, is an emerging score whose continuity is demonstrable through a number of linked (or linkable) and performable orchestral fragments that would have accounted for perhaps up to three-quarters of a completed movement. Without more recently-discovered bi-

folios, the order of the orchestral fragments within the structure often had to be much of an educated guess with the exception of the exposition section of the *statement*. This indeed was the case with some of the earlier reconstruction attempts by William Carragan, Italian musicologists Nicola Samale and Giuseppe Mazzuca. The exposition section itself of what was almost certainly designed as a typical late-Bruckner bi-partite sonata structure is more or less complete in itself but the continuation into development is interrupted numerous times by small, at-least-sixteen-bar gaps in the emerging score.

The material gives much more than mere glimpses of an intended structure and its ultimate end (or at least its construction) is fairly certain – although Bruckner had he lived would almost certainly have recast it. Indeed as if beginning the process early, Bruckner made no fewer than five separate drafts of the opening exposition section or its components alone, of which the last is sadly lost. Indeed, it seems that he was not completely happy with the versions that he had constructed because of the changes of melodic and harmonic direction that appear between some of the drafts. It is only in the third of the expositional fragments that the music's harmonic direction appears to be a little more complete. As was the norm during Bruckner's compositional process, more or less the last thing that was laid down was the melodic line, and that certainly seems to be a feature of this part of the movement also. This indeed may be why some past commentators thought that the material of the *finale* was thin and uninspired: because the final strands of completion – the melodic lines – may not have been fleshed out to the required extent. Because of the compositional stage of the movement as a whole, it is entirely feasible that much of the rhythmic subtlety that is normally a part of Bruckner's musical construction is therefore also missing, so that at least two of the three fundamental constructional blocks of melody, harmony and rhythm are in quite rudimentary form – which of course does not assist anyone with any reconstruction attempts.

The construction and direction of the music seems clear; but many of the more detailed melodic aspects look to have been on Bruckner's mental drawing board when he died. The four-note dropping motif may thus have been a shorthand version of a completed theme structure inspired by the first symphony *motif* or perhaps some other kind of mnemonic. However as we have seen, it may already be complete in itself because of the four-note first symphony woodwind *motif* that immediately answers the downward-directed opening. If the downward-directed motif is only a shorthand version of a first theme though,

how could it be extended and still have such a perfect foil in the quotation from the first symphony?

The concept of 'completion'

To date, a number of 'completions' of the sketches for the ninth's *finale* have been attempted and many of these have been preserved in recordings. The concept of symphonic completion itself is not new; many symphonies by well-known composers have been reconstructed and given performing editions. Pre-eminent among parallel cases is one that has been already mentioned; Deryck Cooke's performing version of Mahler's tenth symphony, plus others by other composers. Then there exist Brian Newbould's versions of Schubert's seventh and incomplete tenth symphonies - not to mention Deryck Cooke's rendition of the finished *Unfinished*. There is Semyon Bogatyrev's inspired reconstruction of an E flat symphony of 1892 by Tchaikovsky, the (very) speculative reconstruction by Barry Cooper of the first movement of a tenth symphony by Beethoven: and most recently and perhaps most triumphantly of all, the splendid realization of the sketches for Elgar's third symphony by British composer Anthony Payne. The fact of life however is that this practice of 'completion' creates a sharp division of opinion as to what should actually be done (if anything at all) with composers' incomplete musings.

The opinion has been expressed by eminent musicians including Bernard Haitink and Riccardo Chailly that perhaps the best thing to do with Bruckner's private, incomplete musical thoughts is to simply leave them alone because they were not their composer's final views on the matter; that proliferation of them may give a false impression of what was ultimately intended. Whilst it is possible to appreciate this point of view, it denies anyone the opportunity of actually finding out for themselves what the end of an incomplete masterpiece may have sounded like. Certainly the majority of Brucknerians would love to hear how the composer was thinking in terms of this final movement and this symphony, even if a final complete version has not come down to us. Certainly, getting to know the music of the *finale* adds another dimension to the appreciation of the ninth symphony as a whole, and may even modify the holistic conception of the work as a four-movement whole, as Sir Simon Rattle has ably demonstrated in concert performances and a recording. If the former school of thought held sway universally, we would not have performing versions of works such as Mozart's *Requiem* or Mahler's tenth, which have both become staples of the performing

repertoire. Indeed, the Süssmayr completion of the Mozart *Requiem* is now coming back into vogue, even though there is much less Mozart in the *Requiem* than there is Bruckner in the *finale* of the ninth symphony. The logic of the realization of this *finale* is the same as that for Anthony Payne's work on Elgar's sketches for his third symphony, which is rapidly becoming normal repertoire: a performing version of the extant score with portions of it in the manner of Bruckner, rather than a 'completion' *per se*.

Given the resurgence of Süssmayr's Mozart, if the concept of studying whoever's sketches is therefore a valid one, another question then arises: how does the amateur musician with little knowledge of the art of score-reading get to know these sketches? Performance is needed to set them and any performing versions of them into context. We have seen that the music of the *finale* only arguably provides the kind of musical coherence and argument that are eminently present in the first three movements in often rudimentary form. Logic thus dictates that any 'completion' perhaps should fail to provide the answers that the first three movements demand, because of the nature of the *finale*'s musical substance itself: it *should*.

Up to the 1980s, the completed portions that were extant had either been performed in two-piano versions, or in orchestral guise where this was feasible. As noted above, Hans-Hubert Schönzeler in 1974 conducted the then-BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra (now the BBC Philharmonic) in all of the playable orchestrated stretches of the *finale*, amounting to some twelve minutes of music as part of a BBC Radio 3 lecture by Paul Hamburger that set the fragments in context. Two reconstructions had in fact been attempted prior to this during 1969, by German conductor Ernst Märzendorfer who died in 2009, and Dutch conductor Hein's Gravesand who died the year following his work on the *finale*, in 1970. No recordings of these completion attempts exist, and given the condition of the known fragments during Hamburger's lecture in 1974 where even their order (besides the Exposition) was thought tentative at best, a substantial amount of author input would have had to have been necessary to achieve a continuous performing score: perhaps around 50% of the movement's putative length.

Two major camps developed since the early 1980s with regard to the development of a continuous and complete Bruckner ninth *finale*. The first of these was initiated by American musicologist and current *Bruckner Edition* editor William Carragan, assembled between 1979 and 1983 and just a couple of years after a completion by another American musicologist, Marshall Fine. The fact that Carragan's version has been updated three times in the last ten

years (most recently in 2010) is evidence of Carragan's belief in the integrity of the musical torso and is an admirable piece of homage over a period of more than thirty years. Expertly crafted though it is, the 1983 version ultimately cannot make anything like a complete success of the extant material in the way that Bruckner ultimately might have had he lived. At that particular time, a more limited amount of material was available to work with that did not indicate specific linkages and continuities, such that a lot of what appeared in Carragan's first completed edition was naturally speculative. Carragan's early version has also received criticism for perhaps adding too much material of Carragan's own composition, in that the likely gaps in the source material were extended beyond what is thought to have been intended by a study of the probable periodicity of the missing bi-folios.

Carragan's 1983 score was recorded by Yoav Talmi and the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra and issued on CD, coupled with the original playable score fragments, which by this time were slightly more extensive than Schönzeler had performed ten years previously. It seemed clear that while it would certainly be possible to link the fragments in Brucknerian style, there was a huge stumbling block in that as noted, there seemed to be nothing even sketched of what the *finale's* coda may have looked like. As such, Carragan's coda for his 1983 completion was entirely speculative, although another by a second major completist camp, Italian musicologists Nicola Samale and Giuseppe Mazzuca started to interpret the sketched outlines and likely length that the coda may have been cast in. As the years have gone by since the end of the 1980s however, more fragments have come to light, including material that has been clearly identified as being for the coda. This has resulted in something of an escalation of activity in recent years.

Another completion emerged in 1992 by Nors Josephson, which has not been subsequently updated since that time, although it was played in more recent times in west London, with Josephson present. Interestingly, Josephson's account of the *finale* is marked *alla breve*, whereas the other completers have opted for a more *nicht schnell* approach. This very fast tempo linked to very spare and succinct linking passages that sometimes make for awkward-sounding joints and some rather un-Brucknerian construction in the transition to the coda and coda itself. This consequently produces a short playing time of less than a quarter of an hour, which perhaps would not sit well in context with the timing of the remainder of the symphony. Perhaps this was conceived more as a stand-alone version of the *finale* that inputs

as minimally as possible in order to join the *echt*-Bruckner pieces together, rather than as a structural last movement to a vast symphony.

Samale and Mazzuca were joined in the early 1990s by Australian musicologist John Phillips and German musicologist and conductor Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs with the intent of taking the emerging score back to its philological roots and determining what could be interpreted from the fragments as they existed at the time, identifying the periodicity of the gaps between the fragments and what could be extrapolated from the extant bi-folios. As such, the first ‘SPCM’ edition (Samale/Phillips/Cohrs/Mazzuca) was published in 1991. This edition however also suffered from a substantial lack of coda material. Updates to this version have been undertaken more recently that take into account more source material, enabling an assessment of the likely structure, length and some hints of actual musical material for the coda. William Carragan had also re-visited his completion in the interim in the light of new score fragments and what had been discovered on existing ones. In addition, in 2007/8 a completely separate realization of the *finale* was undertaken by the Belgian musicologist Sébastien Letocart. What is remarkable is that in these later versions from Carragan and the SPCM members from the mid-2000s onwards, the *sound* of the versions, their harmony and direction were notably much closer than they had been, fifteen to twenty years previously. Also, Letocart’s sound world was similar to this, although he did not apparently use any of the up-to-date scholarship for his version of the coda, which instead used a multi-level approach to combining multiple themes from the ninth symphony and earlier, to create an extended coda that is very similar in construction and feel to that of the fifth symphony.

The drawing-together of the sound of these different versions is therefore perhaps similar to the Darwinian concept of convergent evolution where different evolutionary paths converge to find a similar solution to an ecological problem; but here, the different conceptions of the *finale* seem to be converging into a common conception of what the extant material of the *finale* was pointing to.

On the face of it, all ‘completed’ versions of this *finale* could be (and in the past have been) seen to be hampered in the end by the same basic obstacle; that much of the available music might be interpreted as being on an audibly lower level of inspiration than the first three movements, because of the lack of harmonic and melodic ‘filling-in’ that perhaps remained to be done by Bruckner. Some of the extant material therefore hardly sounds inspired at all – but then we must not forget that much of it has not come down to us complete

and is likely in places to be a bare-bones construction lacking rhythmic originality as well as the overlaying melodic and harmonic structure. The central *fugato* for example (an idea perhaps based on the success of a similar section in the *finale* of the fifth) is somewhat stilted and does not stand direct comparison with its distinguished predecessor. It may be that Bruckner felt that a fugue was necessary at this point in the design and just put one together using the first subject with an appropriate harmonic basis just to fill a gap where this fugue should be – and nothing more at that point. The actual substance of the fugue could perhaps have been elaborated later. There is indeed a potential precedent for this perspective, since an anonymous *Symphonic Prelude* of 1876 that is possibly attributable to Bruckner could well have been a study for the fugue in the *finale* of the fifth symphony – and that is also hardly inspired, although the fugue in the fifth's *finale* certainly is. So if indeed the *Prelude* was by Bruckner, the fugue in the ninth's *finale* could have been a 'working title' for its final form in the same way that the *Prelude* had been for the fifth's *finale* fugue – if indeed the *Prelude* is by Bruckner – but that is another story.

If this is all true, and given the range of constrictions within which the various scholars who undertook their performing versions have worked, their scores are in fact far more successful than one might at first imagine. As noted, Samale & Mazzuca's original *finale* was elaborated and re-thought by a team led by John Phillips using more up-to-date philological research. The SPCM realization was originally completed in 1991, updated in 1995 and given its first UK performance in that form in 1996 as part of the BBC's centenary celebrations of Bruckner's death under the Russian conductor Vassily Sinaisky. The SPCM score was further revisited and edited by Samale and Cohrs in 2005, this edition being given its *première* in Sweden in 2007, conducted by the young Briton Daniel Harding. As with Carragan, the work however has still continued, and a further revision that included a major re-think on the construction of the *coda* was published in 2011 and performed in Europe and the USA in 2012 by the Berliner Philharmoniker under Sir Simon Rattle, and the performance released on CD. This is a substantial and high-profile *imprimatur* that has not been accorded to the versions by Carragan and Letocart. Cohrs has indicated that this is the final revision – unless and until more fragments turn up.

As they stand then, the bare, disjointed bones of the musical fragments of the 'emerging autograph score' (as termed by Phillips) give the impression of something like a newly-discovered incomplete Roman mosaic floor: the individual pieces separate and an

overall view of the whole, impossible. Skilfully joined together however with other pieces in the original style, the floor would regain something of its former glory. Similarly, the completed *finale* in any of the most recent major versions has a flow that has undeniable presence and conviction. Unfortunately, as with the Roman floor, the sections that are missing have to be ‘touched-in’ in the most authentic manner so that the original *appears* correct. The analogy breaks down at this point however, because archaeologists have much experience in restoring mosaic floors due to the number that have been restored of a similar type. Bruckner’s ninth is unique even within Bruckner’s own canon and therefore the musicologist is much more out on his own.

The interpolated sections by the various teams are so carefully and meticulously designed within the framework of the gaps that in the most recent editions it is often very difficult to distinguish between Bruckner and his imitators: not so perhaps with earlier versions. This is even more so with the Phillips team’s later versions since the interpolated music has been adjusted and reconstructed to fit exactly with the gaps that were assessed to be present. This has unfortunately resulted in some ostensibly desperate-sounding modulations in order to join the sketches together without alteration in the later stages of the movement.

What about the musical *style*, though? If Bruckner was developing forward once more, how should the music actually sound? Can we actually base a reconstruction on the Bruckner we know from the seventh and particularly the eighth symphonies? There is no doubt that after the harmonically daring and dissonant first three movements, the *finale*’s opening minutes seem to lapse back to a more familiar sound and tonality. This led to some unfortunate circumstances in the earlier versions of the 1980s: Samale and Mazzuca’s first version sounded relatively stilted in the interpolated sections, and because of the at-the-time complete lack of original material, the coda to Carragan’s 1983 completion, even though authentically crafted, had an unfortunate tendency to over-blow the *finale*’s chorale theme in an attempt to make for a suitably impressive ending: it was even called ‘Hollywoodesque’ in some circles. This has not been altered in the most recent revisions.

Elsewhere, Carragan in his first version seemed to alter some of the musical substance and tended not to respect the numbers of missing bars. It appeared that Carragan’s own invention was extended significantly in the centre of the movement with little published in the way of explanation of his musical logic, as his SPCM colleagues were doing as they progressed. Then, the overtly Wagnerian descant trumpet counterpoint found in Carragan’s

coda does little for his argument as it just does not *sound* like Bruckner, for the composer in this symphony is far indeed from Wagner's sound-world. The feel of the projected ending to the symphony in the first SPCM version of 1991 appeared to be more in the psychological mood of the first movement, bringing an entirely different slant to the music. Here was the first attempt at presenting the themes of all four movements at the conclusion of the symphony as had happened in the eighth. Bruckner had capped all of his symphonic edifices since the third symphony with a re-statement of the first movement theme, and here it is reasonable to think that he would at least use the same technique of combining all four movement themes together at the conclusion of the ninth, although John Phillips' perspective seemed to be moving away from this rationale in more recent times. It has to be said though that the inclusion of the quotations from the first movement in the 1991 version at the height of the second section were maybe not that convincing.

The finale justified?

It is unfortunate that in the efforts to make this music accessible to the general musical public, the different completed versions of a completed *finale* in fact might in a way be seen to do more to help the 'leave it alone' lobby than they do to help their own. All they perhaps do is help to confuse the listener? Let us not forget though that the Bruckner-lover has already had to contend with different versions and editions of most of the symphonies, and has had to make a choice of preferred listening. Surely it is the same here? Indeed, having more than one performing version available should make the avid Brucknerian feel at home, for surely this is merely an extension of what he or she has had to do since being attracted to Bruckner's music in the first place! Constant re-thinking of the original 1980s Samale/Mazzuca original has meant that the 1995 SPCM version derived from it is subtly but noticeably different, as is the 2005 Cohrs/Samale revision to the 1995 version. With the availability now of the 2010 Carragan and 2011 Cohrs editions, to my mind the available choice adds to, rather than detracts from the mystique of this *finale*.

The situation begs yet another question: which completed version is the more 'authentic' and why? For an explanation of that tricky subject, the musicologists themselves must justify their own actions and leave the judgement of them to posterity. It is not for one person to say 'this one is better than that one'; it is a subjective opinion and that is all the current author can express. It does not mean that it is correct or indeed incorrect. The basis of

William Carragan's stated argument for his original 1983 completion was that the previous three movements display a strife that is obviously intended to be turned into salvation in the *finale* through the medium of Bruckner's religion, a point that was touched on above in relation to the SPCM completion. Is this actually so, though? There are two pieces of musical evidence from the symphony and a simple piece of logic which would seem to contradict this assertion.

Firstly, the logic. If Bruckner's previous symphonies were not overtly religious (and I would submit that they are definitely not), then why should the ninth be? Yes, the ninth was dedicated "To My Dear God, if he will accept it" - but are these unsure words enough in themselves to apply a religious connotation to the work, or was it more of a matter of covering all of the bases, just in case? You can dedicate a book to your wife without the book having to be about the subject of marriage - I have indeed done so! So was this gesture in fact an act of consciously hopeful and *speculative* re-affirmation of his faith so that maybe the symphony could be completed - whilst his subconscious actually told a different story? The three completed movements of the ninth give the impression of a tense, terrifying work that leaves little enough room for even the dimmest hope of salvation. A *finale* would have to perform superhuman feats to rescue salvation out of the depths into which the first three movements plunge the listener.

This then brings us to the first musical indication that I mentioned. Simply, that is the dissonant climax to the third movement which blears negation rather than the hope we might have expected. Would not Bruckner here have given us a pointer as to the way that things were ultimately going to go? In the eighth, the *adagio's* climax arrives in a clear E flat major, although musical incidents prior to this are by no means clear-cut; and it takes the entire length of the *finale* to find the radiant C major triumph at the end. Here in the ninth, there is nothing but blackness at the equivalent point. No positive indications whatsoever.

Secondly, there is the actual material of the extant music of the *finale* itself. The completing teams have ingeniously composed bridge passages between the existing stretches of the extant *finale* and provided a speculative coda based on short-form sketches, in the case of the 1995 SPCM version and its subsequent revisions, and Carragan's most recent work. It may be argued that they have done what Deryck Cooke did for Mahler's tenth; that is, fill out the bare bones of what the composer intended. But that argument contains a serious flaw, however. The music of Mahler's tenth was truly continuous. It was a draft of a complete work

with all its melodic, harmonic and rhythmic parts in at least a traceable path through the symphony. In the *finale* of Bruckner's ninth, this is not the case. The first three movements only (whilst with their own minor flaws) are complete and self-sufficient; but the finale, for whatever reason is incomplete although it likely existed in a complete form at some point. It seems likely that souvenir-hunters plundered Bruckner's room immediately after his death, taking away bi-folios that would complete the score of the *finale*. How true this scenario actually is will probably never be known. Phillips *et al* have postulated the most likely final shape and periodicity of the movement, but unless a continuous score or more bi-folios should come to light, we will not know this for certain.

The task that Bruckner had set himself, of completing a symphony whose first three movements were so awesomely composed may on the face of it have been too much; and Bruckner may have known this subconsciously. As if to underline it all, as Robert Simpson says in 'The Essence of Bruckner', it would be a brave man who would try to compose Bruckner's greatest climax for him, although the Phillips team appears to have gone as far as is humanly possible with what remains. What Bruckner would have ultimately composed will never be known because we do not know what was going on in his mind. Any performing version is therefore based on what the completer thinks that Bruckner's mind was thinking about at the time, and it is here that things become even more complicated.

Perhaps as Haitink and Chailly have indicated, it would have been kinder to have left things as they ultimately finished. Bruckner may have instinctively known that he would not live to finish the gigantic creation that he had started, although it certainly seems from his working methods that the continuous score stage for the entire movement had indeed been reached. Maybe the lie to the argument in favour of reconstruction is given by a parallel case that has already been mentioned, that came to fruition in 1997; that of Anthony Payne's inspired performing version of the sketches for Sir Edward Elgar's third symphony. Whilst huge stretches of (predominantly developmental) material are simply not there and there are precious few authentically scored passages, Payne manages to convince us that his score captures the essence of what Elgar was driving at. The music is powerful, touching and *sounds* right in much the way that John Phillips and his team (and more latterly, Cohrs and Samale) manage with their version of the Bruckner ninth *finale*. No-one pretends that it is absolutely authentic to the *n*th degree; it is an outline structure that presents the extant original material in the best light possible.

But what of Carragan's and Letocart's versions? As I said above, it is remarkable how the major camps have come together over the years in terms of what the finished editions present. The first versions by Carragan and Samale/Mazzuca were in different sound-worlds, with the SPCM team in the 1990s seeming to find perhaps a more authentic voice for the emerging score. Carragan's first version of 1983 just did not sound authentic when linked to the remainder of the ninth – or even on its own terms. There has clearly been substantial re-thinking and re-alignment within the last ten years, since Carragan's 2010 edition is much closer to the Cohrs/Samale model of 2005, even though Carragan still perversely uses spurious and atypical countermelodies in his realization (especially that trumpet descant in the *coda*) that militate against what sounds truly authentic. The putative *coda* begins after a general pause in two of the three versions (SPCM and Letocart) in order to give breathing space for the *coda* to expand into a radiant conclusion in the major: that otherwise, there is too much of a jarring juxtaposition between the angst of the later stages of the counter-statement and the rise to serenity in the *coda*. This is exactly what Bruckner himself did in the *finale* of the eighth and at the end of the first movement of the ninth. However, having said this, the most recent 2011 SPCM edition edited by Cohrs removes the pause that was there, and makes such a juxtaposition in exactly the same way that Carragan does!

The finale completed

Thus, the musical public will demand (and indeed deserve) an insight into Bruckner's final struggle, even if the way in which it is presented differs. The major versions contain the *spirit* of Bruckner's score as well as the completers' interpretation of what was in Bruckner's mind regarding the actual notes at the latest stage of the *finale*'s composition. For example, the SPCM version in its development over the years has tended to use philological detective work and reconstruction to determine where Bruckner was heading at the time of his death, and in the process identifying likely gaps of bars and even inserting modifications to the musical logic of what appears in Bruckner's drafts. This appears to move away from the literal insertion of Bruckner's music in the more recent SPCM versions, since in one notable section at the movement's beginning, the periodicity and the melodic line has been interpreted as being different to what we had been used to with Carragan 1983 and Josephson. In this case, Carragan inserts the more traditional draft of the exposition's opening, even in his most recent edition even though it is clear that having had five attempts, Bruckner himself was not

happy with how any of them sounded. Whereas Carragan undertook a degree of harmonic sanitization, *à la* Franz Schalk in 1983, the sound-world in 2010 was now much more harmonised with the SPCM version. Given the processes of reconstruction over the years and the fact that we are used to hearing the ninth – incorrectly - as a three-movement work, performances of the whole symphony with the *finale* in place can still sound odd – but mainly just because we are used to hearing the *adagio* as the symphony's ending, which was never Bruckner's intention. Perhaps the way forward might be to treat the *adagio* as an inner movement with the resolution being provided by the *finale*, in the way that Daniel Harding did with the SPCM/CM *finale* in 2007 and Simon Rattle in 2012 by investing the *adagio* with less *gravitas* than is perhaps customary.

As noted above, Bruckner perhaps knew that he may not finish this symphony. However, research into the *finale* score by John Phillips and his team in Vienna in the 1980s appears to indicate that the skeleton of the ninth's *finale* may indeed have been completed prior to the composer's death, but that some of the bi-folio sheets have been lost; or worse, looted. This conclusion is based upon the fact that Bruckner's compositional method consisted of laying out a foundation for a complete movement on the strings or single woodwind in sequentially numbered bi-folios, then filling the sheets in afterward. This is a process that can be seen all through his compositional career. The fact that the linking pieces and the entire coda may well have existed in this fashion but were lost (or stolen) is very frustrating to think about. However according to Phillips, the coda bi-folios were not the only place where Bruckner jotted down his ideas for the coda; short scores on two staves and pencil sketches survive elsewhere amongst the bi-folios. Phillips asserts that about half of the coda can be identified in this way in sketch form, thus giving the prospective completer a slightly more easy time in trying to put it all together and decide where it was ultimately heading. The SPCM performing version constructed by the Phillips team therefore ostensibly has assembled as close as we can get to an aural picture of what the *first complete score* of the *finale* might possibly have been driving at, without the lost sheets themselves turning up. Bearing in mind Bruckner's constant revision, there is no doubt whatsoever that had he lived longer then the material would likely have sounded noticeably different in any case after revision.

Because of the difference in approaches taken by Carragan, Letocart and the SPCM team – especially bearing in mind the recent 2011 Cohrs/Samale revision - overviews of the

most recent editions of all three completions will be found here, plus an indication of how the scores differ. All of the scores are approximately the same length – around 20 to 25 minutes – and indicate that if they are anywhere near what Bruckner intended, then the completed work would have constituted Bruckner's longest symphony at approximately an hour and a half or more.

iv) Misterioso – nicht schnell (Carragan 2010)

The introductory *forhoftechnik* of this completed movement is all unadulterated Bruckner in the completed versions – although using different versions of the exposition, as we shall see - and starts over a timpani roll, an effect unique in Bruckner. Immediately, the violins give out a four-note dropping motif that is immediately bounced back in retrograde inversion by the clarinet. The clarinet response as we have seen has the exact contour, melodic shape and rhythm of the first subject of the first symphony, so that this movement's opening motif is actually a modified inversion of the first symphony reminiscence. This process is repeated, and then the two utterances are repeated again, a tone lower – and then a tone lower again, resulting in six utterances of this dialogue. Horn harmony and a flute warble lead to a foreshortened *crescendo* which brings an impressive unison downward-moving variant of the opening violin dotted theme. A short bridge via sombre block harmony on the brass leads to the *gesangsperiode*. This is built from the same musical idea as the main theme, and therefore does not introduce variation or relaxation into the melodic flow or rhythmic pulse of the music. High strings extend their ideas past a ruminating woodwind-and-horns combination to a rather banal, pseudo-jolly extension of itself. A *crescendo* initiated by an inspired inversion of the introductory theme (shades of the opening of the first symphony) introduces the third subject group, led by a brass chorale assisted by swirling strings which transmutes the *adagio's* 'lebewohl' into the major in an attempt at affirmation. This recedes onto the opening motto of the *Te Deum* of 1883 on a solo flute, and it is here that the first uninterrupted Bruckner sketch finishes.

At this point in the construction of the music, its direction appears clear. A change of key initiates a developmental phase, and what is clearly intended to be an energetic passage. We are now in Carragan's interpolation of a short period of missing bars. Development is obviously taking place within the main Statement's framework though. Carragan has the horns intoning a fragment from the first movement's *coda* against a busy orchestral

background, and woodwind and brass elaborate the chorale. An energetic string passage introduces an almost Elgarian phrase (which in the opinion of the SPCM editors is far too long an insertion based on the available evidence), before Bruckner breaks back in with a fugue (*à la* the fifth symphony) built again on the opening dropping phrase. This initially sounds rather routine and uninspired, although Carragan's alternative orchestration of the fugue subject on the horns adds interest, as does the fugue's extension. It is almost as if Bruckner is trying to unite the symphony by attempting to emulate his success in the fifth's last movement; surely his most successful *finale*, structurally. At its height, Carragan inserts a *tutti* followed by a developmental high plateau. Bruckner's own material then brings in the welcome relief of the 'Bruckner rhythm' in the brass, following a genuinely Brucknerian passage which is startlingly similar to one in the *finale* of the sixth symphony.

A pause; then strings and woodwind meander around the *gesangsperiode*, sorrowfully extending into the '*lebwohl*' on strings until they introduce yet another allusion to a previous symphony; the first movement of the third. This allusion is interesting, as we have already heard a reference to the final bars during the third movement *adagio*. Then there is a reminiscence of the flute warble from near the beginning of the Exposition, a pause and then a timpani roll into a crescendo passage built on the jagged ascent to the first subject. Rhythmic diminution takes place over a series of extensive modulations that lead to the third subject group is repeated (the whole section being a Carragan insertion that extends beyond the number of missing bars postulated by the Phillips team). Instead of the chorale being repeated on full brass, a modulatory *tutti* passage leads to the chorale theme, *p*, on a solo trumpet over the *Te Deum* accompaniment on *arco* strings. It is a magical idea; and ostensibly pure Bruckner, although the emerging score can be interpreted in a different way here as we will see. Unfortunately, the solo trumpet line is unnecessarily embellished by a spurious flute countermelody that although stated by Carragan to be derived from one of Bruckner's masses, actually sounds as if it may have been quoted from the passionate first theme of Tchaikovsky's sixth symphony! An extension of the chorale theme on full brass leads to the last of Bruckner's fragments.

From here, the movement finishes with music that is largely by Carragan, without the benefit of the SPCM team's extensive philological research. A bridge passage based on the inversion of the main theme (the quotation from the first symphony) moves straight into the *coda* which uses a *coda* figure from the first movement as a back-cloth for the *crescendo*.

This breaks onto a re-statement of the chorale harmony on horns, but not the actual melody. This is supported by elaborate harmonised insertions of the main theme of the movement on tubas and unfortunate shades of *Tannhäuser* in the trumpet harmony. This over-inflates the *coda* substantially, even if it is a very skilful counterfeit.

The final bars combine the chorale/‘*lebwohl*’ motif, an inversion of the *Te Deum* accompaniment figure, and the ‘*alleluia*’ motif from Bruckner’s *Psalm 150* of 1892 into an affirmatory conclusion, which unfortunately does not confirm victory or indeed does nothing to offset the overall mood of the work; at least not to this listener.

While Carragan inserted much speculative material into his completion, all of the allusions to past symphonies in this movement were put there by Bruckner himself. This only serves to reinforce the opinion that the composer was searching for a way of completing this vast work by recalling his past efforts. The fugal inspiration from fifth’s *finale*, because it was the most successful; the passage from the *finale* of the eighth which became the *lebwohl* of the ninth’s *adagio*; the first and third symphonies because he had most recently revised them wholesale, and they thus may have been fresher in his mind – and of course, that the first had always been a particular favourite.

Listening to the music in any completed form makes it clear (at least to me) that the obsessive idea of the last movement was consciously intended by Bruckner to be based on an inversion of the first theme from the first symphony, so that this theme in its different guises would begin and end what the composer saw as his symphonic utterance. If this is the case, what if anything is the actual significance of this phrase? Cohrs invests the dropping phrase with religious significance as a motif representing the cross, in the same way that Bach did in his Passions, but this must be purely speculative, especially if the phrase was reverse-engineered from the opening theme of the first symphony. We will probably never know. In any event, the dissonances of the completed three movements do not find their resolution here in what remains unmistakably Carragan’s much more diatonically pure view of the ninth symphony’s *finale*.

The version originally undertaken by Giuseppe Mazzuca and Nicola Samale in the 1980s, and then taken up and extended by John Phillips and Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs is

noticeably different in several important respects. Its overall shape and length is similar to Carragan's but the order of the incorporated fragments is slightly altered according to more recent scholarship. The mood of the interpolated sections was also altogether different. The 1995 so-called SPCM revision produces a sound that is more integrated than Carragan's early version, including as much of the original material as possible even from alternative versions of the same sketched section, whereas Carragan had suppressed parts of the sketches and had not included them in his completion. The result in the SPCM version is perhaps more in keeping with the harmonic brittleness of the first three movements. It also seems to be more successful in integrating the score fragments with thoughts about how these fragments may have been put together, especially as more recently revised by Cohrs and Samale. In this way, a cyclic feeling is introduced, in the same manner as for the eighth symphony *finale*.

iv) Misterioso – nicht schnell (SPCM version ed. Cohrs/Samale, 2005; Cohrs, 2010)

The introductory *forhoftechnik* of this version of the completed movement is developed from what the SPCM team thought was the intention in Bruckner's original final version of the exposition, although this unfortunately no longer extant. It starts over the same D timpani roll, and immediately, the violins give out a four-note dropping motif that is immediately bounced back in inversion by the clarinet. The clarinet response as we have seen has the contour, melodic shape and rhythm of the first subject of the first symphony. Whereas with Carragan (who reproduces what Bruckner wrote in the earlier exposition sketches) this process was repeated, there is only a single utterance of each question-and-answer phrase in the latest CM edition before a single restatement, at lower pitch. There are two more utterances at semitone distances, resulting in a slightly different and shorter opening to Carragan's - and indeed to the 1995 SPCM version where the last two were in the same key. This results in four utterances only of this dialogue rather than Carragan's six. The tiny horn and flute interlude from Bruckner's original and Carragan's edition does not appear in this version since it is not felt necessary in directing the melodic and harmonic lines. The foreshortened *crescendo* appears which brings an impressive unison downward-moving variant of the opening violin dotted theme. A short bridge via sombre block harmony on the brass leads to the *gesangsperiode*. This is built from the same musical idea as the main theme, and incorporates variants of the theme from other extant versions of the exposition for the sake of material variety. Clarinet ruminations on the opening theme lead to the strings

becoming more energetic. Brass rumblings reintroduce the timpani and a *crescendo* that is initiated by an inspired inversion of the introductory theme, making the first symphony provenance obvious, and introducing the resplendent third subject group. This is led by a brass chorale underpinned by swirling strings which transmutes the *adagio's* 'lebewohl' into the major in an attempt at affirmation. This harmonious chorale suddenly recedes on dissonant snarling brass onto the opening motto of the *Te Deum* of 1883 on a solo flute, and it is here that the first swathe of uninterrupted Bruckner's original music finishes.

The editors now extend the transition over the *Te Deum* motif punctuated by the opening theme rhythm in the bassoons. At this point in the construction of the music, its direction appears clear. A change of key initiates a developmental phase, and what is clearly intended to be an energetic passage. A dissonant trumpet accompanying figure over strings working up and down an arpeggio figure, using a minor ninth resolving into an octave is retained here, where it was toned down *à la* Schalk in Carragan's original version but retained in the latest.

We are now in an interpolated section leading to another Bruckner fragment. Development in this fragment is obviously taking place within the main Statement's framework. Strings become eloquent as the mood softens, and they rise up against intoning trumpets, leading into the introduction of the fugal section, built again on the opening dropping phrase. This initially sounds rather routine and uninspired, although the detail of the fugal extension in the most recent research does increase the interest level. It is almost as if Bruckner is trying to unite the symphony by attempting to emulate his success in the fifth's last movement; surely his most structurally successful *finale*, if not his greatest. The editors' fugal interpolation based on Bruckner's material bring a full statement of Bruckner's own material which brings in the welcome presence of the 'Bruckner rhythm' in the brass, following a genuinely Brucknerian passage which is startlingly similar to one in the *finale* of the sixth symphony.

Strings meander around the *gesangsperiode*, sorrowfully extending into the '*lebewohl*' on strings until they introduce yet another allusion to a previous symphony; the first movement of the third by way of the softer music we heard a moment previously. The Carragan-inserted ascent to the third subject group is not present here: the ascent is achieved by the use of the extension of the material that sounds as if it came from the third symphony. A Brucknerian modulatory *tutti* passage leads to the chorale theme which in the Carragan

version was presented *piano* on a solo trumpet (under that very odd solo flute, sounding as if it was reminiscing over the passionate violin theme from the Tchaikovsky *Pathétique*!) over the *Te Deum* accompaniment on *arco* strings. The SPCM editors have interpreted Bruckner's markings to mean *tutti* trumpets, since there is a marked *diminuendo* in the second phrase, which makes sense in performance terms.

The counter-statement's climax is preceded by use of sketches not used by Carragan in his original 1983 version, although Carragan has also now inserted them here, as their place in the score has now been confirmed by the order of the extant bi-folios. There is a pause after which the strings search upward using the first symphony motif, this time accompanied by the *lebwohl* on oboes. The editors achieve the climax itself by combining themes and rhythms from all four movements in the style of the eighth symphony, and although this is not explicitly indicated in the emerging score, it is impressively realised. It moves without a break into a restatement of the chorale theme, which then extends into a high plateau of sound which in the 2005 version ends in a dissonant climax reminiscent of the third movement and breaks off unfulfilled, into a deep chasm of a pause.

The coda steals in, immediately in the major with the *Te Deum* motif present in the strings. The brass ring out in affirmation and the coda comes to an impressive end with four-note 'hallelujahs' from the brass.

In 2010, Cohrs substantially changed his approach to the *coda*, shortening it considerably, and joining it onto the previous climax. The end of the movement here seems to come just a little too quickly given what has happened in the previous twenty minutes, and the swirling strings do not have the subsuming effect that they had in the 2005 version. For these reasons, my preference for the coda lies with the previous 2005 version.

iv) Misterioso – nicht schnell (Letocart, 2008)

As noted previously, the bulk of the movement occupies the sound-world of the later SPCM and Carragan completions, with what seems like much more active horn section; the differences arrive once we reach the transition to the *coda* and the *coda* itself. The recapitulation of the chorale theme arrives in similar fashion, with the Bruckner fragments in the same order as SPCM. Then there is a wrench; an acceleration, and a pause. Then we hear a slow meandering ascent as part of the transition to the coda which also builds to a climax,

and the first level of coda, where the chorale is underpinned by what sounds like an accompaniment figure straight out of the fifth symphony. Expansion and extension of some of the earlier harmonies bring us to the next coda level, where the upper strings shriek out their jagged figures from the first subject over slow jagged figures in deep brass. Again there is a pause, and harmonies reminiscent of the eighth symphony flit across the desolate landscape, followed by harmonies from the ninth's first movement. There is a crescendo based on an open fifth, and rhythmic diminution leads to a modulation from D minor to D major and a 'halleluja' motif derived from the middle section of the second movement's *trio*. The coda is therefore a substantial structure that seems to make the end of the movement top-heavy, and it just does not make the kind of glorious noise that the end of the eighth symphony does, by virtue of its magical modulation.

As we have seen, all of the allusions to past symphonies in this movement were put there by Bruckner, and the gaps have been filled in very impressive ways: speculative and perhaps some freely-composed sections by Carragan, and rigorously constructed music focused on what Bruckner actually left by Cohrs, Samale, Mazzuca and Phillips. Both completions only serve to reinforce the opinion that the composer was searching for a way of completing this vast work by recalling his past efforts. The fugal inspiration from fifth's *finale*, because it was the most successful; the passage from the *finale* of the eighth which became the *lebwohl* of the ninth's *adagio*; the third symphony because he had most recently revised it wholesale. The first symphony allusions are perhaps the most striking of all in the *adagio* and *finale*, given the insistent nature of the quotations from the main theme of the first movement.

There is one other 'version' that should be mentioned in passing. In 2006, conductor Peter Jan Marthé produced what was referred to as a free re-composition of the ninth symphony's *finale* incorporating material from the sketches, which was marketed as 'Bruckner Reloaded'. We will not deal extensively with this composition here, as much of it has little to do with what Bruckner left. There are a few snatches of the half-hour composition that clearly do come from Bruckner's fragments as signposts to where we are in the movement, the main ones being the two appearances of the *chorale* theme in the statement

and counter-statement. The remainder however appears to bear little relation to Bruckner's sound-world or intent as documented in the emerging score of the *finale*.

The finale in context

Thus we arrive at the speculative end-points of these re-constructions; completions – the various editors term them differently. The journey taken to reach them has been different and the structure of the edifice viewed, also different. The obvious differences are plain; to take the actual sketches first: the Phillips team incorporates them into the completed movement order as Bruckner left them, and develops them in what is deemed to be the most philologically correct way. This is actually very helpful in identifying what is *echt* Bruckner and what is not, both from the perspectives of signposts within the Phillips team's own version and indicators of what is original Bruckner. Carragan took a slightly different view of the sketches in 1983 in that although they were essentially as Bruckner left them, Carragan extended and sanitized them as a basis for his version. Thus there were parts added to the orchestration and alterations of some of the harmonic backdrop, and some of the harmonic trends themselves. This has been changed in the recent editions to give a much more stark version that is closely aligned with the SPCM team's thinking.

In the Phillips team's version the initial exposition section seems to be slightly altered and 'regularised' as seen in the utterances of the initial theme, and the inferred harmonic trend at the end of the original sketch is adjusted to make a transition into the next sketch possible. Where this differs from Carragan is that the order of the sketches is not exactly the same and thus the harmony needs to be re-directed. The interpolated sections are expertly done but the mood of the music is disturbed by the dissonances present, as it was in the previous completed movements. The '*lebwohl*' chorale truly seems to have a battle on its hands in the SPCM version.

The transition to the coda and the coda itself in the SPCM version do not appear to even attempt the kind of glorious ending on the scale originally envisaged by Carragan, even in its latest version. In Samale and Mazzuca's original, elements of first movement motifs mingle with the chorale descent in a passage strikingly similar to the coda of the eighth in execution, but in frightening harmony with the *Te Deum* shape battling away in the background. A cadential passage regularly used in the eighth's *finale* moves the music into its final moments with the brass howling in bare fifths as they did at the close of the first

movement. There is little resolution here in the Carragan style; the music is as troubled as it was in the first movement. The later SPCM version uses the identified coda sketches to build a more affirmatory ending, even though it is dissonant in keeping with the remainder of the symphony. The Cohrs/Samale revision from 2005 removes the allusions to the first movement completely from the coda, save for the passage where themes from all four movements are combined.

In the context of the symphony as a whole then, perhaps the Phillips team's interpretation of what the musical endpoint was thought to have been, is the more convincing – which is not to say that the completions by Carragan and Letocart are not impressive achievements in their own right – apart from the spurious and unnecessary flute and brass countermelody interpolations in Carragan's coda. Indeed as has been indicated, Phillips has referred to the concept of the *adagio* followed by a completed *finale* as 'death and purgatory'. This is not to denigrate Carragan's redemptory coda, which may be convincing in terms of the movement in isolation but perhaps not in terms of the symphony as a whole.

Whichever version appeals to the listener and whatever the shortcomings of its original material are however, a 'completed' ninth symphony with a *finale* is without doubt a very valuable addition to Bruckner knowledge in understanding where the composer may have gone musically, had he lived further.