Anton Bruckner was born into a schoolmaster's family in the province of Upper Austria, and grew up in a semi-rural environment. From childhood on, it was his ambition to become a teacher like his father. Bruckner was educated at the Abbey of St. Florian, where he also held his first position; he maintained close ties with the abbey for the rest of his life. The profession of organist, which was to make Bruckner famous throughout Europe, seems to have been of little interest to him at the start, for he almost had to be forced into it in 1856. A certain disinclination to changes in his personal situation remained characteristic of him; twelve years later he hesitated before finally accepting a professor's position in Vienna, a post which proved to offer greater freedom for composing. Nor could it be said that his musical career got off to a flying start: Bruckner was 38 before he finished his musical studies. The compositions of that period, moreover, are scarcely more than traditional run-of-the-mill, predominantly church music and works for male chorus; the decisive change in Bruckner as an artist did not take place until 1864.

At every period there have been composers who were at variance with the times; they are not prepared to accept compromises that run counter to their conscience as an artist; on the other hand, they are not capable of pushing their work on to success by more or less ruthless and dictatorial methods. Bruckner was one such composer. To make matters worse, his chief impediment was himself. There is no lack of contemporary evidence about how awkward and unworldly he was; his behaviour was often childish and sometimes downright foolish; he was naive in the extreme, and had a capacity for self-doubt that bordered on a sense of inferiority. His excessive modesty and obsequiousness took on at times the character of self-denial. One will not go wrong in assuming that the monastic upbringing in the Abbey of St. Florian aggravated these traits of temperament to a considerable degree. That same upbringing, however, laid the foundations of Bruckner's unshakable Christian faith. This he never doubted or even so much as reflected upon. In the last years of his life, Bruckner's faith became something of an obsession (he kept "prayer diaries" and suffered from religious delusions), but that very faith in God made it possible for him to carry on in the face of adversity and to overcome the psychic crises and thoughts of suicide that beset him from time to time. The nervous breakdown he suffered in 1867 – the aftermath was a three-months' cure in Bad Kreuzen – was the longest and the worst, but it was not the last; in later years he was oppressed by the criticism levelled at him in Vienna (he referred to it as his "martyrdom") which led to similar psychic crises. Bruckner, whose robust physical constitution belied his extremely sensitive response to his surroundings, whose outward behaviour often enough gave occasion for ridicule, found himself with his "unfashionable" compositions in a very exposed position as an artist; so much so, in fact, that the continued existence of his work, given the conditions then obtaining in musical life, in the concert industry and musical criticism, was by no means a foregone conclusion.

After calling Bruckner's compositions "unfashionable," let us hasten to add that the meaning of the word "fashionable" or "up-to-date" is not unequivocal. Calling for a change in current fashions is one way of being up-to-date. But the same term is also used to denote being in agreement with just those current fashions, which agreement may be general or limited to a minority. In the arts the difference in the degree to which current fashions are accepted can be said to be the difference between "tradition" and the "avant-garde." At every period one group of artists stands closer to tradition and thus can usually reckon with the general approval of the public. Likewise, the progressive artist will normally find a few of his fellows to agree with, and together they can wave the banner of progress (we need not go into the question as to whether this latter group may possibly be "unfashionable"). Unfashionable in any

event, however, is the artist who neither behaves in conformity with the traditionalists nor with the avant-garde. In the 1860s the musical avant-garde was composed of Richard Wagner, Franz Liszt and their circle. For them, progress meant the alliance of music with a programme, and the result was an almost exclusive interest in opera and the one-movement "symphonic poem"; the symphony, so-called "absolute music," they roundly condemned. Wagner's "Tristan" was performed for the first time in 1865, by which date Liszt had composed twelve symphonic poems. The avant-garde was established. Opposed to this circle were those composers who continued to write symphonies (mostly in four movements) in the Mendelssohn and Schumann succession. A symphonist named Brahms was not yet in the public eye; his First Symphony was not premiered until 1876.

This was the prevailing musical climate when Anton Bruckner appeared on the scene with his first symphonies. During the decade between 1864 and 1873 he evolved a concept of the symphony which from the outset was incompatible with the principles of the Wagner-Liszt circle, due to its lack of programmatic orientation. Compared to the symphonies of the traditionalist composers, however, that concept was so markedly individual that whatever bonds remained were no longer strong enough. Bruckner was isolated from what, by rights, should have been his natural allies.

Bruckner's concept of the symphony can be observed for the first time in its distinctive shape in his Third Symphony, which he finished on New Year's Eve of 1873. Almost ten years earlier, he had spoken his own musical language for the first time in his D minor Mass, composed in 1864 at the age of 40. There are no ties between this work and works of earlier years. The mass itself had been preceded by a Symphony in F minor which Bruckner wrote in 1863 while still a pupil of Otto Kitzler; the composer himself rejected it as "schoolwork". As an old man he wrote on the score of another symphony (D minor, 1863–1864) the words "doesn't count", "only a trial run", "null and void", "annulled". This latter work became known as the "Symphony No. 0" (in German, the "Nullte"). Between 1864 and 1873 then, came the three great masses and the Symphonies 1–3 (in Bruckner's numbering). The première of the Third Symphony took place in 1877; the outcome was a fiasco of catastrophic proportions. The audience left the hall during the movements, only a few of Bruckner's friends and pupils remaining until the end. Obviously the poisonous Viennese atmosphere of the time can certainly be held accountable for the initial failure of the Third. But we should also bear in mind that even the neutral members of the audience must have been at a loss and absolutely unable to cope with the originality of this symphony; after all, the performances of the "classicistic" Second Symphony in 1873 and 1876 had been a pronounced public success. Bruckner was deeply hurt by this defeat, just as he was by the repeated refusal of the Vienna Philharmonic to perform his symphonies in their regular concerts. Nevertheless, he was not diverted from his purpose. To be sure, he was always prepared to alter and revise when he judged it to be artistically defensible[1], but he did not change his basic symphony concept. By and large, it remained the same right through to the Ninth Symphony. To conclude from that, however, that the symphonies possessed no "unmistakable individuality" (Friedrich Blume: Bruckner, in: Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Vol. II, col. 368) is unjustified; the style of Bruckner's symphonies, which must be regarded separately from his symphony concept, changed from work to work. A discussion of details, unfortunately, exceeds the scope of the present article.

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The most striking mark of originality in Bruckner's symphonies is their length, approximately two times the customary proportions. Brahms's unkind words about the "symphonic anaconda" would seem to confirm that

all symphonic works which exceeded the length of Beethoven's Ninth threatened to strain the powers of concentration and absorption of late 19th-century audiences. As regards length, Beethoven's Ninth – the point of departure of Bruckner's symphony concept – can only be taken as a model to a limited degree, since its extension is primarily determined by the choral Finale. In Schubert's great Symphony in C major, on the other hand, certain of the features are found which Bruckner took as examples of extension: the themes are expanded, and for the most part worked up into thematic complexes which are self-contained and clearly set off from one another; the traditional closing group is developed into an independent third thematic complex, and within the exposition it is put on an equal footing with the first two groups (principal and subsidiary). Decisive for the formal structure and the expanded dimensions of Bruckner's symphony movements, however, is the "cumulation principle." (Translator's note: This seemed to me the least weak rendering of "steigern", which means to raise, heighten, increase, strengthen, enhance, intensify and enrich, all of which Bruckner's procedure does. The simplest form of a "Steigerung" is a rising thematic sequence; the most complex is the way in which whole blocks are expanded or more strongly instrumentated each time around.) Bruckner uses this principle in many ways: open cadences, interrupted cadential formulas and certain harmonic progressions often give his music a thrusting, forward-moving impetus; cumulations, frequently in combination with a crescendo that is abruptly broken off, are linked into large sections and lead to climaxes which are precisely graded in importance. It can happen that whole thematic complexes are laid out as cumulative progressions, for example the third thematic complex in the first movement of the Fourth Symphony: this complex consists of three fortissimo parts; each of them is reached by a cumulation, the first of which has the function of a transition. In the developments of the symphony movements, cumulative progressions followed by an orchestral tutti are a characteristic constructional element. The principle of thematic working-out is of minor importance by comparison. In the slow movements the cumulations come to have almost form-bursting powers: in the course of the movement the expanded song-form is more or less dropped by the wayside in favour of cumulations which ultimately bring about a point of absolute culmination which – to put it metaphorically – towers over all the previous peaks of the orchestral massif. The dynamic effect of this technique of composition is compensated by sharp caesuras, broadly expanded pedal-points, written-out ritardandos, and an often extended, spun-out ending to individual sections of the form, such as the exposition.

A further peculiarity of Bruckner's symphonic writing is the religious tone which is manifested in extremely varied ways. It is most clearly expressed in the chorale themes which, beginning with the Third Symphony, appear in the form of quotations. From the Sixth Symphony on, certain themes themselves have a chorale-like flavour. Bruckner constructs these chorale melodies in free imitation of a liturgical model; the chorale-like motives in Wagner's "Tannhäuser", "Lohengrin" and "Die Meistersinger" were probably not without influence on them. To match the ecclesiastical mood of the chorales, Bruckner's instrumentation leans heavily in the direction of organ tone. The reason is understandable. Bruckner was the greatest organist of his time in Austria. The report of the examining committee before which he appeared in 1861 at the conclusion of his studies with Simon Sechter also mentioned his qualities as an organist. On concert tours to Nancy, Paris and London, Bruckner's improvisations brought him European renown. Throughout his life, Bruckner had, so to speak, the sound of the organ in his ear, and that instrument had an enduring effect on his technique of orchestration. This is noticeable above all in the abrupt changes of tone colour which are comparable to changes of registration on the organ. These tone-colour blocks can have a certain rigidity about them; they usually do not vary in character, and thus differ fundamentally from Wagner's sound mixtures with their constantly shifting colour values.

Bruckner considered himself primarily a symphonist, but this did not prevent him from thinking of his orchestral works as manifestations of faith. The dedication of the Ninth Symphony "To the Dear Lord" and the quotations in his symphonies from the D minor and F minor Mass and the Te Deum can be interpreted in this sense. In the slow movement of the Second Symphony (bar 181 ff.) Bruckner quotes the theme of the bass solo from the Benedictus of his F minor Mass. He himself stated that the point was to express his gratefulness at his recovery from the serious psychic crisis of 1867. But more frequent than literal quotations are reminiscences of motives from his great sacred vocal works; they give his music a character which he himself regarded as religious. This corresponds to the feelings which the chorale-like nature of many themes of his later compositions evoke in the listener. Thus Bruckner's symphonies are distinguished by a religious avowal which is foreign to the music of his great antipodes, Brahms and Wagner.

The relationships between Bruckner's masses and his symphonies have on occasion been

very strongly emphasized. In his book on Bruckner Hans Ferdinand Redlich, for example (Bruckner and Mahler, p. 51f.), speaks of an "affinity of mass and symphony" and believes that the symphony movements, with the exception of the scherzo, "could easily be transformed into sections of a mass by way of 'parody,' in the technical sense of the ecclesiastical practice in earlier centuries." But whether the return of the principal theme of the first movement at the end of the Finale is in fact "an exact parallel to the interrelationship between the 'Kyrie' and 'Dona nobis pacem' in his masses" (D minor and F minor) must be doubted. In the composition of masses this technique follows a hard and fast tradition; such a procedure in the symphony is the result of other intentions. The principal theme appears – after what is usually a long, tension-laden cumulation – not only as the crowning conclusion of the coda, but also as the goal of the whole symphony. This pointing towards a goal obviously has nothing to do with the pianissimo ending of a mass. Closer at hand is the idea of a thematic apotheosis deriving from the concluding section of a fugue (Alfred Orel: Anton Bruckner, p. 136), an idea which Bruckner as an organist would have had, so to speak, at his fingertips.

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As we have mentioned, the fact that Bruckner did not base his compositions on a programme, but wrote "absolute" music, made his symphonies "unfashionable" in the eyes of the Wagner-Liszt set. Nevertheless, his relations with Wagner played a crucial rôle throughout his life. Wagner's operas gave him decisive impulses for his work. In December 1862, Otto Kitzler, the opera conductor in Linz, showed Bruckner the score of "Tannhäuser," and in February 1863 Bruckner heard the two performances of the opera in Linz; in the next two years, Bruckner studied "Lohengrin" and the "Flying Dutchman" preparatory to the Linz productions of those operas; in 1865 he saw the third performance of "Tristan" in Munich, after a friend from Linz, Moritz von Mayfeld, had already introduced him to the work. Bruckner emphasized over and over again the importance of "Tannhäuser" for him; Wagner's music brought his own personal idiom to the fore. With the D minor Mass of 1864 Bruckner – after two transitional works in 1863–1864 (the choral work "Germanenzug" and the "Symphony No. 0") – suddenly emerged as an original and independent composer.

During a stay in Munich in 1865, Bruckner became personally acquainted with Wagner. In September 1873 he travelled one day from Marienbad to nearby Bayreuth with the scores of his Second and Third Symphony in his suitcase. At the time, Wagner was extremely busy with the construction of the festival theatre. That he condescended to look at the scores at all can probably be ascribed to his vanity which reacted favourably to Bruckner's flattering and devout words. But it must have been his artistic perception which caused him to accede to Bruckner's wishes that he accept the dedication of one of the symphonies (he decided on the Third). Comments made by Wagner to other persons prove that he recognized Bruckner's qualities as a composer; and he must surely have appreciated the homage paid him by the quotations from "Tristan" and "Die Walküre" in Bruckner's Third Symphony[2]. Apart from this, however, there was in reality no common ground, no avenue of understanding between the two. Wagner was quite prepared to accept Bruckner's veneration – the dedication of the Third Symphony reads "with deepest respect" – but he probably did not take him really seriously for all that; in any event, Wagner did not retract his words about the symphony having ended with Beethoven. Nor did he make any effort to have the Third Symphony performed, and his later remark to Bruckner that he intended to have all his symphonies played can scarcely have been meant sincerely. Even so, Wagner's behaviour gave the "Wagnerites" the impression that Bruckner was one of their number. Shortly after his pilgrimage to Bayreuth, on October 15, 1873, Bruckner became a member of the "Wiener Akademischer Richard Wagner-Verein" (Vienna Academic Richard Wagner Society). By doing so, he was drawn into the fray between the "New Germans" and the conservatives, which was conducted nowhere with more venom and vehemence than in Vienna.

After the première of the Second Symphony on October 26, 1873, August Wilhelm Ambros, a fellow-professor at the Vienna Conservatory, referred to Bruckner as a "Wagner epigone" for the first time; this was the cue for all the opponents of Wagner to take the field against Bruckner too. The critic Eduard Hanslick, who had been well disposed to Bruckner at first, was still generally benevolent in his review of the Second Symphony, but he did find fault with the work's prolixity – a criticism which he later was to hurl at Bruckner again and again, along with disparaging remarks about his lack of musical logic. One year later Hanslick took a completely anti-Bruckner course by preventing his appointment to a paid position as a lecturer at the University of Vienna. Criticism from conservative quarters was triggered by fears that Bruckner sought to "transfer Wagner's dramatic style to the symphony" – as Hanslick put it on the occasion of the première of the Eighth. But Bruckner's critics did not realize that although many details are reminis-

cent of Wagner, this danger actually did not exist. Just as little noticed was the fact that Beethoven's Ninth was Bruckner's model; despite the originality of his symphonies, that model can be clearly recognized. Considering that the anti-Bruckner faction invoked Beethoven (among others) in defence of its own aesthetic views, it is surprising that the presence of Beethoven in Bruckner should have been overlooked or ignored. Perhaps we should take it as a sign of how strong critical prejudice against Bruckner was.

Bruckner's ties to the Wagner circle prevented a fair hearing for his symphonies for years, and led critics to over-emphasize the influence that Wagner actually had on him. The Wagnerites may have over-estimated it too, for they entered the lists for Bruckner's symphonies, particularly the leading Wagner conductors of the day. The Vienna Wagner Society did its part with piano performances and lectures. But these activities, important as they were for the spread of Bruckner's music, had one aspect which diminished their value somewhat: the preoccupation of conductors and sponsors with programmatic music led in many instances to false interpretations of Bruckner's symphonies. The composer himself was partly to blame by making after-the-fact programmatic references to his Fourth and Eighth Symphony. The "programmes", however, are so threadbare that they should be understood solely as a sign of private associations in the mind of the composer.

There is no denying that reminiscences of Wagnerian themes are found frequently in Bruckner's symphonies; colouristic effects, the orchestral apparatus and certain details of the "cumulation" technique can also be traced back to Wagner. But all this is of secondary importance, even if listeners at the time found it especially conspicuous. More important for Bruckner's music were Wagner's harmonic innovations in "Tristan." They encouraged Bruckner to liberate himself from the bonds of traditional harmony in a similar way in his Eighth and Ninth Symphony, and it was above all the harmony of those last two works which had such a strong influence on Gustav Mahler. If Bruckner drew inspiration from Wagner's style, he also did so from non-Wagnerian stylistic elements, for example Renaissance harmony and true polyphony. Contrapuntal means are an outstanding feature of Bruckner's technique of development; extreme cases of this practice are the fugues in the Finale of the Fifth and the unfinished last movement of the Ninth Symphony.

In their conception, Bruckner's symphonies were decidedly "un-Wagnerian" from the outset. In this respect, Wagner's favourable opinion of Bruckner is not without paradoxical overtones. Nevertheless, that blessing, with all its consequences, must be regarded as a marvellous stroke of luck for Bruckner; after all, it was the "Wagnerites" who were chiefly responsible for his symphonies ultimately winning over the concert public. The price Bruckner paid for success was a certain degree of falsification of the "unfashionable" aspects of his music at the time. Not until the 1930s and '40s did research into Bruckner's style and the autograph and other sources make it possible to identify those falsifications. This process culminated in the restoration of the original versions, in which Bruckner's symphonies are usually played today.

[1] The exception was the Eighth Symphony. Here Bruckner did bow to the wishes of the conductor Hermann Levi for a revision of the work, without being convinced of its necessity. Bruckner also consented to the revisions made by his pupils, but he did not authorize them. The same applied to them that applied to the cuts he himself suggested, namely his remark that what we call today the original versions should be saved for a "future time".

[2] In the first version of the Third Symphony Bruckner quoted the "sleep" motive from "Die Walküre"; he had heard "Wotan's Farewell and the Magic Fire Music" in the Wagner concert of May 2, 1872.

(Translation: Eugene Hartzell)

Life and Work at a Glance

1824	Born at Ansfelden (September 4).
1837–40	After his father's death, a choirboy at the Abbey of St. Florian.
1840–45	Training school at Linz, and assistant teacher at Windhaag and Kronstorf.
1845–55	"Official" assistant teacher at St. Florian.
1848	Abbey organist (officially from 1851).
1855	High school teaching examination.
1856–68	Cathedral organist at Linz.
1855–61	Theory lessons with Simon Sechter in Vienna.
1860–61, 68	Choirmaster of a male choral society in Linz.
1861–63	Lessons in Linz with Otto Kitzler (orchestration and form).
1862–63	Studies the score of "Tannhäuser".
1863	Student symphony in F minor.
1863–64	Symphony "No. 0" in D minor.
1864	Mass in D minor.
1865–66	First Symphony in C minor, 1st ("Linz") version (1st perf. 1868 in Linz).
1866	Mass in E minor.
1867–68	Mass in F minor.
1868–96	Vienna. Professor of thorough-bass, counterpoint and organ at the Conservatory. Court organist (provisional post in the court chapel).
1869, 1871	Organ tours to Nancy, Paris and London.
1869–72	Second Symphony in C minor, 1st version (1st perf. 1873 in Vienna).
1872–73	Third Symphony in D minor, 1st version.
1873	Journey to Bayreuth. Joins Viennese Wagner Society.
1874	Fourth Symphony in E flat major ("Romantic"), 1st version.
1875	Honorary lectureship in harmony and counterpoint at the university (with fixed salary from 1877).
1875–76	Fifth Symphony in B flat major (revision 1876–78, 1st perf. 1894 in Graz). Second Symphony, 2nd version (1st perf. 1876 in Vienna).
1876–77	Third Symphony, 2nd version (1st perf. 1877 in Vienna).
1876, 1882	Trips to Bayreuth: 1st perf. "Ring des Nibelungen" and "Parsifal" respectively.
1877	Second Symphony, 3rd version (1st perf. 1894 in Vienna).
1878	"Active" member of the court chapel.
1878–79	String Quintet in F major.
1878–80	Fourth Symphony, 2nd version (1st perf. 1881 in Vienna).
1879–81	Sixth Symphony in A major (1st perf. of the 2nd and 3rd movements 1883, first complete performance 1899, both in Vienna).
1881–83	Seventh Symphony in E major (1st perf. 1884 in Leipzig).
1881–84	Te Deum.
1884–87	Eighth Symphony in C minor, 1st version.
1887–90	Eighth Symphony, 2nd version (1st perf. 1892 in Vienna).
1887–94	Ninth Symphony in D minor, 1st–3rd movements (1st perf. 1903 in Vienna).
1888–89	Third Symphony, 3rd version (1st perf. 1890 in Vienna).
1890–91	First Symphony, 2nd ("Vienna") version (1st perf. 1891 in Vienna).
1891	Honorary doctorate from Vienna University.
1895–96	Ninth Symphony, 4th movement
1896	Dies in Vienna (October 11).