

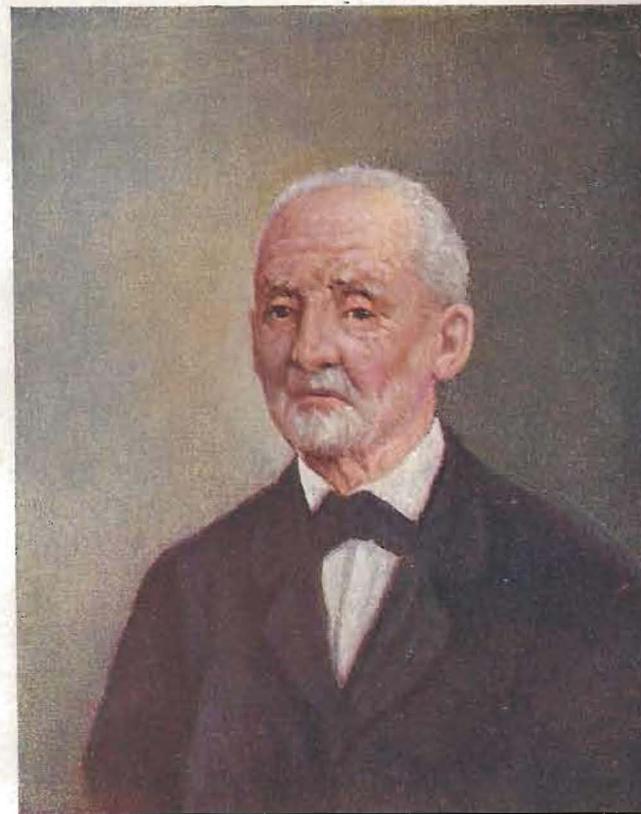
## Bruckner.

Four years before the death of Franz Schubert, the fifth and last of the so-called classics, but himself already in great part to be reckoned among the romanticists, the first of these was born in the person of Bruckner, called Master of the Symphony as well.

Actually connected with Vienna this great composer was only from the time that he was appointed court organist in 1867 until his death in 1896. He lived for many years in a house in the very center of one of Vienna's busiest streets, the Schottenring, opposite the Wiener Bankverein. In this house the master wrote most of his finest compositions. His dwelling was on the top floor, and one of his pupils who visited him there describes it as having been very simple. When he rang the bell, having come by appointment, the master himself opened the door, as he kept no regular servant and had only a charwoman in

the forenoon, an ignorant person who could neither read nor write, but knew exactly where to find any desired manuscript of the many that lay in neat parcels on the floor along the walls of the ante-room. In his study a venerable-looking piano occupied the center. It no doubt contained more snuff than resonance. The rest of the articles in the room were a table, an arm-chair and a chest of drawers, upon which lay several scores and a crucifix was standing. No carpet, no curtains softened the severity of the furnishings.

During these years his figure, which retained much of the rustic look of the days of his youth, was a familiar sight in the streets of Vienna. He was easily distinguished by his square form, always clad in black cloth of country cut, the pantaloons unusually wide and leaving the ankles free, while a broad-brimmed soft hat covered his rugged head. In the throng of elegant promenaders he did not fail to attract attention, and heads were often turned around as he passed by. As a rule he had an absent-minded and serious look, but when he awoke from his abstraction a pleasant light came into his eyes and a good-natured smile spread over his features, revealing the simple-mindedness of his nature. One involuntarily recalls the figure of Beethoven wandering



*Bruckner*

solitary in the country roads of his beloved Heiligenstadt, far from the madding crowd.

From his peasant origin Bruckner retained the habit of what may almost be termed servility in his intercourse with others, and he was always ready to adapt his opinions to theirs. A characteristic illustration of this and his conciliatory manner, even when already at the height of his fame, may be seen from the following: Whenever Hans Richter, the celebrated conductor, appeared in the Musikverein for the rehearsal of a Bruckner Symphony, he had to fight a silent battle with Bruckner who was already waiting for him and could not be restrained from submissively helping him off with his overcoat. During the rehearsal he usually took up his stand behind Richter at the conductor's desk, and when the execution of a passage pleased him particularly, he turned up his eyes ecstatically and blew kisses in every direction. Now and then Richter would turn to him with the question: "Is this the way you want it done?" And Bruckner, bending almost to the ground in his submissiveness, hastened to answer each time: "Yes, yes, Herr Hofkapellmeister, just so, just so, no other way!" At this Richter, quite reassured, gave his attention again to the score, but Bruckner, who just then was not quite satisfied with the

rendering, at once made an eloquent grimace behind the conductor's back and signified to the Philharmonic men with upraised hands that he was not at all content. When at this Richter suddenly turned around and said pretty energetically: "Well, say how you want it, say it to my face!", Bruckner, shrinking into himself in deep humility, replied quite crushed: "But Herr Hofkapellmeister, just so, just so, no other way!"

Anton Bruckner was a romanticist of the most genial kind. He was born at Ansfelden in Upper Austria on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1824, and was taught music by his father, a school-master like Schubert's father, who likewise gave his son the first lessons in music. Orphaned at the age of twelve, he was admitted to the monastery of St. Florian. Among extremely adverse conditions, later as teacher and organist in the monastery, he was in the main an autodidact in music, but became such a master of counterpoint and so excellent an organist, that at the competitive examination for the post of organist in the Cathedral of Linz he went forth victorious. He made repeated trips to Vienna in order to perfect himself in counterpoint with Sechter as his teacher, whose successor as court organist in Vienna he eventually became in 1867, when he was also ap-

pointed professor of the organ and of counterpoint at the Vienna Conservatory. In 1875 he received the post of lector of music at the Vienna University which conferred on him the title of doctor of philosophy in 1891. As organ player Bruckner made a triumphant progress through many European countries, including France and England, playing in Paris in 1869 and London in 1871. In 1865 Bruckner attended a performance of "Tristan and Isolde" in Munich and became an enthusiastic admirer of Wagner, whose orchestral style thenceforth had great influence on him. His third Symphony in D minor he dedicated to Wagner, who spoke of it in terms of warm praise. The impressive adagio in the E major Symphony was written in a spirit of melancholy at the news of the approaching death of Richard Wagner. The great success of this symphony at Leipsic in 1884 and at Munich in 1885 set all the world talking of Bruckner, whose name till then had been little known, thanks to the machinations of the Anti-Wagnerians. Of the nine symphonies composed by Bruckner, the third, fourth and seventh are best known and most often performed. Only the first three movements of his last symphony were completed by him in the order of Allegro, Scherzo and Adagio, when death stayed his hand. The severe physical suf-

ering of his last years prevented Bruckner from completing this symphony, and he had the wish that his "Te Deum" should be used for the finale, although such a close does not appear to be necessary. The wonderful adagio of this symphony, which closes the manuscript, is permeated with a spirit that soars beyond earthly matters, a veritable "farewell to life", as Bruckner himself called it. The symphony had its first performance in Vienna on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1903, and created a sensational effect.

When Bruckner retired from his post at the Vienna Conservatory, in 1891, the Emperor Francis Joseph allotted to him a dwelling in a side-wing of the Prince Eugen palace known as the Belvedere. In this dwelling Bruckner was relieved from his sufferings by death on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1896.

The one hundredth anniversary of Anton Bruckner's birth was celebrated in an impressive manner on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1924, at the foot of the fine memorial erected to him in the Stadtpark of Vienna. On the same day a tablet commemorating this centennial was affixed to the house on the Schottenring in which the master had once dwelt.



*Bruckner Monument.*