

The Scholz Recording of the Bruckner Symphony No. 9

My attempts to track down the missing first movement.

The dilemma: How does one find the missing movement from a recording that was made fifty years ago when the conductor was a pseudonym, the orchestra was a "pick-up" ensemble, and you don't know who made the recording? As discussed in other parts of this discography, the recordings produced by Alfred Scholz have created a great deal of confusion as to the orchestra used and the conductors who led this ensemble.

It is important to understand what Scholz had in mind for these recordings; They were to be offered to record producers for low budget releases (supermarket sales, etc.) It was Scholz's hope to license these recordings more than once so he soon began to use pseudonyms for the conductors (real names and imaginary) and a few other names for the orchestra just to keep his catalog unique to his buyers. Of course, it is entirely possible that the record manufacturers changed the names as well. Scholz set up studios in Schloss Klessheim, near Salzburg. While the conductors seem to vary, just about all of the records offer the South German Philharmonic as the ensemble. It is believed that most of the musicians employed in this "pick-up" orchestra were members of the German Philharmonic of Prague who were expelled from Czechoslovakia after World War II and later became the core of the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra. Other local musicians may have been employed as well. More recently, it has been determined that Scholz was also accustomed to licensing (or stealing) existing recordings.

The difficulty with the Bruckner Symphony No. 9 is that an error was made in the mastering soon after the recording sessions. Recordings in the 1960's were usually mastered on open reel tape at 38 cm./sec. (15 inches/sec.) Hubs of tape were usually 1000 meters in length thus giving the recording engineer approximately 43 minutes of recording time per reel. It was common practice in recording works the length of a Bruckner symphony to place one movement on one reel of tape. For this Bruckner 9th, there would have been three reels. Apparently, during the mastering process, the engineer got confused and created the "running master tape" incorrectly, accidentally substituting the 3rd movement for the first movement and then re-using the 3rd movement again at the conclusion. This error would have occurred back in the 1960's. It is unimaginable that the orchestra neglected to record the first movement. It was certainly recorded, but apparently it has never seen the light of day on a commercial release.

What is surprising is that no one seems to catch the error at this early stage. The recording was subsequently released on a Euphoria LP with the incorrect movement sequence. It later showed up on a Highland LP and cassette with the incorrect sequence. It appeared on several European releases as well and finally (in the 1990's) it was released on a Point CD in the incorrect sequence. The Point recording (catalog No. 265010-2) featured the Sudddeutsche Philharmonie conducted by "Cesare Cantieri." Several years ago, I contacted Point Classics (in Malibu, California) and advised them of the error. They eventually repaired the error by re-issuing the CD (under the same catalog number) with the Evgeny Mravinsky / Leningrad Philharmonic recording that was made on January 30, 1980. This recording has also shown up on several different labels. Point went so far as to place the new artists on the CD cover, but the back tray card continued to offer Cantieri as the conductor and offered the original movement timings.

I contacted Point Classics again since their website (that allows one to sample the files offered for licensing) continued to have the III-II-III sequencing error. I spoke with a very cooperative young woman who recognized the problem and promised to check with their archivist in Germany about the missing movement. A few days later, she wrote back with the startling news that they had the first movement! While the recording was being transferred, discussion began concerning my ability to license the recordings for a limited release to Bruckner enthusiasts. When the recording arrived; however, all enthusiasm faded when it turned out that the Bruckner 9th first movement recording was that performed by Mravinsky. She then advised me that the library that Point Classics purchased had all been digitized back in the '90's and that no analogue tapes were available to them.

So the quest continued. The problem is that this recording was not done by a pre-existing record company (such as DGG or EMI) so there is no place to look for the original masters. There is no data available that says where these recordings were made and which company originally recorded them. There is no official conductor and no official orchestra to contact. It appeared that we had hit a brick wall and that the first movement from the Alfred Scholz Bruckner Ninth was not to be heard.

Jump ahead nine years. Just before going to bed one night, I received an e-mail from a collector in California. Just by pure coincidence he was auditioning two recordings of the Bruckner Symphony No. 2. One was a recent download from my site of the Hans Swarowsky / South German Philharmonic / Alfred Scholz recording. We knew that Swarowsky wasn't the conductor, but that was the name that Ampex put on their commercial tape release. The other recording was one that he had recently acquired in an aircheck trade. It featured Erich Schmid and the Southwest German Radio Symphony Orchestra. He was startled by the similarity and that was the gist of his e-mail to me.

The next morning, I pulled out both recordings and did a careful comparison. My colleague had noticed how similar they were musically, I zeroed in on non-musical elements (knocks, chair squeeks, etc.). They were indeed the same!

So this opened up a whole new avenue of investigation. This recording of the Bruckner 2nd was not by a pick-up orchestra, it was the SW German Radio Symphony Orchestra. If the Symphony No. 2 was a SWF recording, could the other Bruckner Symphonies be from the same source?

I contacted a colleague at the Deutsch Rundfunkarchiv in Frankfurt and asked if he could check his database. Within minutes, I had a listing of the SWF Bruckner recordings from the 1960s. The Erich Schmid Bruckner 2nd was there (in stereo), there was a bunch of Hans Rosbaud recordings (in monaural) and there was one Bruckner Ninth in stereo. Stanislaw Skrowaczewski conducted the SWF SO in the Symphony No. 9 in January of 1965. Fortunately, I had this recording in my archive since the original broadcast was offered on a Japanese pirate CDR. I pulled out the recording and compared the second and third movements with those on the Point / Cantieri / South German Philharmonic CD. Without any doubt, this was the same recording! So we now knew who the true performers were and we had the missing first movement. A fifteen year quest was finally solved.

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