



The Life of Anton Bruckner

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Bruckner, Anton (1824-1896) – composer, organist, one of the greatest Austrian composers of symphonies of the 19th century.

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from CHORD AND DISCORD
A JOURNAL OF MODERN MUSICAL PROGRESS
Published by the Bruckner Society of America, Inc.
in January, 1940 – (Vol. 2, No.1)

Like Franz Schubert, Anton Bruckner springs from a line of Austrian schoolmasters. In the pleasantly situated village of Ansfelden, not far from the town of Linz, Bruckner's grandfather Joseph and his father Anton had both devoted their lives to the drab duties of rustic pedagogy, at that time still considered a hereditary occupation among provincials. Hence the arrival on earth of Anton himself on September 4, 1824, meant in the normal course of things merely a fresh candidate for the abundant miseries of schoolmastership.

As early as his fourth year the tiny "Tonerl," like Haydn a century before him, showed his undeniable musical bent, for even then he could bring forth intelligible music from a little fiddle and (to quote an old Ansfelder's naive characterization of these first signs of composer's fancy) "could often be heard humming or whistling unknown tunes."

With the dawn of schooling the child showed a hearty dislike for all classroom activities, except the "Singstunde," an hour which seemed for him filled with irresistible enchantment. Of course, he received many a whipping for his backwardness in all extra-musical studies.

As tradition demanded of the village school-teacher, Father Bruckner had also to play the organ in church, and it is doubtless owing to his efforts that Anton at ten knew enough about the organ to attract the attention of a good musician in a nearby village. Under this man Weiss, a cousin of the family, the boy then earnestly studied musical theory and organ-playing for two years. Remarkably enough, the organ preludes he composed during that period exhibit a freedom of expression which deserted him all through his subsequent decades of theoretical study not to return again unimpaired until his years of maturity as a symphonist.

The death of his father in 1837, leaving eleven children (Anton being the eldest) rendered it imperative for his mother to accept the refuge offered the gifted boy as *Saengerknabe* in the sacred music school of St. Florian. The four impressionable years he spent there learning how to play the organ, piano, and violin, and mastering the elements of musical theory doubtless stamped his entire character, musical and otherwise, with a fervent piety which no later influence ever dimmed. Even when the conflict

of suffering and passion rages highest in his monumental symphonic first and last movements, a sudden naive appeal direct to heaven through austere trombone chorales points back to the influence of those early years of unquestioning devotion and zeal at St. Florian.

Yet at this time the idea of music as a life-work seems hardly to have entered the boy's mind. His father had been a schoolmaster; he too must become one. To further this aim he added to his arduous music courses private studies in academic subjects, finally gaining admission to the teachers' preparatory school at Linz.

Though even a brief ten months spent in learning what a pious child must not be taught proved trying to so human a soul as young Bruckner, he passed his examination for a position at seventeen and set out for the first scene of his teaching career, the world-forsaken mountain-village of Windhaag. Here, as assistant village teacher and organist, he was to receive the munificent monthly wage of two gulden (less than eighty cents). Additional attractive features of his work were that he must help in the field during "spare" time and breakfast with the maid servant.

In spite of these crushing handicaps the youth seems not to have been altogether unhappy, for he found the village-folk friendly. An especial joy was the folk-life and dancing, with its opportunity for a new, fascinating kind of music making. In this pleasant life the youth gladly joined, playing the fiddle at dances and absorbing those rustic, rhythmic strains which the Midas-touch of his genius later turned into incomparably vital and humorous symphonic scherzos.

The ancient calm of the village church services was frequently interrupted by the new organist whose marked leaning towards dramatic harmonies was irrepressible. His experience with the startled villagers in this respect was much like that of the great Bach himself, who was once officially reproved for his fantastic modulatory interpolations during the ritual music.

Yet Bruckner's innate musicianship must have dawned even upon the ignorant villagers, for this word has come down about it direct from the lips of an old Ansfelder, "Yes, that fellow Bruckner was a devilish fine musician!" Then, as an afterthought, in the light of a teacher's unhappy lot, "I wouldn't let any son of mine become a teacher. No, sir! Much better be a cobbler!"

One day Bruckner, who was absent-minded, forgot to attend to some menial chore in the field and for punishment he was transferred to the still smaller village of Kronsdorf.

The teacher's demotion proved the musician's promotion, however, for the little "nest" lay only an hour distant from two historic towns, Enns and Steyr. The latter was noted for its fine organ and soon became the object of the youth's frequent pilgrimages. In Enns, moreover, lived the celebrated organist von Zanetti, a fine musician, who now became Bruckner's new master of theory. All his compositions during this period bear the modest character of occasional church music.

Completely humbled in the face of superior knowledge the zealous student was content to obey implicitly the so-called laws of music. Infinite thoroughness, the sole path to perfection, became an obsession with him. Trustingly he allowed the incredibly long veil of years of academic self-suppression to fall over his genius.

Meanwhile he had been preparing himself for the final examination for a regular schoolmaster's license. At length, in May 1845, he passed the test, and experienced the good fortune of an immediate appointment to St. Florian, the happy haven of his earlier youth.

The texts and dedications "to the beautiful days of young love" of several of his songs and piano pieces in those days tell us that Bruckner met his first "flame," young Antonie Werner, soon after his appointment as teacher at St. Florian. Yet sentiment was but short-lived in the heart of this youth whose insatiable yearning for musical knowledge swept aside all other considerations. At this time, too, there began to unfold that magnificent gift of his for free improvisation on the organ, the gift with which he in later years held audiences spellbound, even as Beethoven and Bach had done before him.

In 1851 the post of organist at St. Florian was declared vacant and Bruckner, who had for some time been occupying it as substitute, was officially appointed thereto. By then he had reached the comparatively affluent state of eighty gulden per year, plus free rent, and one of his dearest wishes had at last been realized: he was master of the finest organ in the world. Determined to become a virtuoso of the keyboard he made it a habit to practice ten hours a day on the piano and three hours on the organ.

At St. Florian in 1849, he composed his Requiem in D-minor, the only early work deserving classification with his mature accomplishments.

Desiring to obtain a license to teach in "main schools" he continued his academic studies, stressing Latin, and in 1851 successfully passed that examination as well.

In 1853 he had made his first trip to Vienna in the hope of laying the ghost of doubt that would ever loom up in his soul as to the lifework he had chosen. This doubt had even led him to consider giving up music altogether, for he once applied for a clerical position in Linz, claiming in his letter that he had been preparing himself for several years for such a vocation. Fortunately, wise counsel induced him to forget such thoughts and to apply himself anew to theoretical studies. From this decision date his amazing years of self-imposed confinement in the contrapuntal chains forged by the famous Viennese musical grammarian, Simon Sechter. There is this to say for the almost incomprehensible devotion of the superannuated schoolboy Anton to his text-book lessons, that only such hard prescribed work could dispel the torturing doubts which lurked grimly at the threshold of his consciousness.

In January, 1856, having been persuaded to take part in an open competition for the vacant post of organist at the Cathedral in Linz, he easily carried off the honors, astonishing all by his incredible powers of improvisation on given themes.

During the first few of the twelve years he served as organist in Linz, Bruckner made practically no efforts at original composition, burying himself heart and soul in the contrapuntal problems heaped upon him by the pedantic Sechter. During the periods of Advent and Lent, the Cathedral organ being silent, Bishop Rudigier, who greatly admired Bruckner's genius, permitted him to go to Vienna to pursue (in person) the studies which throughout the year had to be left to the uncertain benefits of a correspondence course.

One may get some inkling of the stupendous physical and mental labor involved in "studying," as Bruckner interpreted the term, if one believes the evidence advanced by eye-witnesses, who assert that the piles of written musical exercises in the "student's" room reached from the floor to the keyboard of his piano. "For those who think this incredible there is the written word of the unimpeachable Sechter himself to the following effect. Upon receiving from Bruckner in a single installment seventeen bookfuls of written exercises, he warned him against "too great an intellectual strain," and lest his admonition be taken in ill part by the student, the teacher added

the comforting, indubitable assurance: "I believe I never had a more serious pupil than you."

Eloquent of Bruckner's Herculean labors in the realm of musical grammar and rhetoric during those years is the list of examinations to which he insisted upon subjecting himself (after typical Bruckneresque preparation). After two years of work, on July 10, 1858, he passed Sechter's test in Harmony and Thorough-bass. Of the text-book he studied (now a treasured museum possession) not a single leaf remained attached to the binding. Then on August 12, 1859, he passed Elementary Counterpoint; April 3, 1860, Advanced Counterpoint; March 26, 1861, Canon and Fugue. Thereupon he remarked, "I feel like a dog which has just broken out of his chains."

Now came the crowning trial of all, one without which he could not be sure of himself. He begged for permission to submit his fund of accomplishments to the judgment of the highest musical tribunal in Europe, a commission consisting of Vienna's five recognized Solons of musical law (today all turned to names or less than names). The request was granted and Bruckner accorded the grace of choosing the scene of "combat."

Such final tests of "maturity," not uncommon in Vienna, were usually of a somewhat stereotyped nature, but in the case of this extraordinary candidate the occasion assumed an epic cast.

Bruckner had chosen for the scene of his grand trial the interior of the Piaristen-Kirche. Had Wagner been present, he might have been reminded of the examination of Walter by the Meistersinger, which he was even then planning. The customary short theme was written down by one judge and submitted to the others for approval; but one of these maliciously doubled it in length, at once changing a mere test of scholarship to a challenge of mastery.

The slip— of paper was then passed down to the expectant candidate seated at the organ. For some moments he regarded it earnestly, while the judges, misinterpreting the cause of delay, smiled knowingly.

Suddenly, however, Bruckner began, first playing a mere introduction composed of fragments of the given theme, gradually leading to the required fugue itself. Then was heard a fugue—not such a fugue as might be expected from an academic graduate, but a living contrapuntal Philippic, which pealed forth ever more majestic to strike the astonished ears of the

foxy judicial quintet with the authoritative splendor of a lion's voice bursting forth from the jungle.

"He should examine us!" exclaimed one judge enthusiastically. "If I knew a tenth of what he knows, I'd be happy!"

Then, being asked to improvise freely on the organ, Bruckner exhibited so fine a fantasy that the same judge cried: "And we're asked to test him? Why, he knows more than all of us together!"

This man's name was Herbeck, and he was from that moment Bruckner's greatest musical friend. Unfortunately he died too soon to be of much help to the struggling composer.

Of great advantage to Bruckner during his Linzian years was the opportunity afforded him for the first time to try his hand at "worldly" music, for church-music had monopolized his attention ever since his earliest boyhood.

The choral society "Frohsinn" chose him as director in 1860. Through this association, on May 12, 1861, Bruckner made his first concert appearance as composer with an "Ave Maria" for seven voices.

He struck up a friendship with the young conductor at the theatre and was appalled at the realization that all his earnest years of academic study were mere child's play beside the practical musical craftsmanship of this brilliant young exponent of the "modern" school. Eagerly he gave himself into the care of this new teacher. Otto Kitzler. From the regaling analysis of Beethoven's sonatas, Kitzler led his enthusiastic disciple to the study of instrumentation, introducing him to the beauties of the *Tannhaeuser* score. Here Bruckner was given his first glimpse of a new world of music, the very existence of which he had scarcely suspected. In 1863, finally convinced that he was ready to face the musical world alone, he took leave of Kitzler and the last of his long years of preparation.

Those years are perhaps unique in the annals of mortal genius, at least in those of Western civilization. The naive modesty of a great artist already within sight of middle age burying himself more desperately than any schoolboy in the mass of antiquated musical dogma prescribed by a "Dr. Syntax" would be at once labeled in these psychoanalytic days as a sample of the workings of an inferiority complex. But Bruckner's had been a church-life, his language a church idiom, and in the light of this, is it illogical to claim that his particular preparation had to differ from that of

other symphonists as the architecture of a cathedral differs from that of a palace or villa?

In short, without those drab years of study mistakenly termed "belated," the tremendous symphonic formal concepts of Bruckner might never have been realized.

Of significance in the contemplation of his spiritual affinity to Wagner is the fact that an Overture in G-minor (composed by Bruckner in 1863) closes with the still unknown "Feuerzauber," not that either master plagiarized the other, but that the caprice of nature which set two such gigantic figures side by side in the same generation must not be ignored. It is truly a cause for human gratitude that sublime accident granted the one the faculty it denied the other. Epic as is the expression of both these Titans, Wagner's helplessness in the field of the symphony is as notorious as Bruckner's in that of the music drama. The future will simply have to regard the two composers as kindred in spirit, but supplementary in achievement.

The music of *Tannhaeuser* sang into Bruckner's ears a veritable proclamation of independence. Thus, Wagner, whom he had as yet never seen, set him free at a mere spiritual touch, spurring him to unrestrained self-expression. With the very first effort of this new-born Bruckner, the glorious Mass in D, the world was endowed with an initial major work surpassed in-depth and brilliancy perhaps by no other in the entire range of music. Inspired by *Tannhaeuser*, if you will, yet sounding not the slightest echo of its strains, the Mass abounds in fine passages, unjustly dubbed Wagnerian, for they could not as yet have had any prototype. The opening *Adagio*, built up on the theme of the *Liebestod* (a year before the first performance of *Tristan*), the music accompanying the settling down of the dove at the end of *Parsifal* (nineteen years before the first performance), the "Fall of the Gods" and the "Spear-motive" from the *Ring* (twelve years before Bayreuth), these anticipatory touches should, injustice, be viewed, not as Wagnerisms, but rather as forerunners of the new epic spirit that was just rising in music.

The composition of this masterpiece took only three months. After the first performance, in the Cathedral at Linz, November 20, 1864, the Bishop Rudigier was heard to remark: "During that mass I could not pray." Indeed, so profound was the impression the work made, that it was given a "concert" performance by general request. Shortly after, achieving a veritable triumph. Bruckner's success was proudly reported in the Viennese

papers, for it was good publicity for the "home" conservatory of which he had been "one of the best pupils."

Elated by his success Bruckner at once began working on his first symphony. That year (1865) May 15 had been set aside in Munich for the greatest musical— event of the century, the initial performance of *Tristan*. Naturally, Bruckner made the trip to the Bavarian capital and when, owing to the illness of Isolde (Frau Schnorr), the event was postponed till the tenth of June, he decided to await the great day in the city. There he had the fortune to be presented to Wagner himself, who at once took a liking to the serious, honest Austrian, inviting him to spend many an evening in the famous Wagnerian "circle." Von Buelow became Bruckner's first confidant when the latter shyly showed the great pianist the first three movements of his growing symphony. Von Buelow was so astonished at the splendor and freshness of the ideas in this new score that he could not refrain from communicating his enthusiasm to the great Richard, much to Bruckner's embarrassment, for when Wagner asked in person to see the symphony, so great was the awe in which the younger composer stood of the "Master of all masters" that he could not summon up the courage to show it to him. He shrank from such a step as though it had been a sacrilege. So naive was his hero-worship of the master that he could not even be induced to sit down in Wagner's presence. No wonder, then, that after the *Tristan* performance Wagner became for Bruckner a veritable religion. Yet for this faith the younger man was condemned to suffer such abuse as has fallen to the lot of no other in the annals of art. He was to write nine mighty symphonies, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, for from man he was destined to receive not reward, but neglect, scorn, and spiritual abuse beyond measure.

On April 14, 1866, Bruckner's first symphony was complete, ready to announce to a skeptical world that the supreme instrumental form had not culminated in Beethoven. True enough, it was from the immortal *Fifth* of Beethoven, that Parnassus of musical classicism, that this new master drew the spiritual motto for all his symphonic efforts. Each of his symphonies might be described as an ascent *per aspera ad astra*. Through the logical order of the four movements he unfolded the panorama of the trials of the human soul as hero. Beginning with (first movement) the drama of inner conflict, then (*adagio*) returning from the prayerful communion with God to the (*scherzo*) joys of life in nature, at length (*finale*) with unconquerable energy and determination entering upon the battle with the world,

culminating in the final triumph over all opposition, he laid down the permanent spiritual foundation for all his symphonic labors.

That the first performance of this symphony, 1868, technically the most difficult that had as yet come into existence, was not a total failure, is scarcely short of a miracle, for the best string and brass sections the town of Linz could provide faced the allegedly "impossible" score almost hopelessly. Yet Bruckner conducted the numerous rehearsals with such desperate zeal that the result was at least musical enough to call forth respectful comment from the critics, though they could have gleaned but the scantiest notion of the true significance of the work from such a performance.

Even the noted critic Hanslick, on the strength of this favorable report, congratulated the Viennese conservatory, hinting approvingly at a rumor that its faculty was soon to be augmented by so valuable an acquisition as Bruckner.

The rumor came true, though only after long, long hesitation on Bruckner's part. He feared to give up his modest but secure post in Linz for a miserably underpaid and insecure chair in theory at the noted music school of the capital, but his friends, understanding his timidity and realizing the tremendous artistic advantages of the proffered position, urged him to accept it. At length, after Bishop Rudigier assured Bruckner that the organ at the Cathedral in Linz would always be waiting for him, he decided to risk the chance. The date upon which he officially assumed his title of professor was July 6, 1868.

Just about this time, in his forty-third year, he was made the unhappy victim of a great spiritual shock. The parents of the seventeen-year-old Josephine Lang with whom the composer had fallen in love refused him the girl's hand because of his age. In Bruckner's many cases of platonic affection for young girls (this continued till his seventieth year) there is enticing food for the modern psychologist's or psychoanalyst's formulizations.

Now began for Bruckner a slow and cruel martyrdom. His very first Viennese attempt, the newly composed Mass in F-minor, was refused a hearing on the ground that it was "unsingable." After this two new symphonic attempts were suppressed by the nerve-racked composer himself with the bitter comment: "They are no good; I dare not write down a really decent theme."

Discouraged, he decided to stop composing for a while and set out on a concert tour through France. The newspaper reports of this series of recitals were so jubilant that Europe soon rang with the name of Bruckner, "the greatest organist of his time."

Returning to Austria, in better spirits, he experienced "the most glorious day of his life" when his Mass in E-minor (composed in 1866) was given its initial hearing (Linz, 1869) midst unqualified enthusiasm.

The astonishing reports from France about Bruckner's organ-improvisations had so aroused the curiosity of many Englishmen that the virtuoso was offered fifty pounds for twelve recitals in London to be given within a week! Out of this "munificent" fee he was expected to pay his own travelling expenses!

Nevertheless August 2, 1871, found Bruckner seated at a London organ dutifully improvising on the appropriate theme "God save the King." Phlegmatic John Bull, quite impressed by the grandeur of these improvisations, nevertheless remarked judiciously that the performer showed his weakness in a Mendelssohn sonata, as had been expected. After one of these recitals a London lady advised Bruckner through an interpreter to learn English before his next visit to Britain. He never visited England again.

Back in Vienna he doffed the hated mask of virtuoso and determined at his own cost to give the shelved F-minor Mass the hearing he felt sure it deserved. The performance took place in June, 1872. He had hired the world-famous Philharmonic orchestra for the occasion at a cost of three hundred gulden (eight months' wages to the Professor of Counterpoint) but the favorable report of the famous Hanslick about the work (though he declared it reminded him in spots of Wagner and Beethoven) was alone worth the price. Could Hanslick, Wagner's most powerful and bitter opponent, only have dreamed that the simple Bruckner was destined to receive at the hands of the great music-dramatist the heavy legacy of critical abuse he had gathered through two score years of stormy travel from Dresden to Bayreuth! Bruckner, only two years before this (1869), humbly as any music student, had sat with rapt attention at the feet of Hanslick, then lecturer on "Musical History" at the Viennese conservatory.

Meanwhile, during his London experience, he had launched upon a new symphony, determined to make it from the viewpoint of technical playability totally acceptable to the easy-going world of musicians and

critics among whom fate had cast his lot. Conviction would not let him abandon the titanic skeletal structure of his *First*, the symphonic "wagon" to which he had "hitched his star." After long pondering he hit upon the unusual idea of punctuating the longer movements of the work with general pauses in the whole orchestra. This striking device at once caught the knowing ears of the musicians during the rehearsals for the first performance and resulted in the fabrication of the sarcastic nickname, "Rest Symphony," by which the work was thereafter known in Vienna. The description "Upper-Austrian," later applied by the noted Bruckner biographer Goellerich, is far more appropriate, for the opening and closing movements, and particularly the *scherzo*, are thoroughly saturated with the atmosphere and song of Bruckner's rustic "home country" surroundings. Upon being once more refused an official hearing for his new work on the ground of "unplayability," Bruckner again dipped deep into his yawning pockets and invited Vienna to hear his *Second Symphony* to the tune of four hundred and five gulden literally borrowed on a "pound of flesh." Speidel, a prominent critic, had the honesty to say in his report of the occasion: "It is no common mortal who speaks to us in this music. Here is a composer whose very shoe-laces his numerous enemies are not fit to tie." Hanslick, still no outspoken Bruckner opponent, expressed discomfort at the titanic dimensions' of the work, and lauded the "masterly manner" in which the orchestra played the "unplayable" score. (October 26, 1873.)

Although Brahms, whose *First Symphony* was still uncompleted, had nevertheless been firmly seated on the world's symphonic throne (for had he not been crowned by all critics as Beethoven's heir?) court-conductor Herbeck could not refrain from making the following remark to Bruckner after hearing this work: "I assure you if Brahms were capable of writing such a symphony the concert-hall would rock with applause."

Bruckner did not enter upon these huge personal expenses because of a thirst for public applause. That the joys of symphonic creation were sufficient spiritual exaltation for him, is clear from the zeal with which he began work upon his *Third* at the very moment his *Second* was unconditionally rejected by the Vienna Philharmonic. In the production of this new score he gave up all thought of mollifying friend and foe, who alike had complained about the length and difficulty of his previous orchestral efforts. The heroic defiance that stalks proudly through every movement of this work, making it sound much like a huge declaration of

independence, has caused many to label it "another *Eroica*," implying a definite community between Beethoven and Bruckner.

That it was Bruckner's original intention to make this *Third* a "Wagner" symphony is clear from the actual note-for-note quotations from the already widely discussed *Ring*. He had apparently, by now, summoned up the courage to go to Wagner and ask him for his artistic approval. Fortunately his arrival at Bayreuth, armed with his last two symphonies, caught the Master of Wahnfried in most friendly humor. Bruckner's own description of his emotions as Wagner examined the scores is eloquent: "I was just like a schoolboy watching his teacher correct his note-book. Every word of comment seemed like a red mark on the page. At last I managed to stammer forth the hope that he would accept the dedication of one of the symphonies, for that was the only and also the highest recognition I wanted from the world." Wagner's answer, one of the few happy moments in Bruckner's tragic life, is surely recorded by the angels. "Dear friend, the dedication would be truly appropriate; this work of yours gives me the greatest pleasure."

After that, Bruckner went on, "We discussed musical conditions in Vienna, drank beer, and then he led me into the garden and showed me his grave!" They apparently spent a most delightful afternoon together. On the authority of the famous sculptor Kietz, who was present part of the time, we have it that a most amusing sequel developed on the two following days. Bruckner had had not only some, but in fact so much beer, the hospitable Wagner continually filling his mug and urging him to empty it (for a whole barrel had been ordered for the occasion), that the next morning found the Austrian quite muddled and at a loss which of the two symphonies the master had preferred. Ashamed to return to Wagner, he sought out the sculptor and appealed to him for help in this dilemma, but the latter, highly amused, pretended not to have paid attention to the discussion, saying he had heard some talk about D-minor and a trumpet. Now in the sculptor's own words, "Bruckner suddenly threw his arms about me, kissed me, and cried, 'Thank you, dear Mr. Councilor (I don't know to this day how I came by the title) thank you! I know it's the one in D-minor the Master has accepted! Oh, how happy I am that I know which it is!'" Next day, however, he was once more doubtful, for he sent the following message to Wagner on a slip of blue paper (now a treasured museum possession): "Symphony in D-minor in which the trumpet introduces the theme. A. Bruckner." The

same leaf came back to him promptly with the following addition: "Yes, yes! Hearty greetings! Wagner." Thus came Bruckner's *Third* to bear the name *Wagner Symphony*. Whenever Wagner heard Bruckner's name mentioned thereafter, he would exclaim, "Ah! Yes, the trumpet."

The report of this incident with its clear implication of Wagner's regard for Bruckner's genius proved the death-knell for whatever chance the symphonist may still have had for Viennese recognition during the Hanslick regime. Up to that moment his work had been neglected mainly because the musicians of the city had little ear for such "modern" harmony and dramatic orchestration, but the leaps and bounds Wagner's music-dramas and Liszt's Symphonic Poems were making in the world of art had brought about a complete revolution in musical taste. The new era was one of bitter personal hatreds between musicians and critics of two opposing factions. No political enemies have ever used more poisonous epithets than the Wagnerites against the Anti-Wagner-ites and vice-versa. A lion for punishment, both taking and giving, Wagner could easily weather the storm of unspeakable abuse, but away from his scores and classes Bruckner was a mere child so simple and shy that the merciless critical boycott of his works, which now followed, all but crushed his spirit. It was inconceivable to him that human beings could be as cruel as Hanslick and his snarling myrmidons were to him, merely because he had gained Wagner's friendship and recognition. His only solace was that he had become reconciled to composing work after work without the encouraging incentive of public hearings,

The *Fourth*, already in the making at this time and bearing the title *Romantic*, was finished November 22, 1874. Although the description *Romantic* is no less fitting than that of *Pastorate* in the case of Beethoven's *Sixth*, there seems little doubt that the detailed "program" or symphonic plot communicated to his circle of friends by Bruckner was a post-analysis influenced by no other than Wagner, who had even published a rather fantastic pictorial description of Beethoven's *Ninth*. It is at any rate silly to dilly-dally over the fitness of its details, for the *Romantic* has so clear and effective a tale to tell that it has become the favorite vehicle for the introduction of Bruckner to a new audience. That the composer did not regard the "program" seriously is evident from his remark concerning the Finale: "And in the last movement," said he, "I've forgotten completely what picture I had in mind." Yet the work possesses an unmistakable unity hitherto without precedent in absolute music, for all four parts spring from

the main theme in the first movement. So logical and masterly is the development of this theme in the course of the work that the climax is not reached until the closing portion of the Finale, making the *Romantic* symphony from the point of view of perfection of form perhaps the last word that has yet been spoken by man.

At this time, thanks to the zeal of his enemies his material condition had become almost hopeless. To quote from one of his letters, January 1875: "I have only my place at the Conservatory, on the income of which it is impossible to exist. I have been compelled to borrow money over and over again or accept the alternative of starvation. No one offers to help me. The Minister of Education makes promises, but does nothing. If it weren't for the few foreigners who are studying with me, I should have to turn beggar. Had I even dreamed that such terrible things would happen to me no earthly power could have induced me to come to Vienna. Oh, how happy I'd be to return to my old position in Linz!"

The Viennese musical "powers that be" had conspired to make life unbearable for the avowed Wagnerite. One of the highest officials at the conservatory, in answer to an appeal by Bruckner, gave him the following generous advice: "It's high time you threw your symphonies into the trash-basket. It would be much wiser for you to earn money by making piano arrangements of the compositions of others." The same man, with equally kind intent, went so far as to say, "Bruckner can't play the organ at all."

The warlike Wagner's arrival in Vienna in the spring of 1875 drew more hostile attention to the timid symphonist. Of course, it did him more harm than good. The music-dramatist's reiterated praise of Bruckner's work was like a signal for the Viennese authorities to redouble the cruelty of their method of torture. Dessoff, conductor of the Philharmonic, promised to perform the *Wagner Symphony*, invited Bruckner to several rehearsals, and suddenly (after two months of preparation) declared he could not find room for it on a program. Later the orchestra took hold of it again, but rejected it finally (only a single musician opposing the move) as "absolutely unplayable."

Just as the persecuted Wagner set to work on his *Meistersinger*, pouring his sufferings out through the lips of Hans Sachs, Bruckner plunged into the tragic depths of his *Fifth*. Only in the construction of his colossal symphonies was he able to play the hero against fate. Over two years in the process of composition the *Tragic* symphony was compelled to wait

eighteen years for its first hearing. That was not to be in Vienna, nor was Bruckner ever to hear the work at all.

In 1876 Wagner invited him to the inaugural *Ring* performances at Bayreuth and the two giant musicians once more discussed the *Wagner Symphony*. Perhaps as a direct result of this conference Bruckner now set about simplifying the condemned score and again appealed to the Philharmonic for a hearing. The prompt refusal then given his request must have convinced even him that a relentless hostility due to Wagner's praise made his cause impossible so far as that organization was concerned. Into this spiritual state of almost total eclipse there suddenly broke a ray of light. Herbeck, old friend of sunnier days, conductor of the fine, though less-famed, orchestra of the *Society of the Friends of Music*, became so disgusted with the unjust persecution that he determined to brave the wrath of critics and musicians by espousing the Bruckner cause. Hardly had he announced the first step of his campaign, a production of the tabu *Wagner Symphony*, when he died. Had not, at this juncture, an influential government representative named Goellerich (father of the noted Bruckner biographer) stepped into the breach, the *Third Symphony* would have been taken off the Herbeck program and the unhappy composer, poisoned with a cup of misery worthy of a Job, would probably have gone mad.

The performance itself which took place December 16, 1877 was one of the saddest in the history of music. Since no conductor dared to wield the baton upon the occasion, Bruckner himself was compelled to direct the orchestra. Early in the course of the symphony. Director Hellmsberger, spokesman of the conservatory, burst out laughing. Promptly another "director" followed suit. Upon this the apish students joined in. Then, of course, the public began to giggle. Soon some people rose and left the hall, indignant that the cause of music had been offered so great an insult as the performance of a Bruckner work in Vienna, the sacred musical metropolis. When the symphony came to an end there were hardly ten people left in the parquet. The few faithful occupants of the "standing room," a handful of Bruckner-pupils, among them Gustav Mahler, rushed down to the heartbroken master, from whom even the musicians of the orchestra had fled, and attempted in vain to cheer him with consoling words. At this moment an angel approached, in the guise of the music publisher Rattig, described the symphony as wonderful, and declared himself ready to risk

the expense of publishing it. Under such a black sky was the *Wagner Symphony* given to the world.

To return to the Viennese critics for whose Wagner-gobbling appetite it had been a gala evening, the director Hanslick (intending it, of course, only as a joke) for once told the absolute truth, namely, that he "could not understand the gigantic symphony." He said there had come to him, while listening, "a vision in which Beethoven's *Ninth* had ventured to accost the Valkyr maidens, only to be crushed under their horses' feet." As a sarcastic climax he added that he "did not wish by his words to hurt the feelings of the composer, whom he really held in great esteem."

A little before this time, through the good graces of the previously mentioned Goellerich, the University of Vienna had announced! the creation of a "chair" of music and the inclusion of harmony and counterpoint in the regular curriculum. Despite the firm opposition of Hanslick, Bruckner, who had ten years before appealed to the faculty that some such step be taken in his behalf, was now appointed lecturer. From the opening address, April 30, 1876, which was attended by so great a number of students that the occasion might well be compared to the first of Schiller's lectures at Jena, the younger generation embraced the Bruckner cause enthusiastically. To the academic subjects taught by

Bruckner, with Goethe's words as motto: "Gray is every theory. Green alone life's golden tree," were added those glorious improvisations for which he was so noted and the inspiring message of which endeared him to the hearts of his "Gaudeamuses," as he lovingly called his students. The open enmity of Hanslick towards their beloved professor gradually assumed for them the proportions of a political issue and a life problem. In the years to come the Bruckner cause in Vienna was to attain such strength through the loyalty of these University students that the combined enmity of critics and musicians would have to bow before it in the dust. This was actually realized ten years later, when the Philharmonic was finally compelled, owing to the force of public opinion, to program the already world-famous *Seventh Symphony* (1886).

As the result of the frigid reception accorded the *Wagner Symphony* Bruckner spent the next two years (1878-80) in a radical revision of the instrumentation of the *Second*, *Fourth*, and *Fifth* symphonies, including the composition of a totally new movement, the now famous *Hunting Scherzo*, for the *Fourth* or *Romantic*. However, the changes he made in the scores are

not of the nature of compromises between the artist and the world, for the themes of the symphonies remained unaltered, only unnecessary rhythmic and technical complications being abandoned.

To this interval also belongs the composition of the (*Quintet* for strings, Bruckner's sole contribution to chamber-music, but a work so deep and mighty that those who have heard it proclaim that in the whole range of chamber music only the last Beethoven string-quartets attain such spiritual heights. The *Quintet* was composed by the *symphonist* Bruckner and has the sweep and grandeur of his best symphonic creations.

The interval of rest from major composition saw him frequently attending the many colorful formal dances of Vienna. It seems psychologically consistent that one whose mind was always engaged in tragic inner conflicts should seek recreation in the halls of festivity and laughter. Bruckner had always been fond of dancing.

A severe attack of "nerves," doubtless due to overwork, drove him to seek relief in Switzerland during the summer of 1880. In August of that vacation period he visited the Passion Play at Oberammergau and fell head over heels in love with one of the "daughters of Jerusalem," the seventeen-year-old Marie Barti. He waited for her at the stage-door, obtained an introduction, and escorted her home. After spending that evening and most of the next day in the Barti family circle he arrived at a temporary understanding which left the love affair on a correspondential basis. There followed a lively exchange of letters between him and Marie, lasting a year, but the time came when the girl no longer answered him. Thus the now fifty-six-year-old lover found himself again refused entrance into the halls of matrimony. One is here involuntarily reminded of the love of the thirty-seven-year-old Beethoven for the fourteen-year-old Therese Malfatti, though nowadays we have ceased to gasp at such things. The solitary silent remnant of this romance of Bruckner's is a photograph of his bearing the inscription: "To my clearest friend, Marie Barti."

In these gloomy days when, following the deplorable fiasco of the *Wagner Symphony*, no one in Vienna dared or cared to lift a hand in favor of the *Romantic* and *Tragic* symphonies, now long finished and still unperformed, a malady affecting his feet compelled Bruckner to take to his bed. There, in spite of depressing circumstances, he summoned up the spiritual strength to work on his *Sixth Symphony*. As if his misfortunes had merely been trials sent from Above to prove his faith, while Bruckner was

still busy with the last movement of the new work, Hans Richter, the Wagner disciple, visited him and was so struck with the beauties of the dormant *Romantic Symphony* that he at once programmed it and invited the composer to a rehearsal. Richter's own words describing the occasion reveal Bruckner's naive character: "When the symphony was over," he related, "Bruckner came to me, his face beaming with enthusiasm and joy. I felt him press a coin into my hand. 'Take this,' he said, 'and drink a glass of beer to my health.'" Richter, of course, accepted the coin, a Maria Theresa thaler, and wore it on his watch-chain ever after. The premiere of the *Fourth* took place on February 20, 1881 and proved a real triumph for Bruckner, who was compelled to take many bows after each movement. On the same program, however, the symphonic poem, the "Singer's curse" by Buelow, met with utter failure. Buelow, now a deserter from the Wagner camp, and turned to a staunch Brahmsian could not contain his jealousy and asked sarcastically, referring to the successful symphony: "Is that German music?" From Buelow, at any rate, the most devoted of Wagnerians could expect no praise. In time the insults Bruckner had to endure from that source grew vile beyond description. Even seven years later, with musical Germany at the composer's feet, Buelow still stood by the sinking ship, saying: "Bruckner's symphonies are the anti-musical ravings of a half-wit." At last in 1891, the patient composer experienced the gratification of hearing that Buelow had finally relented and was promoting Bruckner's *Te Deum* as a splendid work well worthy of public performance.

In July, 1882, he made a flying trip to Bayreuth to hear the opening performance of *Parsifal*. To him these few days were a beautiful idyll. He would stroll along the road with a black frock-coat on his arm, ready to don it hastily should Wagner come along by chance. It made no difference to him that people said this was an unnecessary act of homage. Sometimes he would stop at "Wahnfried" and gaze at its windows long and reverently. Mornings he would visit Wagner. The Master would come out to greet him, offering him the hand of the little Eva, while he said laughingly: "Mr. Bruckner, your bride!" Then Wagner would deplore the disappointing state of contemporary music, exclaiming: "I know of only one who may be compared to Beethoven – and he is Bruckner!" One evening, grasping the Austrian's hand, the aged Master cried: "Rest assured, I myself shall produce *the* symphony (meaning the *Wagner*) and all your works." "Oh, Master!" was all Bruckner could answer. Then the question: "Have you

already heard *Parsifal*! How did you like it?" Bruckner sank upon his knees, pressing Wagner's hand to his lips, and murmuring: "Oh, Master, I worship you!" Wagner was deeply moved. When they bade each other good night that evening, it was the last greeting they ever exchanged on earth, for the call of Valhalla for the "Master of all Masters," as Bruckner called him, was soon to sound. This is the premonition that took hold of the younger composer, then already deep in the creation of his *Seventh Symphony*. No more majestic tribute to the greatness of one mortal has ever been paid by another than in that glorious, soaring *Adagio of Premonition*. It is an appeal direct to the soul of the mighty music-dramatist, spoken in its own dialect, consummately mastered by a kindred soul.

The death of Wagner was a stupendous blow to the whole musical world and especially so to Bruckner. The latter, now approaching his sixtieth birthday, was still humble Prof. Anton Bruckner to the world about him. The field of musical fame, suddenly deprived of its solitary gigantic tenant, seemed to yawn for a new Titan. The psychological moment was at hand.

On the twenty-ninth of December, 1884, Hugo Wolf wrote: "Bruckner? Bruckner? Who is he? Where does he live? What does he do? Such questions are asked by people who regularly attend the concerts in Vienna." The Viennese were destined to the shame of soon basing taught by Germany the greatness they had been ignoring in their midst for a score of years.

When on December 30, 1884, young Arthur Nikisch, Bruckner pupil, gave the *Seventh Symphony* its first hearing in no less modest a hall than the celebrated Gewandhaus at Leipzig, it was as if a divine Voice had burst forth from total darkness crying, "Let there be light!" As the last note ceased there was enacted a scene of unparalleled enthusiasm, the applause lasting fully fifteen minutes. Bruckner appeared on the stage dressed in his simple manner and bowed repeatedly in answer to the unexpected ovation. One of the critics present spoke of him as follows: "One could see from the trembling of his lips and the sparkling moisture in his eyes how difficult it was for the old gentleman to suppress his deep emotion. His homely but honest countenance beamed with a warm inner happiness such as can appear only on the face of one who is too goodhearted to succumb to bitterness even under the pressure of most disheartening circumstances. Having heard his work and now seeing him in person we asked ourselves in amazement 'How is it possible that you could remain so long unknown to

us?" On New Year's Day, 1885, the whole world knew that a great symphonic composer whom snobbish Vienna had for years held bound and gagged was at last free to deliver his message to all mankind.

The performance of the *Seventh Symphony* in Munich under Hermann Levi proved an even greater triumph. The conductor called it the "wonder work," avowing its interpretation was the crowning point of his artistic career. Perhaps Levi, famous Wagnerian chieftan as he was, intended to annihilate Brahms with a word when he also added, "It is the most significant symphonic work since 1827"

Into the performance at Karlsruhe (the work was now making its meteoric way through all Germany), Felix Mottl, gifted Bruckner pupil, threw so much spiritual fire that even the white-haired Liszt, sitting among the distinguished audience, became from that moment a staunch Brucknerite. This conversion was all the more remarkable since the great pianist had long remained cold to Bruckner's music, although he had been for two score years one of the chief marshals of the Wagner camp. Liszt as a Wagnerian had secretly nursed the notion that the Liszt Symphonic Poems could never be properly understood by the people until they had learned to appreciate his son-in-law's music dramas.

Despite the recognition of the whole of Germany, Vienna and the Philharmonic continued to maintain a dogged aloofness. Still fearful, Bruckner anticipated any possible desire on the part of the famous orchestra to play his work by entering a formal protest against such a move, on the ground that "the hostility of the Viennese critics could only prove dangerous to my still young triumphs in Germany."

For diplomatic reasons, no doubt, the *Quintet* was now given, for the first time in its entirety, by the Hellmesberger aggregation. One of the most prominent reviewers wrote about it as follows: "We cannot compare it with any other Quintet in this generation. It stands absolutely alone in its field." Even Kalbeck, Brahms' biographer and one of Bruckner's bitterest enemies, said: "Its *Adagio* radiates light in a thousand delicate shades – the reflection of a vision of the seventh heaven."

Apparently the dawn of recognition was at hand, even in Vienna. Yet the conspirators were determined to die hard. Another critic, on the same occasion, after paving the way by admitting that the *Quintet* was perhaps the deepest and richest thing of its kind, warned the public on ethical grounds against Bruckner as "the greatest living musical peril, a sort of

tonal Anti-Christ." His argument follows: "The violent nature of the man is not written on his face—for his expression indicates at most the small soul of the every-day *Kapellmeister*. Yet he composes nothing but high treason, revolution, and murder. His work is absolutely devoid of art or reason. Perhaps, some day, a devil and an angel will fight for his soul. His music has the fragrance of heavenly roses, but it is poisonous with the sulphurs of hell."

Meanwhile, for the benefit of his Viennese friends, whom he did not wish to disappoint, the composer personally prepared the initial performance of his recently finished *Te Deum*. This, a semi-private affair, took place in a small concert-hall. Two pianos were used in the absence of an impartial orchestra.

Suddenly Germany and Holland began clamoring for other Bruckner compositions, but only the *Wagner Symphony* had appeared in print. That work had even penetrated to America where the noted Wagner disciple, Anton Seidl, had given it a hearing at the Metropolitan Opera House, December 6, 1885. When Bruckner heard about the favorable report in the *New York Tribune*, he was as happy as a child, and exclaimed: "Now even America says I'm not bad. Isn't that just rich?"

These successes, however, did not turn his head. He was far from ready to rest on his laurels. During the summer of 1884 he began work upon a new symphony. His sister, in whose house in the little town of Voeklbruck he was vacationing, says he would show her a stack of music-paper covered with pencil marks, saying that these scribblings would become another symphony. In order to be able to set down undisturbed the ideas that came to him during frequent walks) in the surrounding woods, he rented a room with a piano in a house nearby, "just for composing."

When he heard that the owner of this house had a young and pretty daughter, he said, "I'm glad. Now I'm sure I'll be able to compose here." Every day he would bring this girl, a Miss Hartmann, a bouquet of flowers. The presence of the younger fair sex seems to have been always a source of happiness to the composer. He was then over sixty years old.

At this time, like Balboa when he first stood upon the hill overlooking the mystic expanse of the Pacific, Bruckner stood at last in the halo of his belated and hard-earned fame looking back with calm melancholy upon the bitter trials of his artistic career. Beneath this retrospective spell his *Eighth Symphony* unfolded itself. As a colossal structure of spiritual autobiography

in tone it is a sequel to his *Fifth* or *Tragic Symphony*, which it excels in depth of expression. It has been called the "crown of nineteenth century music." It is useless to attempt to give any idea of it in words, but its message in brief is: (*First movement*) how the artist, a mere human, like Prometheus, steals the sacred fire from heaven and, daring to bring the divine essence to earth, is condemned to suffer for his temerity. (*Scherzo*) how his deed is greeted with scorn and ridicule by his fellow-men, and he finds solace only in the beauty of nature. (*Adagio*) reveals the secret of his creative power, communion with the Supreme Source. (*Finale*) the battle all truth must fight on earth before it attains recognition and the final victory and crowning of the artist. '

In Bruckner's physical appearance at this time there was! no hint of senility. He was a little above the average in height, but an inclination to corpulency made him appear shorter. His physiognomy, huge-nosed and smooth-shaven as he was, was that of a Roman emperor, but from his blue eyes beamed only kindness and childish faith. He wore unusually wide white collars, in order to leave his neck perfectly free. His black, loose-hanging clothes were obviously intended to be, above all, comfortable. He had even left instructions for a roomy coffin. The only thing about his attire suggestive of the artist was the loosely arranged bow-tie he always wore. About the fit and shape of his shoes he was, according to his shoe-maker, more particular than the most exactingly elegant member of the fair sex. As he would hurry along the street swinging a soft black hat, which he hardly ever put on, a colored handkerchief could always be seen protruding from his coat-pocket.

In the summer of 1886 he arrived in Bayreuth just in time to attend the funeral of Liszt. As Bruckner sat at the organ improvising a "Funeral Oration" in his own language out of themes of *Parsifal*, it was as if he were saluting the passing of that golden age of nineteenth-century music, which had endowed the world with the titanic contribution known as the art of Wagner. Now he was leader of the glorious cause, its highest living creative exponent, but he stood alone, he and his symphonies, while the enemy still held the field in great numbers,

The *Seventh Symphony* continued making new conquests. Cologne, Graz, Chicago, New York, and Amsterdam paid tribute to its greatness. When it reached Hamburg the aged teacher of Brahms said it was the greatest symphony of modern times. Brahms, however, continued to shrug

his shoulders, and remarked: "In the case of Bruckner one needn't use the word 'Symphony'; it's enough to talk of a kind of 'fake' which will be forgotten in a few years."

Then young Karl Muck, Bruckner pupil, came to Graz with the same symphony, and following upon this really Austrian triumph, Vienna was compelled at last to capitulate, much to the annoyance of the Hanslick coalition. Hans Richter conducted the hostile "King of Orchestras" on March 21, 1886. The *Seventh Symphony*, after hunting for the "blue bird" all over the world, had come home at last to bring happiness to the "prophet in his own country." Hanslick's review the following day was a sort of brief *apologia pro vita sua*. "It is certainly without precedent," complained he, "that a composer be called to the stage four or five times after each movement of a symphony. To tell the truth the music of Bruckner so rubs me the wrong way that I'm hardly in a position to give an impartial view of it. I consider it unnatural, blown Up, unwholesome, and ruinous." Kalbeck, his *aide-de-camp*, picked ion Richter for having shown personal homage to Bruckner and alleged that it was done purely for popular effect. Concerning the music itself he said: "It comes from the Nibelungen and goes to the devil!" Dompke, another member of Hanslick's staff snarled: "Bruckner writes like a drunkard." Richter, at the banquet of the *Wagner-Verein* held to celebrate the occasion, declared that many members of the Philharmonic orchestra had changed their minds about Bruckner and that there would be no difficulty about producing his works in Vienna from that time on. As a matter of fact, the next symphony, the *Eighth*, was introduced to the world by the Philharmonic. Heroic Richter now carried the banner into the British Isles, in spite of Brahms' reproving earning, "You surely are not going to perform Bruckner in England!"

The triumphant journey of the *Seventh* continued, Budapest, Dresden, and London next being conquered. To be sure, Berlin, in the hands of the Brahms marshals, Buelow and Joachim, only gave it a timid welcome. A prominent writer said of the occasion: "It was like offering a roast to a table of mules." Another said: "I considered Brahms a great symphonist until to-day, but how the little 'Doctor' seemed to shrink when he was programmed beside this giant, as was the case in this concert!"

It was still impossible for Bruckner to find publishers for his colossal work. Time after time his manuscripts were called for by different firms, but always returned to him with regretful apologies. Then Suddenly, New York

through Anton Seidl threatened to publish the *Romantic*, whereupon Hermann Levi for the second time made a collection of the required sum in Munich and thus saved Europe from the imminent disgrace.

In the autumn of 1880 personal friends of Bruckner and Brahms, hoping to end the quarrel between the two masters, agreed to bring them together in a Viennese restaurant. Bruckner, quite amicable, had arrived early and had already had two or three portions of Nudel-soup before Brahms put in an appearance. "Stiff and cold they faced each other across the table," related one of those present. It was an uncomfortable situation and the well-meaning conspirators were highly disappointed. Finally Brahms broke the silence and called for the bill-of-fare. With a forced display of good-nature he cried out: "Now let's see what there is to eat!" He glanced along the list of courses, suddenly looked up, and ordered: "Waiter, bring me smoked ham and dumplings!" Instantly Bruckner joined in, crying, "That's it, Doctor! Smoker ham and dumplings. At least that's something on which we can agree!" The effect of this remark was instantaneous. Everybody shook with laughter. The ice was broken and the remainder of the evening proved to be friendly and jolly.

A real understanding between the two was, of course, impossible. It was a case of temperaments diametrically opposed, conceptions of art basically at variance, in short, an apt illustration of Kipling's phrase "And the twain shall never meet."

Bruckner explained the situation thus: "He is Brahms (hats off!); I am Bruckner; I like my works better. He who wants to be soothed by music will become attached to Brahms; but whoever wants to be carried away by music will find but little satisfaction in his work." Brahms himself had declared before joining the Hanslick camp: "Bruckner is the greatest symphonist of the age." Once after listening to a Bruckner symphony Brahms approached the composer, saying: "I hope you won't feel hurt about it, but I really can't make out what you are trying to get at with your compositions." "Never mind, Doctor," answered Bruckner, "that's perfectly all right. I feel just the same way about your things."

In 1890, warned by repeated attacks of laryngitis and general nervousness, he begged leave to spend a year free from conservatory duty. His request was granted, but with no pay. He now drew the long-dormant *First Symphony* from its dusty shelf and set to work polishing it. Several years before, Hans Richter, happening to be present when two of Bruckner's

pupils played a four-hand arrangement of the work, in his enthusiasm snatched up the orchestral score and wanted to run off with it, when Bruckner called out anxiously, "But the ragamuffin has to be cleaned first!" From that time the *First Symphony* was known in Bruckner circles as the "Ragamuffin"—an apt nomenclature, indeed, when one remembers the impudence of the opening bars.

Hermann Levi, already familiar with it, was particularly worried that the aging master might make radical changes in the process of revision and wrote to him: "The *First* is wonderful! It must be printed and performed—but please don't change it too much—it is all good just as it stands, even the instrumentation. Please, please, not too much retouching." An eloquent tribute to the genius of the early Bruckner is this, verdict from the lips of the greatest of Wagnerian conductors and certainly one of the finest musicians of his time.

During these vacation days the master would review with longing the happy days before his Viennese trials began. Wondering what had become of the pretty Josephine Lang with whom he had fallen in love twenty-five years before, he decided to look her up. She had married long before and he was delighted to find in her beautiful fourteen-year-old daughter the living replica of her mother whom he had loved so long ago. Kissing the girl, he called her: "My darling substitute." In her company all reckoning of time past or present was lost for him and his heart beat once more as swiftly as the vacation moments flew by.

On December 21, 1890, the first and second printed versions of the *Wagner Symphony* were performed consecutively in Vienna. Hanslick admitted that here and there four or eight bars of exceptional and original beauty might be heard, but that the bulk of the work was "chaos." One wonders whether the man was really so old-fashioned that he could only read confusion out of the super-order which the world now knows as Bruckner's symphonic form, as vast and as centripetal as a great empire.

About Hanslick there seems ever to be popping up a ghost of doubt, "Was the man, after all, sincere?" If so, he certainly deserved the immortality Wagner gave him in the figure of Beckmesser. It is good for us to keep in mind that Beckmesser or Hanslick, the stubborn reactionary, is an eternal type to be found in every generation and in every field of activity.

On the above occasion the critic Helm, long faithful Hanslick assistant, left the opposition and stepped over to Bruckner's side beating his breasts

for his past sins. The valiant Kalbeck still stood firm and incorrigible. He offered this recipe in lieu of criticism: "Stand the *Allegro* of Beethoven's *Ninth* on its head and see the *Finale* of this Bruckner Symphony tumble out."

Vienna was by then thoroughly convinced of Bruckner's quality. A group of wealthy Austrians met to take financial measures necessary to free the composer from his arduous academic duties. Though pride at first led him to misunderstand the motive for this, the master soon realized that nothing but regard for his genius had prompted it and gratefully accepted the offer, deeply moved. Thus he was set free to do with the last five years of his life as he wished. His new found leisure permitting, he would often make trips to Germany to hear his works performed.

Once a chambermaid in a Berlin hotel pressed a note into his hand on his departure for Vienna, in which she expressed great concern for the bodily welfare of her "dear Mr. Bruckner." Naturally, he responded at once, but insisted (this was a matter of principle with him) upon being introduced to the girl's parents. With them an understanding was quickly arrived at and a lively correspondence entered upon, until Bruckner, despite the admonition of his horrified friends, had made up his mind to marry the girl. He insisted, however, that she be converted to Catholicism and this proved in the end the only stumbling block to one of the most curious matches on record. Fortunately, the girl would not sacrifice her faith even for the privilege of nursing her beloved Mr. Bruckner." He was seventy-one years old when this adventure with Ida Buhz, the solicitous maid, came to an end.

Then there was also his "affair" with the young and pretty Minna Reischl. Add to a pair of roguish eyes a thoroughly musical nature and it is easy to see why the aged lover lost his heart to this girl. She, of course, must have been merely amusing herself at Bruckner's expense, because when she went as far as to bring the composer home to her parents, these sensible people of the world at once awakened him out of his December dream. When he came to Linz shortly after, his acquaintances guessing the truth, teased him, saying: "Aha! So you have been out marrying again!" With Minna, however, who afterwards married a wealthy manufacturer, Bruckner remained very friendly until the end.

In the autumn of 1891 he was created "Honorary Doctor" of the University of Vienna, a distinction which gave the ingenuous composer much happiness. Not long before this he had received from the emperor

Franz Joseph an insignia of which he was inordinately proud and which he was very fond of displaying, much as a child will a new toy. This weakness of his for glitter, a characteristic as a rule incompatible with true greatness, is yet easily to be reconciled with his childishness and the long years spent in a land where titles and decorations were regarded as the highest marks of honor.

The summer of 1803 saw him the central figure at the Bayreuth *Festspiele*. His arrival was enthusiastically greeted by a host of musicians and music-lovers. In the confusion of welcome the trunk containing the sketches of the *Ninth Symphony* disappeared, but after many anxious hours it was located at the police-station, to the composer's great relief. Daily he made his pilgrimage to the grave of the "Master of all Masters." The critic Marsop, once an enemy of his, says he saw Bruckner! approach Wagner's grave reverently, fold his hands and pray with such fervor that the tears literally streamed down his face. Perhaps, Bruckner already felt that this visit to Wahnfried might be his last.

In the consciousness of the more enlightened Viennese his name now occupied a place beside the great masters who had lived in the "city of music," and as he passed along the street, voices could be heard whispering with awe: "There goes Anton Bruckner!"

He lived in a small, simple apartment of two rooms and kitchen, tended by an old faithful servant, Kathi, who for twenty years had spent; a few hours each day caring for the bachelor's household. In the bluewalled room where he worked stood his old grand piano, a harmonium, a little table, and some chairs. The floor and most of the furniture were littered with music. On the walls hung a large photograph and an oil painting of himself. From this room a door led to his bedroom, the walls of which were covered with pictures of his "beloved Masters." On the floor stood a bust of himself which he was pleased to show his friends, who relate that he would place his hand upon its brow, smile wistfully, and say: "Good chap!" Against the wall stood an English brass bed presented to him by his pupils. This he called "My one luxury." At home he would go dressed even more comfortably than on the street, merely! donning a loose coat whenever a guest was announced. Kathi knew exactly at what hours guests were welcome. If the master was composing no one was permitted to disturb him. At other times he went in person to meet the caller at the door. Bruckner worked, as a rule, only in the morning, but sometimes he would

get up during the night to write down an idea that had suddenly! come to him. Possessing no lamp, he did this night work by the light of two wax candles. When the faithful Kathi saw traces of these in the morning she scolded him severely, warning him to be more careful about his health. When she insisted that he compose only in the daytime, he would say contemptuously: "What do you know about such things? I have to compose whenever an idea comes to me."

Sometimes, other answers failing him, he tried naively to impress her with his importance, crying: "Do you know whom you are talking to? I am Bruckner!" "And I am Kathi," she retorted and that was the end of the argument. After his death she said of him: "He was rude, but good!"

On the eighteenth of December, 1892, occurred the most impressive performance of his career, when the Philharmonic played his *Eighth Symphony*. Realizing the unprecedented depth of this work, a profundity which only movements of the most colossal proportions could cope with, Bruckner had been much worried concerning the welcome it would receive from the public. The performance, however, was superb and aroused the greatest enthusiasm. Just before the *Finale* the exasperated Hanslick rose to take his leave and received an ovation such as only the consummate villain of the play is given upon a particularly effective exit.

Bruckner's condition at this time was already causing his doctors much concern and it was only owing to the extreme importance of the occasion that they permitted him to be present.

At the close of the symphony, which had been the sole number on the program, the applause was tremendous and threatened never to end. Bruckner, after countless bows to the audience, turned and bowed to the famous orchestra which had at last been won over to his side. It was a true triumph, the first unqualified victory he had ever gained in Vienna. The critics called it the "crown of nineteenth century music," "the masterpiece of the Bruckner style." Hugo Wolf wrote: "The work renders all criticism futile; the *Adagio* is absolutely incomparable." Even the "holdout," Kalbeck, at last admitted, "Bruckner is a master of instrumentation," and "the symphony is worthy of its sole position on the program."

Bruckner was most unhappy that increasing illness often made it impossible for him to hear his own works, the performances of which were becoming ever more frequent. He had been put on a strict diet. "Even my favorite Pilsner beer is forbidden me," he complained to his former teacher

Kitzier. His badly swollen feet rendered organ playing out of the question and he had to remain in bed most of the time. Nevertheless it was this same suffering Bruckner who wrote the rollicking *Scherzo* of the *Ninth Symphony*, perhaps the most vital of all his lighter movements.

The end of 1893 saw such an improvement in his condition that he was even permitted a trip to Berlin. This change for the better was, alas, only temporary, for the following days brought such an enduring relapse that he could not attend the first performance of his *Fifth Symphony* in Graz, under that young eagle of the baton, Franz Schalk, April 8, 1894. A devoted pupil of Bruckner, Schalk had fervently embraced the enormously difficult undertaking of love involved in the study and production of this mighty work, with its irresistibly inspiring climax. Only the presence of the ailing master was lacking to render the occasion as happy as it was musically important.

During the summer Bruckner was sufficiently recovered to return to the rustic surroundings of his earlier years, but his seventieth birthday was celebrated quietly, by order of the Viennese doctor who had accompanied him. Telegrams of congratulation and best wishes streamed into the little town of Steyr from all corners of the earth. Articles about him and his work appeared in all the newspapers. The people of Linz bestowed on him the key of the city; he was elected honorary member of countless musical organizations. In short, not a single sign of esteem the earth might show its kings of tone was now withheld from the ailing genius. The glory he had richly earned twenty years before now came to him when the greatest joy he could reveal at the realization of his universal recognition was a wistful smile in which life-long spiritual pain lurked behind the ghost of a belated happiness.

Unexpectedly, what seemed a swift recovery, in the fall of 1894., found him once more ascending the platform at the university to resume his lectures on musical theory. Only a few such days of grace were granted his shattered body by relentless Fate, for two weeks later he stood for the last time before his beloved students. From then on his health declined steadily and even his mental condition suffered from erratic spells. He was compelled to abandon his *Ninth Symphony* at the close of the third movement, an *Adagio* which, he told friends, was the most beautiful he had ever composed. From sketches found among his posthumous effects we know it had been his intention to add to this glorious work a purely

instrumental *finale*, perhaps in the manner of the closing portion of his *Tragic Symphony*.

Yet, little though he realized it, when the last note of this *Adagio* dies out there is no expectation unfulfilled. It is as if he has confessed all, poured out his very soul in this music, so that the work he despaired of ever finishing, the work he died thinking incomplete, now strikes the listener as a perfect symphony-unit needing no prescribed *finale*.

On January 12, 1896, he heard his *Te Deum*, its performance in Vienna having been recommended by no other than Brahms himself, who at last seems to have changed his attitude towards the man he had opposed for years. This was the last time Bruckner ever heard one of his own works. The very last music he listened to in public was Wagner's *Liebesmahl der Apostel*. It was much like a musical farewell-greeting from the Master he had esteemed above all others in his lifetime. During the summer of that year Bayreuth was prepared for the worst, for a strong rumor was afoot that Bruckner was dying. Yet his gigantic vitality outlived the season. Not till October 11 did the dreaded moment come. It was a Sunday. In the morning he had occupied himself with the sketches for the *Finale* of the *Ninth Symphony*. There seemed nothing alarming about his condition. At three in the afternoon he suddenly complained of feeling cold and asked for a cup of tea. A friend who was with him helped him to bed, but no sooner did he appear comfortable, when he breathed once or twice heavily and all was over.

At the burial service Ferdinand Loewe conducted the *Adagio* of the *Seventh Symphony*. Hugo Wolf was refused entry into the church on the ground that he was not a member of any of the "Societies" participating. Brahms, a very sick old man, stood outside the gate, but refused to enter. Someone heard him mutter sadly: "It will be my turn soon," and then he sighed and went wearily home.

In accordance with Bruckner's implicit wish his remains were taken to St. Florian where they lie buried under the mighty organ that had been his best friend and into the golden majesty of which he had on innumerable occasions poured the troubled confessions of his tragic life.

FB2 document info

Document ID: b4a20b65-6354-4a92-bb70-cb101fb0d17c

Document version: 1

Document creation date: 2005-06-29

Created using: FB Tools software

Document authors :

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