

Ten years of Anton Bruckner in the ether - a radio report

Just as one can judge the importance of a composer during his lifetime by the frequency and selection of the works performed and the manner of the reviews and specialist articles dedicated to him, his position with posterity and its development are also reflected in these criteria. The reception history of Bruckner's work for the first few years after Bruckner's death is reasonably well recorded, especially for the anniversary years 1921 and 1924 and even 1936, but a representative overview for the years in between and the years that followed is still missing. The radio broadcasts that can be verified since 1924 can represent a reflection of Bruckner's position in the general concert business and are easier to survey because of their numerical limitations at that time and easier to evaluate as a representative of the abundance in the concert offer. The institution "radio" also helped the Bruckner reception to additional aspects, which will also be addressed in the following.

It is not surprising that "Bruckner im Äther" turns out to be the domain of the Austrian and German broadcasters, since this distribution also corresponds to the representation of Bruckner in worldwide cultural life. Since this essay only wants to enable a first acquaintance with this partial aspect, it offers a strictly chronological compilation of all Bruckner events of the first ten years of the new medium - special features are pointed out at the appropriate place.

It is remarkable, for example, that unknown ensembles and (still) unknown conductors were able to have their say and introduce themselves to a broader public through the radio broadcasts. This applies in particular to the concerts on March 31, 1930 (British Women's Orchestra), July 26, 1930 (Badgasteiner Kurorchester), February 23, 1933 (Sinfonieorchester der Schutzpolizei Berlin) and September 2, 1933 (Glove Makers' Choir).

The radio also helped music lovers to become aware of concert venues away from the Bruckner "mainstream", such as Breslau, Dessau, Königsberg or Frankfurt, and at the same time increased the level of awareness of the up-and-coming Bruckner specialists on the conductor's podium.

The radio programs can also be used to document concerts that would never have been recorded in conventional performance reports. Representative here are event-related performances or concerts outside of the usual concert series, such as the performance for the inauguration of the first Berlin bishop in the Sportpalast on November 20, 1929, the monster concert in Salzburg on July 26, 1930, the (presumed open-air) concert in the Lewisohn Stadium in New York on August 21, 1930, the provisionally last sound of the Bruckner organ on December 28, 1930, the performance of the 8th symphony in the world's largest movie theater on January 4, 1931, the musical accompaniment to state celebrations (11 August 1928) or at the Catholic Days (October 4, 1931, September 4, 1932, September 11-13, 1933)

Since there was no way at that time (before 1935) to make sound recordings of concerts and broadcast them later, the broadcasters had to either broadcast concerts by the established orchestras live or organize concerts themselves, if not, mainly for late broadcast dates, had access to vinyl (March 30, 1934). From the very beginning, the radio orchestras played an important role in the reception of Bruckner. Their workload must have been above average, because they often had to play very late at night - see January 4, 1934 - and had no opportunity for retouching or corrections during their live

performances. After a performance of the 4th symphony (on November 5, 1929) it was said: "The horn wobbled at the very outset of the work".

Another special feature for all orchestras was that only limited broadcasting time was available for the concerts. Based on the concert lengths that can often be determined, it can be deduced that either Bruckner's works were played at a faster tempo than we consider it usual and appropriate today, or that they were also performed in a much shorter form. Cuts are indicated in many reviews of the time (not just of the radio concerts); their extent and impact (e.g. omission of the scherzo-da-capos?) is nowhere exactly recorded. However, they must have been so self-evident that their absence justified a special reference, as was the case with the 8th symphony under Klemperer on January 20, 1929. Another possibility of saving time could have been the omission of entire individual sentences. There are no indications of this either; on the contrary, the not so rare indication of the movement names in the radio newspapers suggests that all movements were played (cf. March 7, 1926). In any case, the broadcast times stimulate thought and pondering.

An advantage of radio broadcasts that should not be underestimated - this does not mean the broadcasters' own productions, which were mostly broadcast locally - lies in the fact that such live concerts were often taken over by many other broadcasters, including foreign broadcasters. In this way, Bruckner could be conveyed to a larger audience throughout Europe, as is the case for the concerts conducted by Franz Schalk on April 15, 1929 and April 27, 1931, or for Toscanini's performance of the 7th Symphony in New York on March 8, 1931, which was performed in several American states and Canada.

Broadcasters were also able to run Bruckner cycles in a very different way than established concert promoters. In the period under study, the Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk in Leipzig excelled, bringing a variety of orchestras, conductors and performance venues into play (in the 1932/33 season). The broadcasts that got by without music may have been particularly meritorious. While introductory lectures before concerts and newspaper articles about Bruckner were previously intended for local listeners and readers, broadcasts with this content now reached a much larger audience. The four-part lecture series by Fritz Ohrmann from October 6, 1928, which was repeated shortly after the first broadcast, should be mentioned here. Well-known Bruckner specialists such as Franz Moissl, Alfred Orel, Ernst Decsey, Vincenz Goller, Oskar Lang and Franz Xaver Müller also used the new medium. The first activity of the Bruckner Society of America was a Bruckner lecture by member Joseph Hauber on March 3, 1931. Finally, radio also made possible innovations such as a review of the concert immediately after it ended (after a Mengelberg concert on December 1 1927) or the offer of work introductions, usually before the broadcast or during the concert break (November 11, 1926, October 1, 1930, March 8, 1931). This "educational" endeavor is also expressed in detailed Bruckner articles or work introductions in radio program magazines (cf. April 27, 1931).

Since the Social Democratic newspaper "Vorwärts" had to cease publication on February 28, 1933, its reliable reporting on the Berlin concert events and their radio broadcasts also ended. Newspapers from English-speaking countries such as the USA, Canada, Great Britain and Australia were also evaluated for the present overview; a further entry in the Bruckner database is planned. However, the lion's share of the finds presented here is due to the radio magazine Radio Wien, which provided detailed information about the programs of the German and other European broadcasters, especially in the early years. What

has been found so far provides sufficient material on the sub-aspect "broadcasting" within the Bruckner reception.

Although it is certainly not possible to evaluate all relevant sources for the present collection of material and there is therefore a risk of an unrepresentative result, it can be assumed simply because of the history of the work's genesis and Bruckner's origin from a special cultural environment (in an Austrian context) that Bruckner's work in Central Europe had to meet with a greater response than in America, which, with its sometimes very Hanslick-like rejection, followed Europe's "mistakes" with a time delay. This phenomenon also has an impact on broadcast acceptance, which reflects the difference between the old and new worlds. The dominance of the Central European broadcasters is reflected in the sheer number of programs offered. However, Europeans must take the palm of victories due to the first Bruckner broadcaster, the Pacific Coast Broadcasting Station, General Electric Company Frequency 960 kilocycles. (312 meters)".

The following chronological compilation of all broadcasts on the subject of Bruckner that have become known so far in the first ten years provides a glimpse of the phenomena discussed above and could stimulate further special investigations.

A short statistical summary can be found at the end of the following list.