

ANTON BRUCKNER (1824-1896)

From his early childhood, through many years of struggle for achievement, to his last request to be buried in the church of Sankt Florian, Anton Bruckner never wavered in his profound belief in the Almighty God. His religion, the Catholic faith, was to him a necessity of life, a mode of living. His devoutness was nurtured by the environment in which he grew up. He was born in a small Austrian village where church-bells reminded folks to say the Lord's Prayer and where the town-priest was authority. His formative years were spent as a choir-boy in residence at a monastery, with the daily routine of devotional rituals and exercises. His professional career as a musician began as a church-organist. No wonder that Bruckner's initial compositions were written for religious services.

When Bruckner later developed as a composer of symphonies, he still interspersed his work with religious compositions, some of them on a large scale: Mass in E Minor (1866); Mass in F Minor (1867-8); Te Deum in C Major (1881); Psalm 150 (1892).

It is said that Bruckner found peace of mind in writing the Mass in E Minor after a disappointment caused by the rejection of one of his marriage-proposals. Bruckner fell in love quite often and usually with lovelies of much younger age. This time, it was Jossfine Lang, the 17 year-old daughter of a butcher. A golden watch and a prayer-book, which he had sent as gifts, had been returned to him with a note that she was too young to marry this 44 year-old suitor.

It took Bruckner only three months to write the Mass in E Minor which was completed on November 25, 1866. The work had been commissioned by Bishop Rudigier in Linz. Since it was to be performed in the open air, Bruckner planned it without string-instruments and organ, scoring it for chorus without solo parts; the accompaniment is for 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns (tuned in pairs), 2 trumpets, and 3 trombones.

The first performance took place at the cathedral in Linz on September 29, 1869 under Bruckner's own direction on the occasion of the consecration of a new chapel. It gave Bruckner his first public recognition as a composer and he remembered the event as "one of the most glorious days of my life."

MASS NO. 2 in E Minor

KYRIE
GLORIA
CREDO
SANCTUS
BENEDICTUS
AGNUS DEI



ANTON BRUCKNER (1824-1896) *Austria*

Following in the steps of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven came a number of great 'romantic' composers in Germany and Austria who wrote 'symphonic' music on a grand scale. Like Beethoven, Bruckner wrote nine symphonies that are big, noble works full of rich music. Although his works seem large and complicated, Bruckner was at heart a simple and religious man. He allowed all kinds of people, including his pupils, to re-write and arrange his music for him and the musical scholars are only just sorting out what Bruckner himself really wrote, so that we can hear his works as he originally intended them.

Program Notes by

FRANK J. PLASH

The BRUCKNER SOCIETY
OF AMERICA Inc.