SYMPHONISCHES PRÄLUDIUM – COMPOSED BY ANTON BRUCKNER?

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***Symphonisches Praeludium* in C Minor**
»Rudolf Krzyzanowski cop. 1876« / »von Anton Bruckner«
Facsimile and Score, edited by Wolfgang Hiltl.
Doblinger/Vienna, 2002; STP 704, ISMN 012-18981-7
(score on sale; orchestral parts on hire)

The history of this ouverture-like symphonic movement in C-minor of 293 bars length, ascribed to Anton Bruckner, is most curious: After the Second World War, the Viennese composer Heinrich Tschuppik discovered an unknown, music manuscript in the estate of his uncle, the composer Rudolf Krzyzanowski (5 April 1859 – 21 June 1911). He was a pupil of Anton Bruckner and is known to Brucknerians because he, together with Gustav Mahler, prepared the Piano Arrangement of Bruckner's Third Symphony. The manuscript constitutes an orchestral score of 43 pages, bearing the inscript »Rudolf Krzyzanowski cop. 1876« on the first page, and on the last page, in large, blue letters, »von Anton Bruckner«. Tschuppik immediately reported in public about his finding («Ein neu aufgefundenes Werk Anton Bruckners», in: *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* 88/1948, p. 391; «Bruckners *Sinfonisches Praeludium*», in: *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 8 September 1949). He also prepared his own, clean copy of the score, copied out orchestral parts, and also arranged a four stave particello of the movement in two copies. Tschuppik had also shown the piece to Bruckner scholars Max Auer and Franz Graeflinger, and as well to the Swiss conductor Volkmar Andreae. Their opinion on Bruckner's authorship was positive, and Andreae agreed to give the first performance of the piece – meanwhile entitled *Sinfonisches Praeludium* by Tschuppik – with the Vienna Philharmonic (23 January 1949).

This performance, however, did not take place, as reported by Helmut Albert Fiechtner («Verhinderte Bruckner-Urauffuehrung», in: *Die Oesterreichische Furche*, Wien, 29 January 1949): The members of the Vienna Philharmonic voted against Bruckner as the likely composer of the piece, and Leopold Nowak, who had been asked for his expertise in due course, was not able to come to a final result and asked the orchestra to publish a note that he »couldn't finish yet the examination«. Indeed, on 3 January 1949, Tschuppik had given Krzyzanowski's manuscript to the Music Collection of the *Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek* (Austrian National Library = ANL), where a photocopy was made, the manuscript returned to him thereafter. Finally, the Munich Philharmonic under Fritz Rieger gave the premiere of the piece (7 September 1949). Shortly after this first performance, Tschuppik died (1950), and the public and scientific debate about the piece ended. Tschuppik's clean copy, his handwritten orchestral parts, and a photocopy of the four stave particello remained sleeping in the drawers of the archive of the Munich Philharmonic. The original piece was never performed again since then. Krzyzanowski's original manuscript remained in the possession of his descendants until the late Eighties. The photocopy of it was never entered in the inventory at the Music Collection of the ANL. Instead, Nowak kept it in his private possession. It was found amongst his estate and returned into the Music Collection only after his death in May 1991. Nowak also never published the expertise he had been asked for in 1949. This had some strange and remarkable consequences.

In 1948, Tschuppik had given some of the manuscripts of songs composed by his uncle as well as another copy of his own particello arrangement of the *Praeludium* to a Mrs. Gertrud Staub-Schlaepfer in Zurich. She studied the piece and came to a strange conclusion, which she wrote on top of the particello

herself: »Koennte das nicht eine Arbeit f. Pruefung von Gustav Mahler sein? Krzyzanowski gab den Klavierauszug zur dritten Symphonie Bruckners (2. Fassung) heraus mit Mahler zusammen.« (»Could this perhaps be composed by Gustav Mahler for his examination? Krzyzanowski edited the piano arrangement of Bruckner's Third Symphony (second version) together with Mahler.«) On 7 September 1949 – half a year after Nowak had made the photocopy of the original score and, strangely, on the very day of the first and since then only performance of the *Praeludium* in Munich – she gave all this material which she had received from Tschuppik to the Music Collection of the ANL, perhaps with the positive intention to contribute to the solution of the question who actually composed the piece which Krzyzanowski copied.

The Sleeping Beauty remained behind the thorns for thirty years. Then the Mahler scholar Paul Banks discovered the Particello from the possession of Mrs. Staub-Schlaepfer in the Music Collection of the ANL and published an article in due course («An Early Symphonic Prelude by Mahler?» in: *19th Century Music 3*/1979, p. 141ff). Nowak never returned the photocopy of the score into the Music Collection; Krzyzanowski's original manuscript was at that time still in private possession. Banks didn't even know anything about the first performance in 1949 (and certainly not about the existence of the full material in the Archive of the Munich Philharmonic!). So he assumed the Particello to be the only source for the piece and finally followed the suggestion of Mrs. Staub-Schlaepfer, arguing that the piece could be indeed one of the numerous lost works which Gustav Mahler had composed during his time at the Vienna Conservatory. Hence, a ›lost piece by Gustav Mahler‹ was ›re-discovered‹, and since the Particello was the only known source, Berlin composer Albrecht Guersching was asked to make the movement performable and complement the instrumentation. This ›reconstruction‹ was first performed by the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra under Lawrence Foster (15 March 1981) as ›Symphonisches Praeludium by Gustav Mahler‹.

Only thanks to the German Kapellmeister Wolfgang Hiltl (Niedernhausen), the truth came to the light in 1985, when he published a lengthy study on the piece, which he had discovered in the archive of the Munich Philharmonic («Ein vergessenes, unerkanntes Werk Anton Bruckners?», in: *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft / Beihefte der Denkmaeler der Tonkunst in Oesterreich*, Vol. 36, Tutzing 1985). Unfortunately this truth seems to be unwanted: His article was largely ignored by musicology; the ›Mahlerization‹ was subsequently recorded (prominently by Neeme Jaervi for Chandos) and published by Sikorski, Berlin, where it remains in the catalogue as Mahler's piece, occasionally performed as such. The time and effort Hiltl put into a campaign for the original is remarkable: he published not only further articles, he also bought Krzyzanowski's original manuscript in the Nineties from Tschuppik's family, examined and edited it. Since 2002, the music has been available from Doblinger, Vienna. The full-size score contains both a facsimile of Krzyzanowski's manuscript as well as a modern edition; the parts are available on hire. Nevertheless, and strangely, the piece remains to be unperformed to this day (2006)!

This is hard to understand. On the one hand, one may argue we have only Krzyzanowski's copy and his word that this music was composed by Bruckner. Documentary research gave no further evidence; no further manuscripts from Bruckner's own hand survive, and also in his letters and private annotations nothing is to be found about it. (An explanation for this may be that Bruckner, before he moved into the Belvedere in July 1895, had asked his secretary Anton Meissner to burn various old papers, obviously including many discarded music manuscripts.) On the other hand, it seemed to be no problem for many conductors and writers to accept the piece as allegedly by Mahler, in its second-hand-orchestration by Albrecht Guersching, and even pepped up with some untypical, special instruments (Piccolo, Double-Bassoon, Harp, Cymbal). Krzyzanowski's copy is laid out only for Bruckner's typical orchestra of double Woodwind, four Horns, two Trumpets, three Trombones, Bass-Tuba, Timpani, and Strings.

Wolfgang Hiltl undertook a meticulous examination of the manuscript and analysis of the music in the mirror of Bruckner's contemporary pieces. He came finally to the conclusion that the most likely assumption would be that Bruckner had given a score to Krzyzanowski which he may have already abandoned at the time of its gestation – perhaps as an exercise in instrumentation. From stylistic comparison and analysis it seems to be clear that at least the entire musical substance is by Bruckner himself, most likely in the first stage of the »emerging autograph score«, containing all String parts, some important lines for Woodwind and Brass, perhaps also a few passages being already entirely complete – very similar to what survived from the Finale of the Ninth Symphony. (Wolfgang Hiltl: «Einsichten zu einer Musik im Jahrhundertschlaf», in: *Studien & Berichte, Mitteilungsblatt 63 der IBG*, December 2004, p. 13–16). Krzyzanowski then completed the instrumentation. His copy also contains some annotations possibly from Bruckner's own hand, and some further from another, unknown person. (The playing indications are obviously not by Bruckner, all very enthusiastically youthful, up to ***ffff***, that Bruckner never used.)

There is not enough room in a short essay for a detailed description of the music. However, it seems clear from Hiltl's stylistic examination that the musical material itself is indeed all Bruckner's, and in particular because some of these ideas even anticipate some music from the Ninth Symphony, which certainly nobody can have known already in 1876! The form is quite unique – all three themes are merely lyrical (as later in the first movement of the Seventh Symphony). The first theme contains the core of the Main Themes of the First and Second Symphony in C minor, as well as allusions to Wagner's *Walkuere*, which Bruckner may have known from the piano score of 1865, or some orchestral extracts given in concerts in Vienna in 1872. (He first heard the entire *Walkuere* in Bayreuth in August 1876, which may suggest the *Praeludium* could be the composer's reaction to the *Ring*-experience. But this would leave only very little time for the conception and abandoning of it, and it being given to Krzyzanowski for copying, all in late-1876.) The soft first theme is, as being typical for Bruckner, repeated in full tutti (b. 43), leading into a dark chorale (b. 59, pre-shadowing the structure of the chorale theme from the Finale of the Ninth Symphony), and even a significant epilogue (b. 73), further to be used in the development (b. 160). The second theme (b. 87) reflects some ideas of the Third Symphony, and in particular the famous *miserere* of the D minor Mass as well. The closing theme is an energetic trumpet call with a repeated, remarkable minor Ninth, as at the beginning of the Adagio from the Ninth Symphony, also pre-shadowing the Trumpets at the end of the first movement of this work to be composed some 25 years later. The second part (b. 148) brings two elements from the main theme in variants, similar as in the first movement of the Ninth, leading into a threefold outburst of it in the dominant (b. 195), tonic (b. 201) and subdominant (b. 207). The recapitulation of the second theme is in fact a fugue (b. 221), with a development section which again reflects the Third Symphony (b. 249ff), leading into a climax, in which both first and second themes appear simultaneously (b. 267). The rather short coda is merely a final cadence with almost no thematic material left, only reflecting the earlier third theme, but not as a minor Ninth, but a repeated chain of minor Seconds (one may assume that this elaboration by Krzyzanowski, which sounds rather provisional, may have been filled up later with more concise motivic derivations, as tried out by Guersching in his unnecessary arrangement of the score).

It is impossible to know exactly for which purpose this short, serious movement was originally written. Due to stylistic similarities with compositions of that period, a likely assumption would be that it was conceived already in 1875 or 1876, at a time when Bruckner undertook various efforts to improve his financial situation and to push his own career. An official occasion for introducing such a piece might have been Bruckner's new post at the Vienna University (1875), the inauguration of the new Mauracher organ in St. Florian (19 November 1875), or the concert, in which Bruckner himself conducted again the now-revised Second Symphony in C minor (20 February 1876).

The score includes the Bass-Tuba, which Bruckner did not use before his Fifth Symphony (composed 1875/6, revised 1877/8). The first critical edition includes some revisions by Wolfgang Hiltl, in particular a more Brucknerian layout of playing indications and a correction of the most obvious shortcomings of Krzyzanowski's score. Since the edition contains both Krzyzanowski's score and the modern transcription, the editor found it unnecessary to include a ›Critical Commentary‹, which would only list all the differences which could be more easily taken from comparing it directly with the manuscript. Unfortunately the edition does not provide much information, except a short preface by the editor. His early essay from 1985 is not widely available. A new, comprehensive and generally available study on the entire topic would be most welcome.

In all, this Symphonic Prelude constitutes an extremely advanced, ›experimental‹ sonata movement, with a dramatic, almost radical second part combining development, recapitulation and coda to a unified and radical »zweite Abtheilung«. The musical language and structure, the dramatic sweep anticipates much of Bruckner's last composition, the symphonic choralwork *Helgoland* (1893). The musical quality of the score as surviving in Krzyzanowski's copy would deserve attention, performance and recording even if we had no hint at all that it might possibly be from Bruckner (note that Krzyzanowski himself never wrote something of a comparable originality). It is hard to understand why the beauty continues to sleep till this day.

Postscriptum 2010

In 2008, Wolfgang Hiltl died unexpectedly in a hospital in Wiesbaden. Nobody cared for his assets, and in November 2008, his appartment was finally cleared by the municipality of his last residence, Niedernhausen. The mysterious, valuable manuscript of the Symphonic Prelude ended on a garbage slope …