

Gijs van der Meijden

Bruckner's Ninth: a Final word?

Or,

A musical layman's thoughts on the viability of a completion of the
Finale to Bruckner's Ninth Symphony, and the necessity of hearing it.



(3rd revised version, ©December 2017)

Contents:

Introduction	Page 3
I. Unfinished, yet complete?	Page 5
II. Intermezzo: A key relationship	Page 9
III. The final pieces	Page 13
III/1. What is left of what was left	Page 14
III/2. The <i>Te Deum</i> as Finale?	Page 16
III/3. Filling in and filling out.	Page 19
III/4. Some final conclusions	Page 26
IV. The Finale, a personal survey	Page 29
V. Recordings of various completions	Page 34
Sebastien Létochart	Page 37
William Carragan	Page 40
Nicola Samale, John Alan Philips, Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, Giuseppe Mazzuca (SPCM)	Page 43
Nors S. Josephson	Page 49
Gerd Schaller	Page 51
Addendum; how <u>not</u> to do it: Peter Jan Marthé	Page 54
Final thoughts	Page 55
Illustrations	Page 56
Some suggestions for further reading	Page 59
Post scriptum: acknowledgments	Page 61

Introduction

On the issue of the unfinished Finale to Bruckner's Ninth Symphony several very worthwhile articles and essays have been written by experts, of which those written by the actual completers are of prime interest here. The present essay was written by someone who is neither a musician nor a scholar in any way but who tries to present a "layman's view". It was written without any pretence and should not be read as having any.



1: *Bust of Brutus* (Michelangelo) (Wikimedia)

Virtually every creative artist in history has left unfinished or incomplete works (if only their last ones because the artist died before (s)he could finish his/her final work) and, especially in older times, works that once were complete have reached us in an incomplete state. Several artists though have left a considerable part of their oeuvre incomplete. One may think of artists such as Michelangelo Buonarroti or Leonardo da Vinci. While one must deplore the fact that works were left incomplete or have survived incomplete, it does not necessarily mean that one cannot appreciate them because of their incompleteness. A work like Michelangelo's *Brutus* bust may be unfinished (at least by the standards of its own time if not necessarily of ours), but the sheer power it exudes cannot be missed. Leonardo's *The Adoration of the Magi*

consists only of an underpainting (and even that is not complete), so we will never know the splendour that it might have attained had it been completely finished by the artist; nonetheless, one still can appreciate the work in the state that it has come down to us. The same artist's *Last Supper*



2: *Adoration of the Magi* (Leonardo da Vinci) (Wikimedia)

Supper fresco is today severely damaged, denying to us the full effect that it must have had on its first unveiling, but the power of Leonardo's genius still shines through. In some cases, one might even argue that the work in its unfinished state is *more* powerful than in what would have been its finished state; one may think of Michelangelo's *Atlas*, or his *St. Matthew*, where the unfinished figures seem to wrestle mightily to wrench themselves from the stone that still encases them.

It may thus be concluded that the fact that a painting or sculpture that has power it exudes cannot be missed. Leonardo's *The Adoration of the*

Magi consists only of an underpainting (and even that is not complete), so we will never know the splendour that it might come to us in an incomplete state – either by never having been finished by the artist or by having become damaged over time – does not necessarily mean that it will not suffer the fate of being discarded or ignored because of its incompleteness. How different the situation is in musical works that have been left to posterity in an incomplete form! The one work with which this essay is concerned is the unfinished Finale to the Ninth Symphony of Anton Bruckner.

I. Unfinished yet complete?

Before contemplating the Finale at all, one must address the question: do we *need* a Finale to Bruckner's Ninth? Or might, perhaps even should, one consider the Ninth complete (enough) in its first three movements? Many (still) seem to believe that the Ninth is a complete (enough) work in its three fully finished movements. One Dr. Max Steinitzer, in his introductory notes to an early set of scores of all the numbered symphonies¹, calls the Adagio of the Ninth "*Das abschließende Adagio der Neunten*".

In his 1940 essay "*The Life of Anton Bruckner*", the writer Gabriel Engel describes the three movements of the Ninth in a way that today, seventy years later, to many is still ultimate truth. He writes: "*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 [a reference to the Fifth 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.*"²

Moreover, some even think that a Finale is not just unnecessary, but even undesirable. Herman Rutters, in his liner notes to a special tribute LP containing the Ninth as played by the Concertgebouw Orchestra under its (then) recently deceased main conductor Eduard van Beinum³, asks, '*what more should or could Bruckner have said after this Adagio? To do that no mortal, not even the greatest genius, would have been capable. The Adagio of the Ninth is a Finale, and with it this symphony is completed, just as the so-called 'Unfinished' of Schubert. It was a wise ordination that forever took the pen out of his hands in the middle of the work on the fourth movement.*'

Richard Osborne, in his liner notes the Bruckner issue of the 'Karajan Symphony Edition'⁴, states that "*All that can and needs to be said at the end of this great cycle of symphonies is said by the quiet coda which follows the grinding c-sharp minor climax that sears sense and daunts the spirit at the climax of the [Ninth] symphony's great slow movement*".

The late Georg Tintner, in his liner notes (written over 80 years after Steinitzer) to his (fine) recording of the Symphony⁵ writes: "*The already ailing Bruckner spent the last two years of his life trying frantically to complete the Finale of his Ninth. It is not meant cruelly when I say that I for one am glad that Fate did not grant him his wish, because the material intended for the Finale is just as unworthy of what is perhaps Bruckner's greatest music as is the unfinished material of Schubert's Eighth. The various efforts of the brilliant scholars who have recently*

¹ This is a 3-volume set of miniature scores, issued by Eulenburg in 1922/23, containing the following symphonies from various publishers: I, II, V, VI, IX: Universal; III, VIII: Schlesinger; IV, VII: Gutmann. The note by "Dr. Max Steinitzer" is dated *Spring 1921*. For those interested, these scores can be downloaded (for free) from the site www.abruckner.com/downloads.

² Gabriel Engel: *The Life of Anton Bruckner*, 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).

³ Philips LP L 09011 L, issued 1959

⁴ DGG 477 7580

⁵ Naxos 8.554268

made performing versions of Bruckner's Finale will be of entirely historical interest. (...) I for one do not want to hear anything after this most moving of farewells...". This (rather extreme) statement (which reminds one of the remarks written about the completion of Mahler's Tenth at a time before it had become commonly accepted) is perhaps just one example of the almost generally accepted vision that the Ninth is complete as it is and that not only does it require no additional music in the form of a Finale but also that it is perhaps even better off without it – a vision with which I cannot agree. In the words of Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, in his liner notes to the recording of the complete Ninth on Naxos⁶: *"To this day, Anton Bruckner's Ninth Symphony languishes in a purgatory of misunderstanding, false interpretation, even barbaric mishandling, having long fallen 'victim to prey' (Adorno)".*

One must begin to ask, why do so many people regard the Ninth complete as it is, even when knowing that a symphony without a Finale would be an impossible thing for Bruckner? Why, indeed, do so many people believe (not even) Bruckner would have been able to complete a satisfactory Finale to his Ninth? Because they cannot imagine how such a movement could be written, ergo, neither could its *composer*? Might this still be a lingering of what dogged Bruckner his whole life, that many 'learned' people, while being truly and genuinely devoted to and convinced of his music, nevertheless 'knew better' than the composer himself, and therefore were to decide what to play (and how), and what not?

Why even a consideration of the Finale (leaving aside a notion of its performability) seems to be a no-go, still, for so many performers and listeners can perhaps best be condensed in the word 'laziness'. We are used to performing and hearing the three-movement Ninth that any idea of changing things and adjusting our hearing (for playing and hearing of the Finale means a rather radical readjustment of playing and hearing the first three movements!). The three movements have become tradition, like the two movements from Schubert's Eighth. Yet, as Mahler already observed, *"all tradition is laziness"*.⁷

There are today many completed 'unfinished' works performed, and the level of how unfinished a work was, and how much work had to be added (and, for that matter, by whom, and of what quality) seems to be independent of how such completion is accepted. Some works are even presented as 'by [name of composer]' when that composer actually set down not all that much of it. The most famous example might be Mozart's *Requiem*. Rarely one reads something like 'as completed by Süßmayr'. This while of the whole work only one movement was fully written by Mozart (the *Introitus*), while the last three (*Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*) are fully written by Süßmayr. Everything in between is partly Mozart (usually the voices and some instruments), filled out by Süßmayr. And while it is so that Süßmayr collaborated with Mozart, even on his *Requiem*, and may have had the aid of material written by Mozart (sketches and such) and possibly Mozart's verbal instructions and suggestions, Süßmayr wasn't Mozart, not by a long shot. Yet nobody calls performing the *Requiem* into question. And how many people (other than publishers and, possibly, performers) have ever studied the amount of working out and filling in that is needed to get a performable piano part in quite a few of his Piano Concertos?

Perhaps the most famous 'finished unfinished' symphony is Mahler's Tenth, of which various completions now exist (most famously the Cooke et al. 'performing version'), and which

⁶ Naxos 8.555933/34

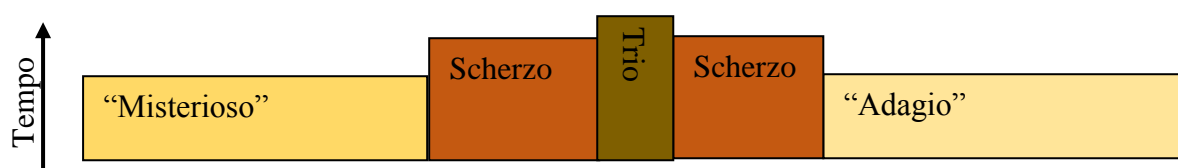
⁷ "Alle Tradition ist Schlamperei!"

nowadays hardly needs defence when performed or recorded (barring some ‘purists’ who for ethical reasons would rather not know at all than know to some extent). Likewise, several other works that had to be, in various amounts, completed are currently unproblematic and unquestioned part of the standard repertoire. Of some, only a very little work was needed to complete them, such as Bartók’s 3rd Piano Concerto; some 17 measures needed orchestration. Others needed more work but are performed completed, such as Puccini’s ‘Turandot’, of which the final Duet had to be written based on Puccini’s sketches and other material. In this case, acceptance was perhaps made easier due to Puccini’s own request to finish his opera when he knew he would not be able anymore. Even works that more or less had to be composed completely on the basis of sometimes rather skimpy material have made it to ‘standard repertoire’, such as Mussorksy’s opera ‘*Khovanshchina*’.

Nevertheless, some other works which have been completed on the basis of sometimes quite extended material, and which have been available from fairly close after their composer’s deaths, still do not reach the audience (or, for that matter, performers, in which case they automatically cannot reach any audience whatsoever!). One may think of Bartók’s ‘Viola Concerto’. Quite a bit of work had to be done, so much may remain speculation, but as such not really much more than Mahler’s Tenth Symphony. Or Schubert’s Seventh⁸, of which several completions are available, the first for almost a century, but when does one hear the work?

Bruckner’s Finale to his Ninth Symphony clearly is part of that latter group of neglected completions, and one must ask why. Obviously, there is a lot of sentimental rubbish, even mythology, heaped upon the work in its three-movement torso form. The ‘knowing better than the composer’ attitude still hasn’t been fully shaken off. After listening to the three movements, how could anyone feel the work is finished, when so many threads are not gathered together, so many circles not been rounded, so many questions posed but not yet answered? Just because that, rather lonely and unsettling, opening phrase from the Seventh’s first movement is quoted? Can two bars of music fully and satisfactorily close one hour of the most unsettling music written in the 19th Century, music as such rarely matched since?

Perhaps a false sense of symmetry plays a role. By placing the Scherzo second, like in the Eight, and with the first and second movements being of all but equal length and not that different tempo, we get a deceptively symmetrical piece, in which two huge slow(ish) movements pivot around the fast Scherzo, itself wrapped around an even faster Trio.



Had the order of the Scherzo and Adagio been, as in all symphonies up till the Eighth⁹, Adagio-Scherzo, this false sense of symmetry would never have arisen, and the notion of ‘complete incomplete’ would never have marred the acceptance of the Finale.

⁸ Schubert must be *the* composer of unfinished symphonies; he completed seven works, abandoned two works halfway through (the Seventh and the Eighth) and there are sketches for at least four more.

⁹ The very first version of the Second puts the Scherzo before the Adagio, but Bruckner changed the order before the very first performance.

Happily, there are quite a few people who do not share that ground-in “standard” view, but rather think that not only is the Finale worth pursuing, but that doing so is essential if one is to get a fuller understanding of what Bruckner intended this Symphony to be – i.e., that in order to get a better grasp of the first three movements it is vital to do the same with the fourth and thus the Ninth Symphony as a whole. One may quote from an early Dutch (and very readable) biography of Bruckner¹⁰: *“Without doubt Bruckner had very special intentions with the unfinished Finale, which would have become a Satz of even more gigantic dimensions than the final part of the Eighth Symphony – something already evident in the fact that no less than five versions can be discerned in the sketches. What was floating before his mind’s eye was probably a synthesis of the Finales of the Fifth and Eighth symphonies. We find in the sketches both the fugue and the chorale that determine the nature and architecture of the Finale to the Fifth Symphony, as well as for the Eighth Symphony’s Finale characteristic combination of the main themes of all four movements. With this keystone to his oeuvre he wanted to give a final summary of everything that was dear to his heart.”* (...) *“The Finale should have gathered all (...) elements once more into one grandiose climax, chorale and fugue should have testified one more time of the artistic intentions that are embodied in this oeuvre, intentions that sought to declare the earthly and heavenly together as one complete reality without considering the material and the inanimate as something inferior for Man to flee from in order to remain true to his calling. Bruckner wanted to say in this Finale that Man should not forgo the material in order to maintain his original purity as a creature from God but that, on the contrary, the spiritualization of the material was the true task of Man. Bruckner’s wish to say this one more time was not granted; he had to abandon his work with the solemn sounds of the Adagio.”*

Bruckner’s symphonies have been described as “cathedrals in sound”. In a way, this is true, in the sense that they evidence a very strong architectural sense in which everything is logically connected to everything else. Each element supports each other element – and therefore each element only makes complete sense when it can be experienced within the complete framework of which it is part. Because of this alone, the Ninth without its Finale is not just incomplete because of the lack of that Finale but also because the first three movements cannot be fully appreciated without the fourth, since there the various elements are brought to a logical whole. The various threads of the first three movements should have been tied together in the fourth (as in all Bruckner symphonies). Now, as it generally ‘stands’ in just three movements, there remain loose ends, unanswered questions and unfulfilled questings. Conductors usually try and ‘end’ the Symphony with the Adagio, rather than clearly leaving things open and unfulfilled. When listening, as much as possible, with an ear attuned to ‘how Bruckner sermoned’, things jar and wring, like attending a Mass lacking a Creed, or building a house without a roof.

From the above, it may perhaps have become clear why I do believe that a Bruckner Symphony cannot be complete without a Finale, because this Finale is what ties the earlier parts together and gives them their full meaning. Since no Bruckner Symphony casts its view wider than the Ninth, it is here that the Finale is most severely missed. We are given a presentation of the human/earthly/demonic plus a vision of the divine without the connecting final vision. It is impossible fully to understand the Symphony without the Finale. In the words of W. van Hengel: *“This intention to create a grand synthesis puts its mark on the three completed sections of the Ninth”*.

¹⁰ W. van Hengel: **BRUCKNER**; Gottmer, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 1949 (only available in Dutch)

II. Intermezzo: A key relationship

Bruckner's symphonies aren't just complete structures in themselves; the various symphonies seen together are also connected. The way I see it, there are three groups within the 'mature' symphonies (in which the misnamed 'No. 0' should be counted, and the "study" Symphony in F minor disregarded). First, there is an aborted group, consisting of the First and the Symphony in D minor (of this Symphony one may still read it was written in 1863 or 1864, thus *preceding* the First, and was regarded – without any ground - as having been revised after completing the First; not so, for it was written in 1869, *after* the First¹¹). The First Symphony is the work in which Bruckner's genius came to the fore completely, and in the process almost destroyed the composer. After completing it, he fell victim to perhaps the greatest mental breakdown of his life, to the level of contemplating suicide. This despair perhaps drove him to "safer waters" when writing his next Symphony. Ultimately, he must have come to the conclusion that this was not the "natural" way to follow, after which he abandoned that road, consisting – so far – of Symphonies nos. 1 and "0" (i.e. , to start a new series – with a Symphony again in the most basic tonality of his musical nature: C[-minor]).

This next Symphony then became the foundation of the cycle of symphonies 2-7, each one rising a bit higher, its central tonality becoming a bit brighter and more colourful. These symphonies together may perhaps be seen as the various (vertical) components of a giant cathedral in sound, the first of the series (i.e. the Second Symphony) the almost subterranean foundation and crypt from which the view can only be straight up, until the very highest vaults of the Seventh, from which the view is almost horizontal, almost totally disconnected from the earth. Surely, the Seventh is his "lightest" work (in the sense that it is, at least to me, almost flooded with light)¹².

This series should, perhaps, logically have ended with a Symphony in C major, but such would also have been an impossibility. For all Bruckner Symphonies are a construct, with a foundation and a summit. This connection can be made from minor to major (Symphonies 2 (c-C) and 3 (d-D)), or within a major key that isn't 'perfect' (i.e. has flats or sharps: Symphonies 4 (E-flat), 5 (B-flat), 6 (A) and 7 (E)); note that the Fourth and Fifth have 'imperfect' (flattened) tonics, the Sixth and Seventh have 'perfect' tonics). A work completely in a 'perfect' key – C major – could only have been 'about' something 'perfect'. For Bruckner, devout Catholic, only one 'thing' could be perfect, namely God. Hence, the work in C major to conclude the series of symphonies was a (very symphonic) Te Deum, being both a conclusion to this magnificent

¹¹ An interesting article on the matter by Paul Hawkshaw can be found at www.abruckner.com/Data/articles/articlesenglish/hawkshawpaulthedat/hawkshawnulle.pdf. That the 'Zeroth' Symphony was written before the First can be read right up till now; the most recent example is the booklet with the recordings made by Hans Rosbaud, and issued on SWR>>Classic (SWR19043CD). Hartmut Lück, the writer of the liner notes, states that "In 1863 he wrote two symphonies, in F minor and D minor respectively". Not only pushes he the alledged year of the D minor symphony back a further year, but states the Bruckner wrote these two symphonies in a single year, something I have never seen written down anywhere else. The correcty date of the 'Zeroth' was known over half a century ago; in the liner notes to Lovro von Matacic 1954 EMI/Angel recording of the Fourth, which includes the Scherzo from the 'Zeroth', the year for the 'Zeroth' is correctly mentioned as 1869 (https://www.abruckner.com/Data/articles/articlesEnglish/carnermoscobruckne2/angel_3548_booklet.pdf) That even such a single simple piece of faulty information (the year in which the 'Zeroth' was written) can persist for well over half a century goes perhaps a long way in explaining why the Finale as essential to the Ninth and as such to a considerable part was already finished by Bruckner is far from accepted!

¹² Anyone asking how I can think a work that contains an Adagio of such profound and funerative nature is in any way 'light' is kindly advised to listen to another work I that feel to be equally "light": Beethoven's Third Symphony! That work likewise contains funeral music in its Adagio, even when the (original) hero was at the moment very much alive! Note that Bruckner, too, started work on the Adagio of the Seventh when *his* hero (Wagner) was also still alive!

series of symphonies and, perhaps, a song of praise to God who had given the composer time and talent to complete it.

No further ‘progress’ after this point was possible, so the next symphony could not be a next instalment in the ongoing series, and had to start, somehow, a new series. Going, literary, back to basics, the next – Eighth – Symphony could only start in c minor. To prove that this, truly, is a new series, one needs only to look at the formal lay-out of both the Eighth and Ninth. Not only in dimensions are these works larger than all that preceded¹³, but formally they differ too, in that now the Scherzo is placed second, followed by the Adagio. For a composer as consistent as Bruckner, changing the inner order of these movements must have been akin to changing the order of organs in a body. To prove that these two symphonies are indeed a new (third) series can be done by looking at the Ninth Symphony’s key. As with the Symphony following the 2nd, this ‘second’ symphony after the Eighth is again in d minor. One might contemplate what a Tenth symphony might have been, formally and tonally. Would again the Scherzo come second, and might the key have been major again? We will, sadly, never know! But somehow I feel it would have been thus, but perhaps not again a symphony in E-flat, but taking another road. Bruckner had a very strong sense of key relationships. The Fourth Symphony is in E-flat, the third note in the scale of c minor, and I believe such is no incident. Might Bruckner have chosen for a hypothetical Tenth Symphony not the third note of c minor (but as major scale), but the fifth, and given us a symphony in G major? An 11th in D major, a fifth apart from G?

A (personal, and probably highly subjective) note on tonalities here. As said above, I feel that there are three series of symphonies within Bruckner’s symphonic oeuvre, each starting with a symphony in c minor, moving on to d minor. The first, starting with Symphony no. 1 in c minor, followed with the Symphony “No. 0” in d minor, was abandoned after that. The third, which was left unfinished due to Bruckner’s death, again started in c minor (Symphony no. 8) and moved on to d minor (Symphony no. 9). Only the second cycle is complete, and also starts in c minor (Symphony no. 2) and moves on to d minor (Symphony no. 3). Then there are four major symphonies, whose tonics are, I think, closely related.

- I The Fourth is in E flat, the Fifth in B flat; a fifth apart
 The Sixth is in A, the Seventh in E; again a fifth apart

- II The Fourth is in E flat, the Sixth in A; a diminished fifth apart
 The Fifth is in B flat, the Seventh in E; again a diminished fifth apart

- III The Fourth is in E flat, the Seventh in E, a half-tone apart
 The Fifth is in B flat, the Sixth is in A, a half-tone apart

- IV The Fourth starts in three flats, the Fifth gets “lighter” by losing a flat, then the
 Sixth exchanges two flats for three sharps, becoming “lighter” still by changing
 a ‘lowering’ flat key for a ‘heightening’ sharp one, after which the Seventh adds
 a sharp ‘heightening’ it even further. Moreover, the Fourth and Fifth are in

¹³ The first version of the Third Symphony has more bars than the first version of the Eighth, so from an accountant’s point of view this statement is incorrect. However, the Third sounds as if it needs more ‘words’ to say what it wants to say and thus feels drawn out in places. This may have been the reason why Bruckner with the 2nd version shortened the work considerably, and with the 3rd version even more. Such a radical shortening of the Eighth Symphony must be considered impossible (leaving aside here whether the shortening of the Third was necessary or desirable); the Eighth, in all its length, is more ‘compact’ than the Third. The ultimate length of the Ninth Symphony is conjecture, but most likely would have been over 2000 bars, the highest number in any Bruckner symphony (including versions).

“flattened” tonalities (E-flat and B-flat), while the Sixth and Seventh are in “pure” tonalities (A and E). Moreover, A is considered a bright key, and E even brighter.

Is all this a coincidence? I think not; Bruckner’s sense of tonality is too strong for this to be mere coincidence.

To continue on this line might have led, as outlined above, to a Symphony in C major (a third below E). Why? Well, the “purest” tonality is that of C major (the “positive” of c minor), in which there are no flattened or sharpened tones. Since Bruckner clearly had a “primitive” sense of tonal relationships (as exemplified in the notes I-IV above), one may speculate that, if C major is the “purest”, c minor must be its opposite. In other words, if c be the “fundamental” or the lowest, C major must be the “crown” or the highest. Hence, the distance travelled from c minor to C major is the furthest. C major has no “colour”, being the purest “white”. Thus c minor must be the opposite, or negative, hence is “black”. All other tonalities have a colour, due to “breaking the light” via flats or sharps. None reaches such purity as C major, but none starts as far from it as c minor.

One could perhaps say that a Symphony starting in c minor and moving to C major travels vertically, all other tonalities travelling in various degrees of diagonal.

All this implies that a Bruckner Symphony is a journey, with the minor-key symphonies an “open” journey (from the minor to the major) and the major-key ones a closed one (from the major to the major). This may be reflected in the fact that, in the minor-key symphonies, the weight is balanced between the first and last movements, whereas in the major-key symphonies the balance shifts to the inner movements, especially the Adagio (the Fourth Symphony being something of an intermediate work here). In the Seventh Symphony it feels as if this development has gone about as far in this direction as it could go, the Adagio having become the centrepiece, and the Finale becoming the slightest movement. This journey to “perfection” thus would have led, as I said to believe, to a Symphony in C major, but this would be unachievable within the ground plan of a Bruckner Symphony. A work in C major would need to be “perfect”, i.e. represent perfection and, hence, no “journey”¹⁴. But within the earth-bound workings of a Bruckner Symphony this could not be so. Instead, a work of perfection would need to have no ties to the earthly, but be divine totally – something unachievable within a Symphony as Bruckner understood the form. So, what Bruckner wrote after the “near-perfect” Seventh Symphony was indeed a work in the “perfect” C major, and one completely devoted to the Divine: the *Te Deum*. This *Te Deum* is, to me, not just an isolated piece but truly a Finale to the symphonic cycle represented by the Symphonies 2-7¹⁵. After reaching this, he could not therefore continue this line of symphonies and had to start anew. In other words, with the Seventh he had put the roof on the cathedral (consisting of Symphonies 2-7), and with the *Te Deum* dedicated it to the divine. To continue, he had to start and build a new cathedral, in his logic of building the foundations first, i.e. start the next Symphony (again) in C minor, to move on to D minor in the next.

¹⁴ A comparison may be made with the works of Mahler in which each Symphony is also a journey. The only exception is the Eighth, which in a way is only a Finale and is, to me at least, therefor the least satisfactory of all his symphonies.

¹⁵ Hence, while Mahler wrote a kind of choral finale within his symphonic cycle with the Eighth, Bruckner wrote one outside this cycle – something that worked better, I believe!

But there are changes. I believe that the symphonies 2-7 are a cycle that is based on the earthly, the physical, looking upwards. The next cycle is written by someone who has seen the (divine) fulfilment and is looking down upon earthly life and all its miseries.

The difference in viewpoint makes for a change in the architecture: the scherzo becomes the second part, the adagio the (much expanded) third¹⁶. This leads to a radical change in perspective. In the first (completed) series of symphonies (2-7), the first movement is a kind of basic statement – call this the thesis. Then there follow two separate antitheses (themselves being a thesis/antithesis set) – the adagio and the scherzo. The finale then forms the synthesis of the various components given in the thesis (movement 1) and antitheses (movements 2 and 3).

Starting with the Eighth Symphony, the ‘thesis’ section of the Symphony is, for me, no longer made up of the first movement alone but of the first two together. The Scherzo forms a complementary part of the ‘thesis’, enhancing the first movement¹⁷. More precisely, the first movement gives us a picture of the earthly and human – and the tragic position of that without, or outside, the divine. The scherzo enhances that picture with a presentation of the sardonic, if not demonic (i.e. giving an idea where the human soul will end without the Divine). The third movement (the Adagio) then forms the antithesis to both separate (but complementary) presentations of the thesis. Because of obvious necessity, this third movement is expanded when compared to the earlier symphonies, and is roughly as long as the 1st and second movement combined. The Finale (of roughly equal length again) then gives the synthesis as in the earlier symphonies, but here again, because of the wider view of the whole Symphony, this movement is expanded.

¹⁶ In the very first version of the Second Symphony, the scherzo is also placed second, giving it the same change to the previous cycle as does the Eighth. Perhaps Bruckner felt that this way was not to be followed (yet)? This very first version was never played during Bruckner’s lifetime though, since Bruckner reversed the order of the middle movements before the first performance.

¹⁷ Comparable perhaps with Mahler’s Fifth, movements 1 and 2, and his Sixth, assuming the Scherzo takes second place, as I believe is the correct one.

III. The final pieces

It has been well documented that Bruckner took more time to compose his last Symphony than any of his previous symphonies (not counting the amount of time put into revisions). He started work on the Ninth sometime in the second half of 1887 (first date in the sketches: 12 August 1887), and finished writing down the Adagio on the 30th of November 1894 after much toil and trouble. Bruckner's final six (or so) years were plagued by periods of increasing ill health which, in combination with his duties as professor at the Vienna Conservatory, took up most of his energies¹⁸. Working on the Ninth was further greatly compromised by the refusal of the original version of the Eighth Symphony by the conductor Hermann Levi, which resulted in Bruckner's extended revising not only of the Eighth but also of the Fourth, Third and First Symphonies, causing valuable time and energy to be lost¹⁹. So it was not until 1895 that Bruckner started work on the Finale of the Ninth (although I hope to convincingly argue later on that he had at least some conception of what the Finale was to be right from the start). Considering his physical state, it is quite remarkable to see how much he got down on to paper, quite a bit of it even in a finished form as fully written out score. The total amount of material

¹⁸ According to Aart van der Wal, in his 2006 essay, the composer suffered from chronic throat and larynx catarrh together with severe symptoms of nervousness from 1890 onwards, later complicated by arterial sclerosis, hepatitis and diabetes (the latter factually a death sentence). Later still, he suffered from dropsy, a pleurisy attack (not the first), culminating in pneumonia. The resulting shortness of breath made it impossible to ascend the stairs of his home in the Heßgasse in Vienna. In February, Anton Meißner asked the Count Liechtenstein to provide new quarters without stairs for his master. On 4 July (1895) Bruckner moved to the *Kustodenstöckl* (lodge) at the Belvedere estate, where he would remain until his death. [©Aart van der Wal: **Anton Bruckner: Symphony No. 9, The unfinished Finale**, February 2006.]

¹⁹ Both Cohrs and Letocart, in correspondence with the present author, contest this view. Cohrs calls it “one of the legends to be contested”, and Letocart refers to the book “**Bruckner symphony No.8**” by Benjamin M. Korstvedt, *Cambridge Music Handbooks*, even stating that the revision “was necessary”. However, I cannot imagine Bruckner, after finally getting some successes – after years of ridicule and animosity – with his music by performances of his *Te Deum* and his Seventh Symphony (the latter under Hermann Levi), especially considering his vulnerable nature, *not* being shocked if indeed not shattered after Levi's refusal to perform the Eighth in its original form, even when considering the fact that Levi honestly felt unable to understand the work, and might well have presented a mangled performance if he had gone ahead. Moreover, to me, none of the reworked symphonies (with the partial exclusion of the Eighth) seems to have really benefitted from it – indeed, rather the opposite! Personally, I cannot understand why many conductors to this day play the – for me - maimed “final version” of the Third when they – wisely – disregard the revised version of the First. Even less why few conductors, at least once in a while, play the first version of the Fourth, since the Scherzo and Finale of that symphony in their original form are completely different music!

It may be a worthwhile ‘thought experiment’ to try and consider how ‘we’ would have felt about Bruckner's symphonies if we presently would have known only the first versions of his First, Second, Third, Fourth and Eighth symphonies! Surely some comments could be made about ‘imperfections’ and such, but just as easily(!) one could make such about a work like Beethoven's Ninth (especially that work's Finale)!

I feel one must deplore all the revising that Bruckner did, since not only did it cause much loss of valuable time, but it was also, at least to me, unnecessary. If we had only the first versions of all his symphonies, we would no doubt have a sequence of works of towering magnitude, perhaps even more so than we have with the revised works. One might be advised here to listen to the first version of the Third Symphony, which is a much more “raw” and “primitive”, or the rather different original version of the Fourth Symphony – and as such rather perhaps more convincing Brucknerian work – than the more regulated and tamed “romantic” version usually played.

Finally, consider that, had Bruckner not lost so much time revising earlier symphonies but instead went on writing, we might have had not only a Ninth with the Finale, but this essay might have dealt with the unfinished Finale of his *Eleventh* Symphony!

in the Finale as presently known apparently comprises several hundred pages of manuscript²⁰, ranging from sketches to short score to score drafts and finished orchestral score. Despite the fact that quite a bit (possibly up to half) of material for the Finale is known to have been lost since Bruckner's death (or, at least, its whereabouts are currently unknown), the total amount of material that we have in the Finale is vast indeed, considering that it was written by an old man in ill health in little over one year. In all, rather more than the 'few incoherent sketches' some sources mention!

III/1. What is left of what was left

Bruckner's methodology when writing the Ninth's Finale was no different than that of the first three movements or, for that matter, any of his other work. Roughly, one may distinguish four stages:

1. *A first notation of the basic continuity of the music, sketched in three- or four-staved particells, at least until the end of the Exposition. (Bruckner rarely sketched a movement in its entirety.)*
2. *The gradual preparation of the score and its main elements – the metrical numbers, the elaboration of the String parts intended to be the fundament of the instrumentation, as well as entries or endings of important Wind or Brass parts; often first in pencil, later erased and overwritten with ink.*
3. *The systematic elaboration of the score, usually first in Woodwinds, then Brass instruments; first the leading voices, later the additional, resonant or supporting parts.*
4. *A last correction phase that Bruckner himself called "Nuancierer" – the addition of nuances in playing, ties, slurs, dynamics and accents as well as final corrections, refinements and retouches.²¹*

It is important to note here that, for Bruckner, as soon as he had transferred a sketch into score, and if only in strings, this bifolio was already part of the emerging autograph score, and numbered, placing one bifolio after the other. In some though not all cases, this remained valid unless it was eventually replaced with a corrected or revised later bifolio; there are valid score bifolios which include the very first transfer from a sketch into string setting, and were later supplemented with the then missing woodwind and brass writing. Thus, "phases" 2-4 are not separate stages, but various levels of completion, and there is a "sliding scale" between them.²²

Most of the score paper (bifolios) was prepared for Bruckner by an assistant (Anton Meißner), who wrote in all instruments and clefs and pre-ruled all pages with four bars.

A fully completed double sheet ("Bogen") would often have the entry "FERTIG" ("ready") written in by Bruckner, and subsequent sheets would be placed one after the other and

²⁰ William Carragan, liner notes to the recording of his 2006 version of the Ninth, issued on Delta, DCCA-0032.

²¹ Most of this overview taken from "*ANTON BRUCKNER, IX, SYMPHONIE D-MOLL, FINALE (UNVOLLENDET), Vervollständigte Aufführungsfassung Samale-Phillips-Cohrs-Mazzuca (1983-2008); Revidierter Nachdruck 2008; Study Score 444; Musikproduktion Höflich, München*, with some annotations of Dr. Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs and the present author.

²² Several photographs of Bruckner's manuscript in the various levels of completion can be found in Aart van der Wal's article *Anton Bruckner: Symphony No. 9; The unfinished Finale* ©Aart van der Wal, February 2006, pages 26-31.

subsequently numbered consecutively, something that is crucial to understand how it was possible to reconstruct the continuity of the movement.

Changes would be possible at any stage, but naturally more so in the earlier stages. If changes in a later stage turned out to be rather big, the sheet could be taken out and replaced by a newly written one or, when the changes resulted in a more extended passage, two.

Unfortunately, when Bruckner died, he had not completed (i.e. brought to “Phase V”) the entire score of the Finale. More unfortunately still, his home was not secured immediately after his death, allowing “treasure hunters” to swoop down on the remaining pages of the Finale, then scattered around his place, to grab bits and pieces for the memorabilia market – this based on the old principle that dead artists are more valuable than living ones. Yet despite that, evidence, in the form of a protocol, shows that the score of the Finale was handed, in complete manuscript form without gaps, to Joseph Schalk. So the missing score pages must have gone missing after they came into possession of Joseph Schalk.

This Protocol, set down on 18 October 1896, i.e. a week after Bruckner’s death on the 11th, reads (my translation):

*“The professors Ferdinand Löwe and Josef Schalk have declared themselves ready to examine the musical legacy of the master, Anton Bruckner, upon request of and by means of a testimony to the executor of the last will and testament of the deceased, and on the same day they have carefully inspected the sketches for the fourth movement of the Ninth Symphony, upon which it was found that there were 75 score bifolios with the pagination (1) to (36). Among them are, for example, P. 1-10 and 2-8, etc., and Joseph Schalk takes these 75 bifolios to investigate the context of these fragments.
Signed; Dr. Reisch, Ferdinand Löwe, Joseph Schalk”²³*

So what do we have of this today? – and do we have a clue as to what has been lost (or, at least, is presently unavailable)?

The autograph of the score, in part fully orchestrated, in part with partial orchestration, at the time of Bruckner’s death, ran to at least the 36th bifolio. Of those sheets, 8 are presently missing (based on the consecutive numbering of each bifolio by Bruckner), thereby creating 7 gaps. The last score bifolio we have is numbered [32], hence at least four more once were present, and these reached at least until in the Coda, and possibly (especially if bifolios after no [36] went missing before the making of the protocol) all the way to the end. From the state of these finished pages it is clear that the missing sheets are indeed *missing*, and not *never written*. For several parts of these gaps discarded (earlier) bifolios, particelli and sketches survive, enabling an educated guess as to what they contained. Bruckner’s working method then allowed for a reasonable filling-in of those gaps. After that, there are score sheets with string parts complete

²³ *Protokolls vom 18. Oktober 1896 (Göll.-Au. IV 3. S.608):*

Die Herren Professoren Ferdinand Löwe und Josef Schalk haben sich über Ersuchen des Testamentsexekutors zur Sichtung des musikalischen Nachlasses des Meisters Anton Bruckner bereit erklärt und haben dieselben am heutigen Tage die Skizzen für den 4. Satz der IX. Symphonie sorgfältig durchgesehen, wonach sich ergab, daß 75 Partiturbögen vorhanden sind, welche die Paginierung 1.) bis 36.) aufweisen. Darunter beispielsweise P. 1-10 und 2-8 etc. und übernimmt Joseph Schalk diese 75 Bögen, um den Zusammenhang dieser Fragmente zu erforschen.

Dr. Reisch mp. Ferdinand Löwe mp. Joseph Schalk mp.

(With thanks to Joan Schukking for providing the text of this Protocol to the present writer)

and woodwind entries written in (Phase III) for approximately another 240 measures. After that, we have continuity drafts (Phase II) for well over 100 measures.

This means that there is continuous material of various degrees of finalisation for some 550 measures, or right up to the beginning of the coda. Some subsequent sketches are preserved which indicate how the main sections of the coda might have been intended. After that (i.e. the Coda proper) nothing in score bifolios survived.

Whilst Bruckner did not systematically work through all the various phases (i.e. rounding off one completely before embarking on the next), the fact that a fully instrumentation existed for at least one third of the Finale leads to the assumption that at least the sketches, and even score bifolios in various levels of finish existed all the way to the end at the time of Bruckner's death, meaning that he did at the very least put down some idea of how the work was to end, and may have begun to work out that very ending. Possibly, this very ending was worked out more fully than previous sections, if Bruckner did work out the final combination of themes as he wanted to satisfactorily end the work in order to better 'guide' his way to that ending²⁴.

Today, we have no score bifolios of the Coda, but several important sketches do survive,²⁵ but that a very substantial part of the Finale has come down to us in at least *some* form – and for a considerable part in *final* form – is clear – quite sufficiently so, in fact, for it to be taken very seriously indeed and to fully refute the idea that what exists are some incoherent sketches and drafts, to say nothing of the notion that “there is no *need* for a Finale”.

III/2. The *Te Deum* as Finale?

Did or did not Bruckner want his *Te Deum* to fulfil the role of Finale to his Ninth in case he could not complete the Finale that he was working on? Opinions about this issue are as far apart as possible, while each extreme is put forward as hard fact. I will cite two examples, each representing an extreme.

Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, in his essay connected to his 2008 revision of the Samale/Philips/Cohrs/Mazzuca completion, writes: “*Bruckner even expressly ordered – what other composer was so far-sighted? – that in the event of his premature death his Te Deum should be played as the best possible substitute for the missing Finale*²⁶. (...) *the Te Deum does actually constitute a worthy ‘substitute Finale’ for many reasons*”²⁷. Dr. Max Steinitzer, on the

²⁴ A possible parallel with Mahler's Tenth may illustrate here. There is evidence to suggest that Mahler hit on that huge 9-note chord that so strongly influences the work only when sketching the Finale, and from there transplanted that chord to the first movement. There are sketches of the first movement of this section which lack the chord, but instead has the music more or less stagger into the final section of the movement. To rather feeble effect. See Colin Matthews essay on the Tenth Symphony in *'The Mahler Companion'*, edited by Donald Mitchell & Andrew Nicholson; Oxford University Press, 1999, page 502-503 in. Likewise, Bruckner may have worked out ideas for the (end of) the Coda and from there adjusted or worked out previous sections of the Finale. Such as the Fugue, or the Chorale. All this may, hopefully, one day be investigated if more, currently lost, score folios turn up.

²⁵ To be precise: 28 bars of the initial crescendo, 8 bars chorale ascent, 16 bars cadence and 8 bars of final pedal point constitute in all 60 bars and certainly at least two third of the planned continuity of the Coda.

²⁶ This was apparently even published in a number of Vienna newspapers at a time when Bruckner was still alive! (Note from Dr. Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs to the present author).

²⁷ See footnote 13.

other hand, in his preface to the complete miniature scores published by Eulenburg in the early 1920s, writes: “*It is mistaken to believe that Bruckner had designated the Te Deum as Finale to the Ninth. One asked the deathly ill man whether it could be played as such, and he mumbled something, without denying it. It is written much earlier, and in a very different style*”²⁸.

Finally, in the liner notes to the CD with the recording of his version of the Finale, Sébastien Letocart²⁹ writes that, in the sketches, there is a point where Bruckner apparently tried to sketch a transition to the *Te Deum*, as if to connect the completed fragment of the Finale to the *Te Deum*.

But does the *Te Deum* fit as a Finale, as Cohrs especially seems to think, or at least seems to think Bruckner may have thought? Personally I do not believe it, despite Bruckner’s apparent (?) wish and the sketches for a transition into the *Te Deum*. There are several reasons for this.

First and foremost, a Bruckner symphony is, as we have already observed, a very tightly constructed architectural whole and, whilst the exact details differ from Symphony to Symphony, there are certain big set constructs that are identical for each. Just as all Gothic cathedrals differ from one another in detail, they have certain set “rules” by which they are constructed. For a Finale to any Bruckner Symphony, this means a construct along the lines of expanded sonata form, with exposition with first theme, second theme (‘song period’), third theme (chorale theme), then the development section (sometimes containing a fugue, such as in the Fifth) and finally the coda. Whilst the *Te Deum* is itself tightly constructed, its construction in a way represents the architecture of the text and has nothing to do with the “standard” sonata form structure of a Finale (although it does have a recurring “main motive” first played at the very beginning, which is to play a big role in the Finale to the Ninth). Thus, the form is not ‘fit’ for a symphonic Finale³⁰.

Second, a Brucknerian symphonic Finale ties together all (main) threads from the whole Symphony (i.e. including the preceding three movements). Thus, in it one can find main themes from earlier in the Symphony, often in combination(s) where, together with the themes from

²⁸ “*Ein Irrtum ist, daß er das Tedeum [sic] zum Finale der Neunten bestimmt habe. Man fragte den todkranke, ob es als solches gespielt werden könnte, und er murmelte irgendetwas, ohne zu verneinen. Es ist viel früher geschrieben und in ganz anderem Stil*”.

²⁹ Referring to John Alan Philips’s thesis **Bruckner’s Ninth Revisited**; Thesis, University of Adelaide, 2002: “*The Te Deum as Ersatz*” §1.1.11 and “*The conjectural Te Deum transition*” §3.3.8. (NB: note the word “conjectural” here! GvdM)

³⁰ To this section in the original version of this essay I got the following greatly interesting note from Dr. Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs: “*Unfortunately the Sonata problem is a much bigger issue than you address. The Te Deum works in Sonata parameters if you give up the conservative model explanations of what a sonata should be. Look at the Finales of the Seventh and the Third in its last version: In the Seventh, you find almost the same structure as in the Te Deum: A-B-C-C’-B’-A’-Coda. The closing period serves as a link for a mirrored repeat of the Themes, which become development and recapitulation at the same time. In the Third, the second part of the Finale is even clearer: Main Theme developed and recapitulated at the same time, and then Gesangsperiode and Schlußperiode likewise, leading into the Coda. In the Te Deum, the Te ergo serves as Gesangsperiode, the Aeterna Fac is the third theme (and if only a hapax legomenon) and the section following the repeat of the initial Te Deum theme serves as “Prelude, Fugue and Coda”, hence, further development and synthesis of the preceding. Note that, for example, the countersubject of the Fugue represents actually a motif from the initial theme to the words “venerator”. Look also into Helgoland, which Bruckner named expressly “Symphonischer Chor”: A similar form. Actually I think Helgoland would be a much better Notfinale for the Ninth, even if it is in G minor/major. (!) There is an arrangement of it with mixed choir and new text by Fritz Oeser ...”.*

the Finale itself, they tie together the whole “argument” of the Symphony. Since the *Te Deum* contains none of the themes set forth in the first three movements of the Ninth, it simply cannot be used to make a satisfactory conclusion to that Symphony, even when several motives from the *Te Deum* take (very important) roles in the Finale.

Third, simply, I do not think either the *Te Deum* or the Finale-cum-*Te Deum* do fit. The *Te Deum* on its own as substitute “Song of Glory” actually comes closest to Bruckner’s intentions as to how the symphony should end, but “sticking on” the *Te Deum* at 2/3rds of the way through the Finale seems a bad misfit, even when Bruckner seems to have tried to sketch a transition between the two. One might just as well try to stick on Mahler’s “*Veni Creator*” halfway through the Finale of his Sixth Symphony!

The fact that Bruckner makes – rather great – use of motives from the *Te Deum* in the Finale to his Ninth is not strange in itself. He used motives from his “great” Masses³¹ in his early symphonies (especially in the First and Second, but also in the later ones). Likewise, he uses motifs from Wagner in some of his symphonies, but for symbolic reasons, such as the *Gesegnet sollst du schreiten* from Wagner’s *Lohengrin* that he incorporates into the Third Symphony to pay homage to the revered Master. And it is here that we may find the “true” reason why Bruckner used motives from the *Te Deum* so extensively. His Ninth was dedicated “To the Dear Lord”; it was Bruckner’s indication to various people that the work was intended to end with a “song of praise”, which then must be thought of as a “song of praise to the Dear Lord”. And, for a devout Catholic such as Bruckner was, **the** Song of Praise would be the *Te Deum* and, whilst the actual *Te Deum* setting could not be used as a Finale to the Ninth, strong allusions to it by way of utilising some main motives, most noticeably the opening ostinato, would be a logical way in which to achieve this.

It may be that Bruckner, on his deathbed, was not opposed to the playing of the *Te Deum* in conjunction with the (unfinished) Ninth, as a *substitute* for the Finale he was not able to finish, but as a *separate item*, but **not** as an integral part of the Symphony. The first performance of the Ninth in 1903 had the *Te Deum* after the Symphony, but after the interval³²; this idea, if one wishes to play only the first three movements of the Ninth, seems to me to be a viable solution, but the *Te Deum* as Finale is, at least for me, most emphatically not so!³³

³¹ Those in d, e and f minor, disregarding the earlier one in b-flat. NB: note the systematically ascending tonalities!

³² The *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* wrote: “After the resignation of the third movement of the symphony the *Te Deum* sounded almost like a naturally jubilant conclusion”. The *Fremden-Blatt*: „The extended interval [before the *Te Deum*, GvdM] was well advised if only because it avoided all possible comparison with the choral Finale of Beethoven’s Ninth.”

³³ Dr. Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, after reading the first version of this essay, wrote the following to the present author: “Actually, if I would have the chance to conduct the Ninth again, I would perform the four-movement solution and THEN, after a break, the *Te Deum* too!”

III/3. Filling in and filling out.

So what does anyone wanting to complete the Finale have to provide?

1. As to the fully finished score sheets: nothing, barring some details (“Nuancieren”, as Bruckner called it himself)
2. As to the fully finished score sheets that have gone missing: trying to fathom how those sheets may have looked from the discarded sheets (if present), sketches and suchlike and working them out orchestrally.
3. For the score sheets with strings and wind entries: filling out, based on the material available (sketches, but also by using earlier material for guidance).
4. For the continuity drafts: filling out ditto
5. Coda: here (virtually) nothing remains, so here every completer has to make personal guesses and, until more material surfaces, none can be deemed superior to others in “having the truth”.

It may be useful, at this point, to insert a simplified table of the score of the Ninth as it has come down to us, regarding which material was present at the time of Bruckner’s death, and what has been preserved (see next page):

**The present known state of all last stage score bifolios of the Finale
as were present at the time of Bruckners death**

Score bifolio*	Number of bars	State of completion**	Preserved/lost	Main work to be done***	Structural remarks
1	[16?]	finished full score	lost	reconstruction (earlier versions of bifolio and sketches preserved)	Opening. Appearance of two-note dotted 'ostinato' motive.
2	18	finished full score	preserved	none	Further elaboration of 'ostinato' motive.
3	16	finished full score	preserved	none	Beginning of main theme
4	[16?]	finished full score	lost	reconstruction (earlier versions of bifolio and sketches preserved)	Completion of main theme
5	16	finished full score	preserved	none	Beginning of "Gesangsperiode"
6	[16?]	finished full score	lost	reconstruction (sketches preserved)	Continuation of "Gesangsperiode"
7	[16?]	finished full score	lost	reconstruction (earlier versions of bifolio and sketches preserved)	Completion of "Gesangsperiode"
8	18	finished full score	preserved	none	Transitional passage. Reminder of the beginning of the Finale
9	16	finished full score	preserved	none	Intensification, leading to:
10	16	finished full score	preserved	none	Beginning of "Choral"
11	16	finished full score	preserved	none	Continuation of "Choral"; second statement.
12	16	finished full score	preserved	none	End of "Choral"
13a	16	unfinished full score	preserved	filling out	Beginning of Development; first appearance of 'Te Deum' motive
13b	16	unfinished full score	preserved	filling out	Continuation of Development.
14	16	unfinished full score	preserved	filling out	Continuation of Development. Extremely harsh dissonants original.
15	[16?]	unfinished full score	lost	reconstruction	Continuation of Development.
16	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Continuation of Development. Gradual build-up and intensification.
17	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Continuation of Development. Further intensification lead to:
18	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Beginning of Fugue
19	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Further development of Fugue.
20	[16?]	unfinished full score	lost	reconstruction (sketches preserved)	Further development of Fugue. Main theme re-appears.
21	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Petering out' of Fugue; reappearance of 'Main Theme'.
22	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Continuation, general intensification.
23	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Continuation. Appearance of 'commanding' motive on Horns.
24	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Sudden collapse.
25	[16?]	unfinished full score	lost	reconstruction (sketches preserved)	Recapitulation of "Gesangsperiode".
26	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Continuation of "Gesangsperiode"
27	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts; for most of this Bifolio, no indications of winds.	Continuation
28	[16?]	unfinished full score	lost	reconstruction (sketches preserved)	Continuation
29	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Preparation for return of "Chorale".
30	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	"Chorale" (indicated), with 'Te Deum' motive (rectus and inversus) in strings (by Bruckner)
31	[16?]	unfinished full score	lost	reconstruction	Possible continuation of "Chorale"
32	16	unfinished full score	preserved	working out of windparts using Bruckner's indications in the score	Continuation and transition
33	[16?]	unfinished full score	lost	reconstruction (some sketches preserved)	Beginning of Coda(?)
34	[16?]	unfinished full score	lost	(re)construction	Continuation of Coda
35	[16?]	unfinished full score	lost	(re)construction	Somewhere here the 'Coagmentatio' of main themes (?)
36 - ??	[?]	unfinished full score	lost	(re)construction	Completion of Coda; conclusion (on pedal?) in D major

*Numbering from Bruckner, simplified

** Conjectural in the case of lost bifolios

***Disregarding the work to be done on preserved material, such as articulations, corrections of obvious writing mistakes and such.

It must be noted here that any and all additions any completer makes, no matter how small or how “obvious” or “logical”, are by definition conjectural. Doing something this or that way may seem very obvious from the material present but, especially in the Ninth, there are many instances where no-one could have correctly guessed what Bruckner did from the material at hand; it is the sign of the genius to do things in, in hindsight, inevitable ‘logical’ ways nobody ever thought possible, or even thought about!

It would seem logical to have two different “views” as to the freedom that completers have (or take). With those score bifolios that have not been fully worked out, a completer may assume some freedom as to how strictly these pages are taken. Since Bruckner might have made changes (such as adding bars, lengthening sections, changing pitches, etc.) as seemed suitable to him, a completer might feel free to change things too if he so feels the need. As to the parts of which only sketches but no score bifolios are presently available, he might take even more freedom in changing things. On the other hand, a completer might take the view that, yes, *Bruckner* might have changed things, but any *completer* should respect as “cantus firmus” whatever remains of the less than complete parts, and work from them.

It may be important to stress here that the vast majority of listeners to any of the completions of the Finale may not have access to the scores of the completion at hand (although an SPCM score at least is available, most people probably won’t buy and study it – assuming they are able to study a full score – prior to attending a concert performance or listening to a recording), let alone all completions, and thus may not be able to study the hows and whys of the choices made by the completers or, for that matter, may not be inclined to do the studying; a tiny minority will have access to the original material that is left in order to study that. So, most people interested in the Finale (or, more correct, the complete Symphony, inclusive of its Finale) will (need to) judge any completion by “merely” listening to it. One might then say that the highest praise a completer could get is that people who listen to the Finale have at no point the feeling that they are listening to something else but pure Bruckner, i.e. never have the feeling that they are listening to a completion. If everything in the Finale sounds logical, organic and true, then the completer may be given the credit for having satisfactorily completed the work, if still not as Bruckner would have done it.

Of course, in whatever any completer has to add, the unique spark of genius that was Bruckner’s will be absent and personal views, predilections and opinions of the completer will be present; moreover, the latter will increase and the former decrease if there is less Bruckner material available. While skilled completers will be able to emulate a Brucknerian “sound”, that spark of original genius can never be revived. But history has proven that completers can get very close indeed, if one hears the utterly convincing Cooke/Goldschmidt/Matthews version of Mahler’s Tenth, or Payne’s version of Elgar’s “Third Symphony”³⁴.

At present there are five “competitors” in presenting a completed version of the Finale, several of whom have been at it for sometimes several decades. They are, in chronological order:

William Carragan, who prepared a completion in 1979, orchestrating it in 1983, thus presenting the first ever performance of a full completion of the Finale. When it was recorded by the Utrecht Symphony Orchestra under Hubert Soudant it was the first occasion on which a complete 4-movement version of the Ninth became available to a worldwide audience.

³⁴ Although here it is probably best to speak of a symphony written by Payne based on Elgar’s material.

Then there is a “conglomerate” – Nicola Samale, Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, Giuseppe Mazzuca and John A. Phillips, also known under the abbreviation SPCM (this abbreviation will henceforward be used). These four have not continuously worked on the Finale as a team of four, but various members thereof have worked alone or in various combinations during several decades. Initial work was done by Mazzuca and Samale in 1984 and the project has been running through various stages, the most recent (as of writing) having been brought out in 2012. (After 1986, Mazzuca showed no further interest at all in working at the Finale. After that, the remaining three never worked alone; all the revision work of the new edition was discussed intensely between Cohrs and Samale, and Phillips was asked for his opinions too.)

A comparative newcomer to the scene is the Belgian composer and musicologist Sébastien Letocart, who produced his version of the Finale in 2008 as his thesis. He has subsequently made some small changes.³⁵

An older completion of which only very recently a decent recording was presented is the one by Nors S. Josephson.

The most recent completion is one made by the conductor Gerd Schaller, who has made a series of (live) recordings of Bruckner’s complete symphonies, in which he already presented the Ninth with the completion of the Finale in William Carragan’s version.

These five versions all face the same “problems”, as set out at the beginning of this section, namely to fill out those (as yet) missing finished full-score pages comprising 7 gaps, filling out those subsequent pages of which Bruckner wrote an incomplete score and finally finding a way to end the Symphony’s Coda satisfactorily. Whilst for the gaps there is material on which to draw from sketches and discarded material and the filling out of incomplete score pages can be done by educated guesses based on previous material and Bruckner’s well established *modi operandi*, the five versions are roughly comparable in constitution – even where rather noticeable differences exist – but the Codas are fully “educated guesses” by the completers and thus rather different (other than that all five have a final “Alleluia” ending, even when the how and what thereof differs). As far as can be deduced, the various completers were/are aware of one another’s solutions, but have operated virtually independently of one another. Whilst SPCM and Letocart have provided extensive material as to how each and every solution was obtained, neither Carragan, Josephson or Schaller have, to my knowledge, done so.

Luckily, there are now various available recordings of each completer’s work (a full list may be found at the site www.abruckner.com), so they can be compared audibly.

How, then, about the Finale as we have it? Does it live up to expectations? First, again, let me emphasise that, in his Ninth, Bruckner cast his vision wider than ever before. The first movement is much more tragic and dark than in any of his other symphonies, like an evocation of “Man in his misery of Earthly life”. The ensuing scherzo is wildly demonic, this quality still further emphasised by the Trio, as if Man has now entered, or at least sees a vision of, Hell. To counter that, the adagio is the most divine such movement in any Bruckner Symphony. Perhaps this is why most people want to close the Symphony here. We have seen heaven, so why return

³⁵ One might note here that, since the Samale/Phillips/Cohrs/Mazzuca version(s) with the “how, what and why” and Phillips’s thesis on the subject has been available in print for a very long time, both Carragan and Letocart probably knew about this when they worked on their versions. What, if anything, from the SPCM work may have ended up in the Carragan and/or Letocart is a matter of speculation, of course.

to earth? But if we are to experience Man in music here – Man being capable of both Good and Bad – we have to combine the Good with the Bad to arrive at the complete picture. We may have entered Purgatory, but from there it is still a long way to Heaven, and the road is far from easy³⁶. And Light cannot be appreciated without having experienced Dark³⁷.

Of course, the problem here is that Bruckner did not live to complete this finale. Moreover, in his final years his mental capacities were diminishing³⁸. How much of Bruckner's genius is in this Finale? I for one do believe that *all* his genius is in that Finale. I think that Bruckner had thought out most of his symphonies before starting to commit anything beyond mere sketches and *aides-memoire* to paper. Since all components of the first three movements had to come to full fruition in the Finale, he must have thought that Finale through pretty thoroughly before writing down the first three movements, i.e. the end predicts – or even dictates – the beginning. Because of this, I believe the Finale to have been pretty much complete, at least in his head, when he wrote the first three movements. So perhaps (some of) the sketches to the Finale even predate the scoring of movements 1-3! Moreover, since it is clear that he finished the Adagio with full mental capacities intact, it seems unrealistic to think that he started working out the Finale with suddenly severely diminished powers. So at least the initial stages of committing the Finale to paper must have been when he had full command of his powers, even when, especially in the last months of his life, his deteriorating physical health probably influenced his concentration and mental abilities.

But he did not complete the finale in a fully definitive form (even when substantial parts are definitive!) – at least as far as we know at present. We do, however, know that what was complete at the time of his death was more than what we have today, for quite a bit of it was stolen right after his death. Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, for example, is said³⁹ to know that there is at least one manuscript collector who has parts of this considered lost material (and apparently maintains them under terrible conditions), but keeps it inaccessible due to fear of taxes. Fortunately, we do have his “emerging score bifolios” and sketches for most parts that we lack in full score. It would seem that the sole part of which we have only sketches is the beginning of the final part, the Coda. Of the very end, we have nothing.

But does it convince? It is a piece that is rather different from his other Finales, much darker and more desperate. But then in this Symphony's first three movements Bruckner casts his

³⁶ One may well wonder here is Bruckner was familiar with (some images of) Dante's *The Divine Comedy*!

³⁷ If I may quote from someone I saw recently on TV: “for God to exist, Satan has to exist too” – something that has some meaning in Bruckner's work, and especially in the Ninth, I think!

³⁸ But I have noticed that, whilst it is nowhere specified *which* of his mental capacities were deteriorating, it is nevertheless strongly suggested that it was his intellect that was on the wane. However, in his essay (see footnote 18) on the Finale of the Ninth Symphony, Aart van der Wal writes that Bruckner was suffering from nervousness, not from some kind of dementia. Moreover, even if Bruckner did suffer from some form of dementia, it does not automatically mean that this compromised his composing abilities, since some forms of dementia attack only parts of one's capacities, and leave others (such as creative centres) intact. I am certain that he was completely shattered after the rejections of the Eighth, which may well have driven him not only to despair but also have flung him into a “revision frenzy” which also prevented him from work on the Ninth – a most tragic fact.

One might also consult the book *Music and Medicine: Hummel, Weber, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Bruckner: On Their Lives, Works, and Medical Histories* by Dr. Anton Neumayr, published by Medi-Ed Press, 1995.

³⁹ Pay-Uun Hiu, *De Volkskrant*, 21 August 1998, rev. 16 January 1999.

visions further than ever before, necessitating a greater amount of trials and tribulations to get it all together. If one would put Romantic titles to the movements, one could say the first movement gives us the insecurities and disappointments of human life, the second a depiction of utter despair and the third the promise of salvation. In short: earthly life, hell and *purgatorio*. From this it would be easily understandable why most people consider the Symphony to be “finished” as it stands and even have no desire for a fourth movement since, as is usual in a Bruckner Symphony, such a fourth movement would have to deal with the despairing and hellish aspects once more; “better”, then, to be left in purgatory with a vision of heaven in our minds! Perhaps we would not have been fooled into believing that the work was, or could be, finished in three movements had Bruckner laid out the Symphony as in his earlier ones, with the adagio second and the scherzo third⁴⁰!

Since the Ninth seems to deal with the earthly life and visions of Hell and Heaven (or at least Salvation)⁴¹, one must therefore expect a finale that is more disparate than ever before. The Finale of the Eighth Symphony is already quite different to his earlier ones, but that of the Ninth is even more so. Part of the problem of accepting the Finale might be that the Ninth in its 3-movement form is so very well known, that one has perhaps a feeling about the kind of music that “should” follow. Also, the symmetry of the first and third movement around the Scherzo (itself a symmetric shape!) might be alluring. And since nobody’s mind works like Bruckner’s, the Finale music as discovered might sound disappointing, especially if one has conjured up some sort of expectation of what that Finale should be like, based on what one knows about the first three movements⁴². If we see the first three movements as Earth, Hell and Purgatory, one might suspect the Finale to be a glorious fulfilment of all this, making a sequence of Human Life and Inferno (movements I+II), Purgatorio (III), Paradiso (IV)⁴³, so we might expect the Finale to begin, for instance, with either a glittering shimmer from which the vision of the heavens might start to consolidate (something on the lines of the opening pages of the Seventh Symphony), or a glorious assertive “fanfare”. Those huge and terrifying falling brass outbursts in the first movement (truly *Tuba mirum*!) are already changed into rising brass calls in the third movement, (*Tuba mirum* changed into *Tuba mirabilis*?), so perhaps we might now expect (or like to hear) something of a *Tuba gloriosa*, or something such as the opening of the Eighth’s last movement⁴⁴. Thinking along these lines (but only then!), the idea of placing the *Te Deum* in substitution for the Finale might seem not only plausible but also even desirable. So, the actual opening of the Finale, based on such assumptions, may very well sound disappointing - even wrong! - for we are thrown back into the insecurity, the darkness and the turmoil of the

⁴⁰ Something Bruckner may even have contemplated, since scholars on the subject state that the third I in the III that precedes the Adagio inscription seems to be added on a later date. For comparison, you could just as well then drop the Finale of the Seventh, place the adagio third and the scherzo second and “end” the Symphony with the moving farewell to Wagner!

⁴¹ With perhaps some indication that a substantial part of Hell may be what we call “life on Earth”!

⁴² Like when you see a person’s face, for example, on TV for the first time when you have been made very familiar with his voice earlier on; almost always, the face doesn’t look like what you expected, while at the same time you cannot draw what kind of face you did expect!

⁴³ Note that this makes for a threefold structure of which each part is roughly the same length – a Dante Symphony, so to speak; would Bruckner have known Dante’s work, I wonder. He certainly did know Liszt’s *Dante* Symphony.

⁴⁴ But the Finale of the Eighth, especially in its original shape, is no simple glorious piece of music, but quite unsettling and bare at places, not least right before the final peroration in the Coda – as such, prefiguring the Finale of the Ninth!

opening two movements. The conflict of those two movements re-emerges, even more troubling than before. We have seen a – far off and very much not certain or secured - *vision* of victory in the adagio, but we are as yet not part thereof. The fact that most conductors, when playing the three movements, conduct this movement as a *final* movement and therefore try to infuse the music with a sense of victory – or at least try to end it with a sense of a peaceful farewell do much damage to the intent and structure of the Symphony as a whole, making it even more an incomplete torso than the work in three movements already is!

The opening, a tremolo on solo-timpani (who would have guessed putting the tremolo on percussion only?!) – as such a perfect transition from the end of the Adagio⁴⁵ - does indeed give the tremulous beginning familiar from so many Bruckner openings, but on the darkest level. Almost immediately, jagged figurations (a two-note pattern that will dominate the Finale on an almost obsessive level) begin, and the battle is soon in full swing. The problem with the completion is that, whilst the Symphony does (or at least was intended to) end in victory - be it only at the very end – any completer has to find a way as to how to find a way to end – and win! – that battle, and that very end is missing from the material as we have it and has had to be supplemented from scratch by those completing it. Since only Bruckner (as I believe he *did*) knew how the Finale, and therefore the Symphony, was to end (an ending of a kind unprecedented in his *œuvre* at that!) – and since nobody as yet may fully convincingly emulate the thinking of Bruckner – that very ending as provided may seem to lack some naturalness and conviction. Nevertheless, with subsequent hearings, the music, including its ending, begins to sound more convincing, even moving. So it may well be a simple question of getting to know this music better.

All this makes, at least to me, the question of how sound Bruckner's mind was when he was working on the Finale to be answered by *pretty sound indeed!* I do not think that he was losing his grip on his material; what we have is emphatically *not* of inferior quality but is indeed what he had in his (right!) mind. Judging from material that I have read, Bruckner's mental state at the end of his life may have been deteriorating in some aspects, but more on the level of loss of confidence, rather than a degradation of (compositional) competence. It seems clear that his general mental equilibrium was indeed deteriorating. But Bruckner had already suffered attacks of severe mental disruption several times, most severely so after completing the First Symphony, so it may well be that, had he lived, he might have regained his equilibrium. The rejection of the first version of the Eighth by Levi and the Schalk brothers seems to have been the second severe wrecking experience, which I believe may well have lasted until the end of his life and may even have influenced the content of the Ninth.

⁴⁵ One might even contemplate an *attacca* here!

III/4*. Some final conclusions

1. Bruckner's symphonies are four-movement structures tightly connected within themselves. All movements within one Symphony are interconnected at a deep level. Since in all symphonies material from the first three movements comes together and finds its final "solution" in the Finale, the material from those first three movements must be formed in such a way that it *can* come together in the Finale. It therefore seems impossible that Bruckner (fully) worked out the first three movements of the Ninth without first having a very clear image of how its Finale was going to be. In other words, when starting work on the Ninth, he must have had a clear image of this Symphony in its *entirety*, even when many details were still to be thought and worked out during the actual compositional work.
2. Bruckner worked, like most composers, from drafts "upwards" to the finished score. One may expect that the drafts for the Finale were made straight after completing the draft of the third movement at the latest. Since that third movement shows no signs of failing mental powers, one may assume that at least the drafts to the Finale were made while Bruckner was still in a relatively healthy state of mind. This in combination with point 1. above convinces me that the plans as revealed in the drafts are genuine as to how Bruckner wanted the Finale to be.
3. Those parts of the final orchestral score that are preserved show in their handwriting no sign of mental deterioration and only in the very last parts some sign of physical deterioration. People who suffer from dementia or similar afflictions usually lose some or all of their motoric skills as well, most acutely noticeable in their handwriting. Bruckner's handwriting in the score of the Ninth shows no signs of deterioration up until the very last extant pages – indeed, rather the opposite; published examples of the manuscript score are as meticulous as one might possibly wish, even most of the very late ones. In fact, if one takes into account Bruckner's physical state during the period that he worked on the Finale (and during work on much of the earlier parts, in fact, especially the adagio), it is a miracle that he managed to get the score on to paper at all, let alone in such immaculate handwriting. The last dated page is from August 1896, just two months before his death and well into what is supposedly his "mentally disintegrated" period. Here, his handwriting is clearly less secure than on earlier pages but, considering the level of physical deterioration during his final year, even his last handwriting looks remarkably steady. Writing such a vast, complex score in a state of mental degradation seems to be, to me at least, impossible.

Because of all this, I do believe that what we have of the Finale (which is quite a lot!) is to be taken entirely seriously, on the level of similar sketches to, say, the finale of Mahler's Tenth⁴⁶. The score as we have it should also, I believe, be taken equally seriously. The problem faced is to fill out those score pages that for the time being remain missing. This constitutes somewhat

⁴⁶ In fact, the material for the whole of Mahler's Tenth may be compared to the material for the Finale of Bruckner's Ninth, since in both case we have bits that are in finished score and bits in draft, with all stages in between. Only the Coda of the Bruckner Finale is (presently) missing, while the material for the Mahler Symphony extends all to the last double bar. That said, Mahler probably would have made extensive changes while working out his sketches, especially in the last movement. For Bruckner's Finale, the layout is pretty much clearly set. As such, the Bruckner Finale might be said to be more "complete" than Mahler's Tenth!

less than half the movement as yet⁴⁷. Here, the editors had to construct an orchestral score from the sketches, being aware of the fact that Bruckner may have changed things between sketch and score – and the Coda had to be made from scratch.

But even when one finds that the (re)constructed Finale is weak as opposed to the rest of the Symphony, I do believe that it is vitally important to incorporate it in a performance or recording, in order at least to give some idea of what the *whole work* is about, for even an “inferior” completed Finale changes one’s impression of the Symphony *as a whole* and proves that the three-movement version is NOT complete and therefore NOT fully understandable. The alternative to presenting the completion is to play only those bits that exist in a Bruckner score, but then the problem would be that the Finale is represented as a series of loose fragments, starting and ending abruptly and without an all-important connecting framework. The argument that the Finale should not be performed because it is incomplete is nonsense insofar as it would then be equally valid to state that the first three movements of the Symphony should not be performed either because the lack of the Finale makes the *whole work* incomplete, said Finale being an organic, even necessary, part of the whole structure.

With the Finale in place, the Ninth is a most disturbing work, not at all “heroic”, since its Finale is not the jubilant concluding Finale that one might expect or desire. Victory, or, perhaps, one should say: *salvation* is reached at the end, but only at the *very* end, and barely so even then⁴⁸.

To consider the work complete in its first three movements is, after hearing them several times followed by any of the various attempts at presenting the Symphony’s Finale, so wrong that it is almost obscene. The Finale’s contents are such that they change the whole perception of the entire Symphony. The work most definitely does not – and was not intended to – end with that almost unbearable vision of heaven, on those soaring last chords with that reminiscence of the Seventh Symphony’s opening figure, as if it were the hand of Beatrice reaching out to accompany us into the heavenly, divine sphere. Even to think that the work *could* end there is absurd. The idea that, after this, the *Te Deum* might be fit to follow is Romantic nonsense, fed by a (wilful?) misunderstanding of Bruckner’s intentions as laid down in the Finale (the extensive quotations of the opening ostinato from the *Te Deum*). Some people would probably find it easier, or more satisfying, to their sense of pleasance, to end the Symphony with the Adagio, rather than confronting what Bruckner had intended to follow, for that Finale is perhaps the most shocking piece of music ever conceived by him. No heroic entrance as in the Eighth’s

⁴⁷ Note the remark by Cohrs (to be found in the study score issued by Musikproduktion Jürgen Höflich, Explorer Series Score 444), stated before, that several of the as yet lost score bifolios may still be extant, and apparently there are even signals as to where they are (some private collection); hopefully they will surface one day.

⁴⁸ Compare the original 1st movement of the Eighth Symphony to the revised one; the revised one ends in a despairing fading away, yet the original gives, after that dying out, a mighty presentation of the main theme, *fff*, as though the composer wants to defeat the despair but manages to do so more by sheer willpower rather than conviction. Compare here the Finale of Furtwängler’s Third Symphony, coincidentally also a Finale on which its composer worked for a number of years but died just short of fully rounding it off.



*3Temptation of Saint Anthony; Isenheim Altarpiece
(Matthias Neithart [aka Grünewald] (Wikiart)*

Finale, but a dull drum roll as a grotesque version of that so familiar tremolo shimmer that opens several other symphonies, after which there unfolds a Hellish vision of a soul horrible assaulted by (mental) devils, almost like a Brucknerian musical version of the Temptation of St. Augustine – and no sugary, “tasteful” version suitable for the faint-hearted, but rather like the one painted by Grünewald for the Isenheim Altarpiece.

To distance oneself wilfully from, or even deny the very existence of, this Finale is not wanting to hear what Bruckner desired to say and not wanting to understand what Bruckner had in mind. A complete vision of his final intentions will forever elude us because the composer died before he could complete this work, but at least a good idea of what he intended can be got from the various attempts at filling in the gaps and providing an ending for this most shattering movement that Bruckner conceived.

IV. The Finale, a personal survey

Please note this section is *not* meant to be a thorough ‘musicological’ description of the Finale, as such is well beyond the capacities of the present writer. Consider it to be a survey of noticeable parts and elements of the Finale, as perceived by the author.⁴⁹

The Finale to Bruckner’s Ninth Symphony is laid out not unlike the Finales of the Fifth and Eighth Symphonies. That is, they and the Finale of the Ninth are structured along the lines of expanded Sonata Form, and are mainly build on three important themes, much like the first movement of both the Fifth and the Ninth itself.

Since Bruckner was not able to finish his last Finale, we have an incomplete idea of what this Finale, in fully completed form, would have been, but at least it is clear from the surviving material that the Finale of the Ninth would have become an vast structure of unprecedented wide ranging content and traversing utterly disturbing areas of the mind. The present author has, through listening to all presently available recorded versions, come to the tentative conclusion that the Finale might be considered a symphonic rendering of the sequence ‘*Dies irae*’ from the Latin Mass for the Dead (the Requiem), but with an ultimately positive solution in which the human soul, after struggling through life and death (movements 1 through 3) and seeing the horrors of the Final Judgement reaches Salvation. Not on his own powers, or due to his own capacities and qualities, but because being lifted from Hell into Heaven (not unlike, then, the journey through Hell and Purgatory as described by Dante!).

Those who have been lulled into a sense of comfort due to the idea that the Ninth ends with the last ‘comforting’ strains of the Adagio, never mind that these few measures by no means could ‘make good’ the greatly disturbing and unsettling nature of the Adagio, let alone the upheavals of the first movement and/or the ‘dancing demons’ of the Scherzo. To truly bring the Symphony as a whole to a logical and satisfactory conclusion there has to be a Finale which brings together all elements of the first three movements and, together with all the elements in the Finale, thus can bring the whole work round towards a true solution and ending. Since the first three movements of the Ninth are of such far-reaching content, and are of such unsettling nature, the Finale had to become the most complex and far-reaching Finale of any Bruckner Symphony. A Finale, in fact, that combines (structural) elements of the Finales of the Fifth and Eighth Symphonies into an edifice outdoing both. From the material of the Ninth’s Finale as has been preserved emerges the image of a movement of roughly equal length with the first movement and the Adagio. However, as Bruckner was clearly still working on the structure of the Finale at the time of his death, and evidently was at times greatly expanding certain (earlier) sections thereof, it may well be that the Finale, had it reached completion, would have become quite longer. As they stand now, some sections of the Finale seem somewhat embryonic.

⁴⁹ For the writing of this section, the edition of the 2008 version of the SPCM-score, with its highly detailed analysis of each preserved bifolio, was indispensable.

A short survey then of the various stages and elements of the Finale, insofar as can be learned from the manuscript (or, for that matter, so much of it as has survived to the present day).

While the very first bifolio, which was no doubt complete and finished at the time of Bruckner's death, is presently unaccounted for⁵⁰, its content can be pretty much clearly gleaned from such material as survives, not least earlier discarded bifolios. As so many other symphonies and Finales by Bruckner, it starts with a quiet tremolo, but uniquely here it is given to the timpani (on A). The first 40 or so measures constitute a kind of introduction, in which various elements are given that will, throughout the Finale, either reappear, or give rise to various important (thematic) elements. The very opening brings a sense of suspense and unrest due to a dotted two-note motive, which soon proliferates through the whole orchestra, and results in a rather violent reminder of the 'galloping' opening of the Finale of the Eighth Symphony.

This then quickly subsides, but just as some calm seems to be reached, the main theme bursts in, a very jagged and violent statement, like a cry of despair, and which is repeated three times with increasing tension. This theme, and more precise its jagged (double) dotted rhythm will



dominate the Finale to the point of mania. An image of the 'Last Day', and the wrath of God?

As is custom in Bruckner, the first statement of the main theme is followed by the 'Song Period'; usually a lyrical theme juxtaposing the main theme. Here, however, this 'lyrical theme' is very barren and desolate, like a lonely voice (the 'Voice that cryeth in the Wilderness?'). Uniquely in the whole of Bruckner, this Song Theme is presented not on its own, but accompanied by the Main Theme which, rather than sounding angry as it did in its first statement, now sounds like a voice equally lonely to the Song Theme, as if two lost souls wandering together. In terms of the *Dies Irae*, this perhaps signifies *Quid sum miser?*

This material is then answered upon in similar mode, after which the Song Period itself is recapitulated. The atmosphere has though this become quite muted indeed, and soon we are back again at the very beginning, with the drum roll leading into the figurations the Finale opened with. This, however, is now expanded and elaborated upon. Soon, the woodwinds sound a threatening sounding, ascending triple dotted motive.

When the tension has risen to maximum strength, the Chorale burst in on full brass. This is the third theme of the Finale, and a standard element in any Bruckner such movement. While it is

⁵⁰ The first page of the Finale would be of special interest to 'souvenir' hunters, and, since it would most likely have been on top of the pile of papers that were the Finale as Bruckner left it, the easiest to 'retrieve' for any prospecting interested party right after Bruckner died and before his estate was secure. Thus, it may well still exist in some secretive private collection.

Above this, judging from Bruckner's own indications (and sometimes actual notes), things are getting fuller and busier, until a giant climax is reached. Or, perhaps better, a climax is arrived at, but almost immediately collapses.

After the almost lugubrious silent bar, the 'Song Period' comes again in the violins, perhaps even more bare as the initial time, slightly modified and sounding as an almost unbearable pleading in despair. It seems the music was to remain in this atmosphere for a while, although the bifolio for this music was left very incomplete, in part only containing the strings. The next bifolio is missing, but judging from the surviving sketches and the next extant, if incomplete, bifolio, the music was to become quite fuller and agitated again, reaching a climax and getting back to a variant of the leaping violin figure.

The tension is build up again, and the (slightly varied) Chorale was to burst in for the second time (as indicated but not worked out in the manuscript). In the strings (which are complete in the manuscript), this is accompanied by the '*Te Deum*' motive, both *rectus* (on violins) and *inversus* (on 'celli and double basses). This is, at least to me, the point where the second 'crises' occurs, but here it is less devastating than the first time, possibly because when the first 'crises' occurred (the first statement of the Chorale), the 'ray of hope' constituted by the emergence of the '*Te Deum*' motive appeared only after the music has collapsed. Here, the '*Te Deum*' motive underpins the Chorale, carried by the string section. So, rather than being a (feeble, on solo flute) sign of hope, the feeling of ultimate survival become much stronger, even when obviously that goal is still far off.

After this, the music subsides again, but soon the figurations in the strings mutate in a variant of the 'quarter, eighth-triplet' motive, which gives a heightening sense of unrest (the actual point where the 'orderly' *Te Deum* motive changes into the more 'disorderly' triplet motive is on a currently missing bifolio, but as it is present on the next bifolio, the shift must have come somewhere on the missing bifolio).

This then serves as the background for an (indicated) elaboration on a rather commanding rhythmical figure throughout the brass (and, possibly, the rest of the winds). Unfortunately, only the very beginning of this is preserved in the presently available score bifolios. Indeed, this bifolio (bifolio [32]) is the very last, as all further bifolios (at least some 4 to 5) are currently lost.

As the last bifolio indicates the music here has advanced to (close to) the start of the Coda, this means any completer has from here on the task of providing a convincing Coda of some sort, a Coda that is not just an ending to the Finale, but to the Symphony as a whole.

To my ears, this is also (close to) the point where the third 'crises' *has* to occur, as the Coda has to draw together all strands of the Finale (that is, all its anguish, fear, doubt, but also elaborating the 'ray of hope' indicated along the way) and the main strands of the first three movements, and turn these into a victorious solution. Not unlike Dante, who had to pass the deepest pit of hell, indeed climb along Satan's own body, in order to leave Hell and journey on to, ultimately, the Glory of God.

Luckily, there are some pointers as to how Bruckner intended to proceed. Some sketches have survived which give a very basic idea of the harmonic foundation of the beginning, but unfortunately not the whole, of the Coda. In fact, there are three sketches, all pertaining to the Coda, though none reaches the last bar, and how these three sketches overlap, are consecutive or even in which order they should be taken is pretty much conjecture. Maybe they do not all three belong together.

From what others, who may have seen (or claim to have seen) the last score bifolios before Bruckner died (bifolios since gone missing), have mentioned that Bruckner intended to make a 'Coagmentatio' of the main themes of all movements (as he had done in the Eighth Symphony), and perhaps such was even present in the now lost bifolios (it may well be that these last bifolios, for the sake of 'getting it right', were more completely worked out than the bifolios before; perhaps Bruckner first worked out how he might combine these themes before he went ahead working on the road thereto). How that Coagmentatio was done is, currently, completely up to the completers, and various solutions have been tried.

Also, witnesses have testified that the final end of the Finale was to be (or, perhaps, already was) a "Halleluiah". Other than the certainty that such final "Halleluiah" would be on the note D, reaching such an end has to be, for now and perhaps forever, complete conjecture. Again, various solutions have been tried.

Perhaps, one day the (or some of the) missing bifolios will be found or turn up, and give us a better chance of understanding exactly how Bruckner intended to finish the last and, perhaps, greatest of his Symphonies...

V. Recordings

Since various “completers” have had different ideas as to how to fill in the various gaps and provide a Coda, I do think it is vitally important to hear all those various attempts. Of the SPCM- and Carragan versions several recordings are available but, unfortunately, not all of them are either not by the best performers, or not easy to come by, or both. Of the Letocart, Josephson and Schaller versions are, currently, only single recordings available. While the recordings of the Josephson and Schaller versions are excellent both in performance and recording, the Letocart, due to circumstances, is of rather poorer quality.

What emerges clearly from comparing all these various versions is how much alike they are. For those sections of which a finished full score has survived, this is no surprise, but the sections that had to be fleshed out also sound remarkably similar. Also, the solutions that each completer has found for the Coda (for which only sketches survive up to the beginning of the final pedal point, after which there is nothing) are quite comparable. In all cases, the size of the Finale as can be deduced from the remaining material is comparable to that of the 1st and 3rd movements, i.e. around 23-24 minutes⁵¹. However, considering Bruckner did not finish the Finale, it may well be that the Finale, had Bruckner been able to fully finish it (i.e. work out everything), would have been larger, possibly considerably so. I would here like to refer to an article by Martyn Becker (see the ‘Suggestions for further reading’ at the end of this essay), in which he, quite convincingly, suggests that Bruckner’s score insofar we have it, including of the ‘finished’ bifolios, may very well be, in number of bars, shorter than a truly finished score would have been. The (late stage) expansion of one bifolio to considerable greater length might be proved thereto. He argues that, for example, the material of the Fugue, which in the state it reached us looks and sounds somewhat truncated, might be an initial set-down of ideas for the Fugue, to be (greatly?) expanded into a final version. Thinking this way, that the current material might not be final but more conceptual, which sounds very plausible indeed. There is an interesting CD of the Fifth Symphony, giving exactly such a ‘conceptual state’ of that work. Which is notably shorter than the final version. In this symphony which, together with the Eighth, may have served Bruckner for a kind of template in structuring his Ninth, the Finale, which includes a Fugue, is by far the longest movement, being about 1/3rd of the whole symphony. Thus, had Bruckner been able to truly finish the Finale, it might well have reached close to half an hour in length!

⁵¹ Intriguingly, the Scottish composer Alistair Hinton, in private correspondence with the present writer, stated: “*The one thing that seems most to bother me is that, psychologically, the Symphony needs a movement on the scale of the finale of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony in order to have sufficient space in which to attain the very opposite conclusion to that movement! - i.e. around the 30-minute mark.*”. Whilst what we have of the Finale does not contain material for a movement of 30 minutes (i.e. a Finale of some 900 or 1000 bars rather than the 660-725 assumed by the stage of the Finale reached by Bruckner), a truly ‘final’ version might well have reached that length. Moreover, this remark by Hinton is remarkably apt as to the similarities between the two Finales (i.e. that of Mahler’s Sixth and Bruckner’s Ninth); each presents the final “struggle” of a soul that threatens to be doomed and, whilst Mahler’s “fight” is between victory and defeat, Bruckner’s is between salvation and damnation. Each Finale has three great “crises” with the third at the very end; in Mahler’s case, the result is defeat, whereas in Bruckner’s there is – ultimately, and barely – salvation. And the Finale to Mahler’s Sixth Symphony is about half an hour long, being 1/3rd of the whole symphony. Coincidence?

On the various completions

In the course of the years after the first authentic publication of the Ninth, various people have been working on the material of the Finale. A list will suffice to show that trying to complete the Finale started pretty soon after that publication:

Else Krüger 2 pianos 1934 (fragments)
Fritz Oeser orchestra 1940 (exposition only)
Hans Ferdinand Redlich 2 pianos 1948 (fragments)
Edward D.R. Neill & Giuseppe Gastaldi orchestra 1962 (fragments)
Ernst Märzendorfer orchestra 1968-1969 (completion)
Hein's Gravesande orchestra 1969 (completion)
Arthur D. Walker orchestra 1965-1970 (fragments)
Hans-Hubert Schönzeler orchestra 1974 (fragments)
Peter Ruzicka orchestra 1976 (fragments)
Marshall Fine orchestra 1977-1979 (completion)
William Carragan orchestra 1979-1984 (completion)
William Carragan & Paul Nudelman 2 pianos 1979-1984 (completion)
Nicola Samale & Giuseppe Mazzuca orchestra 1979-1985
Nors P. Josephson orchestra 1979-1992 (completion)
Samale & Mazzuca, arr. Samale 2 pianos 1985 (completion)
Samale & Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs orchestra 1986-1988 (completion)
Samale/John Alan Phillips/Cohrs/Mazzuca (SPCM) orchestra 1989-1991 (completion)
SPCM, arr. Phillips 2 pianos 1991 (completion)
SPCM, revised by Phillips orchestra 1996 (completion)
SPCM, revised by Cohrs & Samale orchestra 1996-2005/2008/2012 (completion)
Phillips orchestra 1999-2002 (fragments)
Jacques Roelands 2003 (completion up to the Coda)
SPCM, revised by Cohrs & Samale, arr. Thomas Schmoegner organ 2005 (completion)
Cohrs orchestra 2006 (fragments)
Sébastien Letocart completion (2008/2009)
Gerd Schaller 2015 (completion)⁵²
Joan Schukking (orchestral construction of the Coda alone)

In the above list, the names Samale, Mazucca, Cohrs and Philips (in any combination and collectively referred to as SPCM) may be readily identified as those who have worked over the longest timespan on the Finale; they seem to assume the position for Bruckner's last Symphony that Cooke, Matthews, Matthews and Goldschmidt have taken for Mahler's last Symphony.

Since the material of Finale survives in rather different state of completion, it may not be a surprise that the most complete folios will be all but identical in the various completions. The folios not fully worked out by Bruckner had to be supplemented by the completers, and the less of Bruckner was written down, the more completers had to add, and the various versions noticeable differ here. For the Coda, of the first segment little survives, and of the end nothing, so the various completions differ here the most.

- ❖ SPCM, after working this last crisis to its maximum tension, had originally stop the music dead in its track on a fermata, after which the music restarted pianissimo on a tremolo in the violins based on the 'Te Deum' motive, to which the winds, in long notes, used the same motive in inversion, and from there worked to a big 'Halleluia' closing. In their most recent version however, they skip this build-up entirely, and switch to this 'Halleluia' immediately, thus turning the music in one sudden stroke from dark to light. Hence, their 'end phase', which they needed to provide from scratch, is quite short.

⁵² List taken from the Aart van der Wal essay (see footnote 18), with added information.

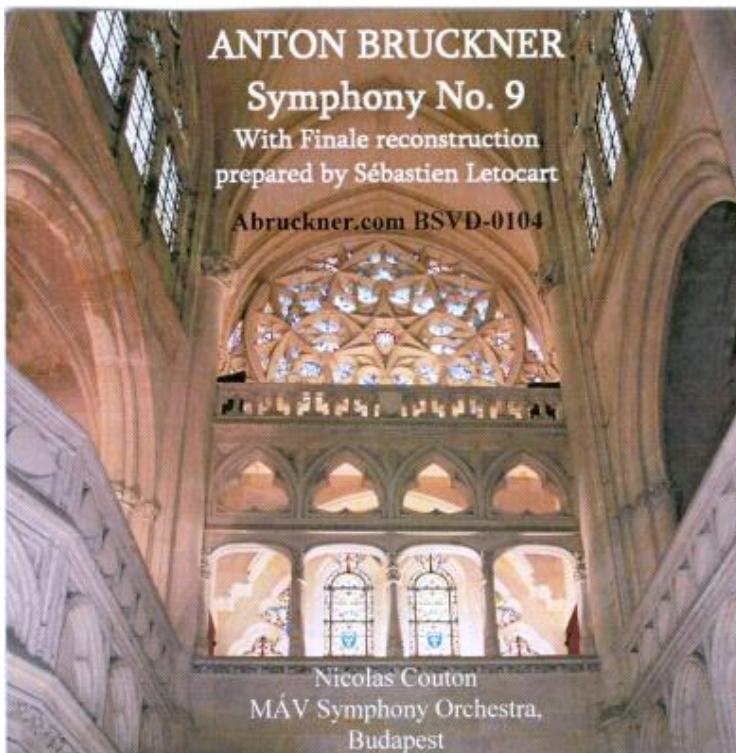
- ❖ Letocart, on the other hand, extends the first three sketches to some greater length, and after the last climax he constructs (considerably more dissonant than SPCM), does proceed with a pianissimo beginning of the ‘Coda of the Coda’ (as he puts it) which is quite extended. More extended, in fact, than comparable sections from any other Bruckner symphony. In all, Letocart’s Coda runs to over 5 minutes in playing time, or about 20% of the length of the whole Finale. But see the discussion of the recording of his version for a further discussion hereof.
- ❖ Carragan’s solution is also quite extended, if not so much as Letocart’s. He, too, adds quite some material of his own after the sketches of Bruckner end, and finds rather different solutions than does Letocart. As far as I can determine, he is rather more free with ‘own invention’ rather than ‘invention based upon Bruckner’ than Letocart is.
- ❖ Josephson’s solution is to restate the climax at the ending of the first movement, lets the music fade, and then closes the symphony with some big (flourished) chords.
- ❖ Schaller’s conclusion is, in workings if not content, comparable to Carragan’s.
- ❖ Jacques Roeland’s completion (as yet unperformed) follows mostly the same principles as SPCM, but because he feels too little material survives to construct a plausible Coda, decided to end his completion before that.
- ❖ Joan Schukking, rather than provide another completion of the Finale up to the Coda, has attempted to construct a plausible Coda, more or less on the lines of thinking of SPCM; at least up to their pre-last version of 2012⁵³.

⁵³ Interestingly, one might thus perhaps consider conflating Roeland’s completion with Schukking’s Coda to produce one new completed Finale!

Discussion of the various available recordings of the five currently available completions. (NB: several of the below mentioned recordings are or have been available in different editions or, in the case of mentioned boxed sets, available separately. The shown editions are all from the author's own collection)

There are several recordings of various completions. Unfortunately, since Bruckner's Finale as completed in any form is by no means accepted at present by most Bruckner conductors, these recordings are either hard to find, of less than ideal performance and/or recording or both. Here follows a – highly personally subjective and wholly unscholarly - “review” of some versions and recordings the present writer has in his possession...

Sébastien Letocart



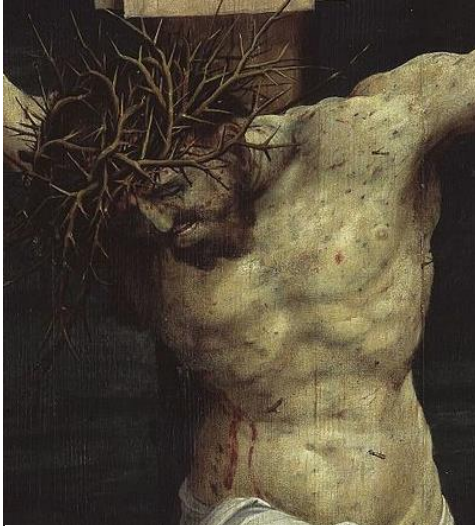
Sébastien Letocart; 2008 version.
Movements 1-3: 1896 Nowak Edition
MÁV Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Nicolas Couton.
Issued on abruckner.com BSVD-0104

I like this version quite a bit. It seems to hang together rather cohesively, logically and naturally. This sense is helped by the fact that Letocart in his notes specifies precisely the times of the gaps in the musical text that he had to fill in and at exactly what point begins the Coda that he had to provide virtually from scratch. Letocart's version is at points – especially in the first sections of the Coda –

noticeably darker than the other two (Carragan and SPCM). His Coda is a rather extended one in four sections (each helpfully time-specified in the liner notes), which gives the Coda extended “space” in which to build itself up. The “crises” Letocart realises at the beginning of the Coda are the most desperate that I have heard and, a little later, this returns once more. Only after the final section (the “Coda of the Coda”, in Letocart's words) establishes itself, starting with gradual crescendo which leads to a final pedal-point⁵⁴ where the music almost wrenches itself into a ray of hope and confidence at the very end, does ultimate resolution arrive.

Letocart's Coda is, when compared to the other completions and the Codas to other Bruckner symphonies, rather extended, and one might say it is rather longer than Bruckner most likely would have done (although it behoves anyone to be very careful in stating what Bruckner might or would have done, especially considering what unheard of things he did in the first three movements!). But, as has been mentioned earlier, it may well be that the Finale, had Bruckner been able to fully finish it, might have become quite longer than the available material suggest. In which case Letocart's Coda might turn out to be not too long in context of such a longer Finale! Yet even if one accepts this Coda to be too long, what Letocart *does* provide is a greatly

⁵⁴ This is quite likely an analogue to the very end of the Finale of the Eighth Symphony.



⁴ detail from the Trauerbischofsheimer Altarpiece (Matthias Neithart [aka Grünewald] (Wikipedia))

convincing *emotional* solution and ending to the Finale and symphony at large. I do think that it is, at least in content if perhaps not detail, close to what the composer intended it to be from the very time that he began composing the Symphony. Perhaps in musicological terms the Coda is ‘wrong’ in being too long within the available material, yet music, like any art, should come from the heart no less than the mind, and in Letocart’s version seems to come from the depths of the heart. I find most discomfiting yet *truthful* music to listen to; I have read it “conveys a sense of Apocalypse”⁵⁵, and I think that is spot on. Yes, in Letocart’s vision the work does, in the – very – end reach the major and the ‘Alleluia’, but it not an unscathed salvation, as the wounds and misery on the way to that salvation do still throb and hurt, and the visions of Hell seen along the way, and indeed suffered, have not be eradicated from memory. One might compare this with one of Grünewald’s paintings of the crucified Christ, which conveys a sense of what unimaginable suffering it takes to reach Salvation. We *have*, ultimately and barely, reached the ‘Halleluia’, but the is still ‘Dies irae’ very much before the mind’s eye. As such, it is most unsettling music to listen to, but, to my personal feelings, it is the most truthful rendition of the *intent* of the Finale.⁵⁶

But then the bad news. I do not greatly like the recording. The orchestra (the MÁV Symphony Orchestra, Budapest) sounds thin (a quick check showed that it is indeed a smallish orchestra), quite lacking the full sonority so needed for Bruckner’s music⁵⁷. Moreover, various instruments in the orchestra sound at times quite weird; I’m quite acquainted with the fact that, say, a Russian-built clarinet sounds different from a French one or an American one, but here there are some truly bizarre sounds, especially in the brass. Also, the orchestra seems not to have an entirely right feel for Bruckner, making the recording lack a certain Brucknerian colour and sound. On top of that, the recording itself is of below the usual standard for a modern recording, and the acoustics of the recording hall are not very ideal. To top it off, the equipment with which the recording was made seems not to have been up to reproducing the more climactic moments, resulting in congested patches. So it was a bit hard to listen through all that. In the liner notes, Letocart writes that, after this recording was made, some minor revisions were made to the score. One may hope that this revised version finds a (more) adequate performing orchestra and a far finer recording thereof to do it justice. Considering how even this less than ideal

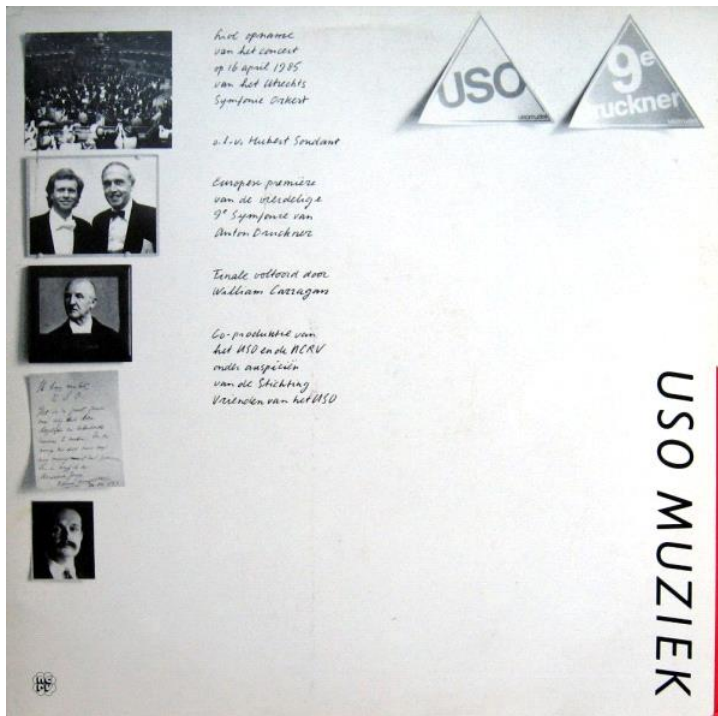
⁵⁵ <http://www.billsmediacommentary.com/?p=2386>

⁵⁶ In a reaction to this section, Sébastien Letocart wrote to me: “*I would not say that my understanding of the Finale is about “the destruction of man” but rather transcendence, leaving the human body to enter the light of revelation, something in the sense of christian transfiguration. (...) fact [is] that the Ninth is obviously Bruckner’s darkest work, a face to face with solitude, old-age, death and a radical search for light, certainty and appeasement.*” (Private email to author)

⁵⁷ Sébastien Letocart, in private correspondence with the present author, wrote that for this recording there was intentionally chosen fewer strings for reasons of clarity. Letocart also wrote that his team had exactly one day to rehearse and then two days to record the work which, since the Finale was completely new to the orchestra, probably explains a lot. It is a pity they did not have more time to rehearse thoroughly and produce a better recording! One must hope someday, preferably soon, a performance/recording doing Letocart’s vision justice will come about!

performance makes an almost shattering impression, one might almost fear what a totally up to it orchestra, with a sensitive conductor making the orchestra give its all, might produce. Possibly something on a par with Mahler's Sixth, possibly even more dark, as in Mahler we see the destruction of a man; Bruckner's Ninth, in Letocart's vision, seems to me to be about the destruction of Man, even when in Bruckner there is a – little – hope yet left. Imagine what someone like Bernstein could have made from this...

William Carragan



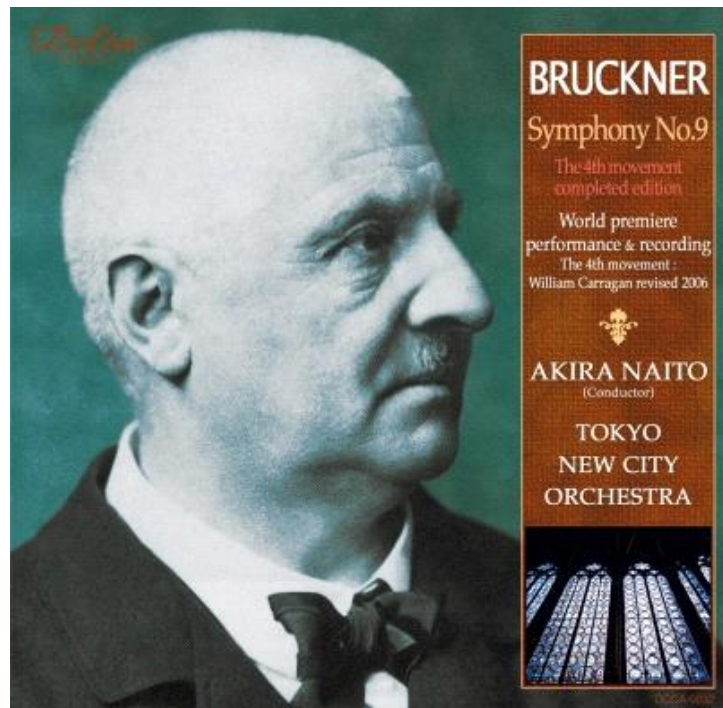
William Carragan: 1993 version.
Utrecht Symphony Orchestra,
conducted by Hubert Soudant.
Issued on LP in 1983 USO/NCRV
LP 6818 498/499, never re-issued
on CD. Download available from
the www.abruckner.com site.

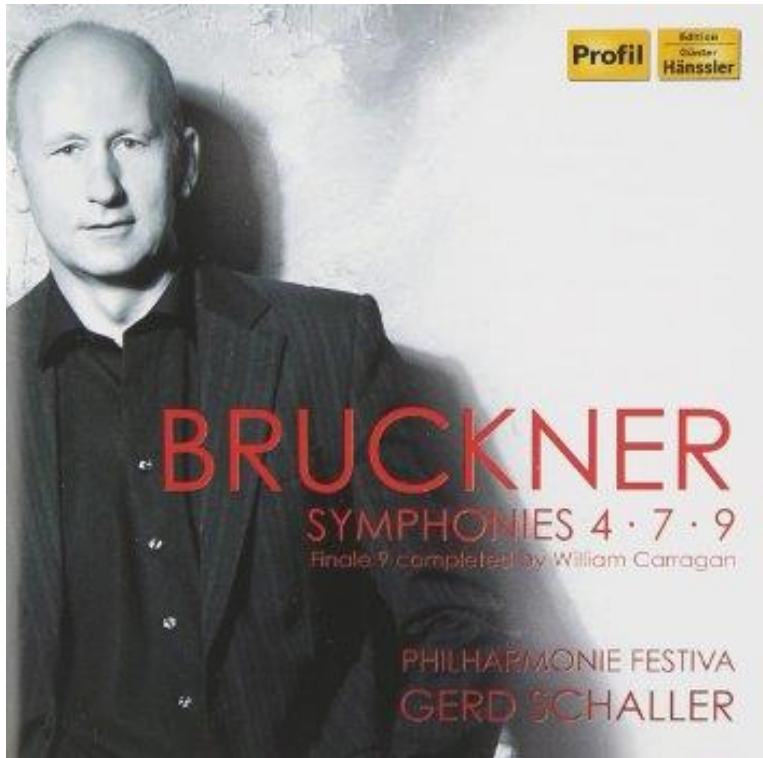
William Carragan; 2006 version, a revision of his 1983 version.

Movements 1-3: Benjamin-Gunnar-Cohrs completion 2000, with instead of the familiar Trio the 1st Trio Bruckner wrote for this movement (but apparently not completed) in the revision of William Carragan

Tokyo New City Orchestra, conducted by Akira Naito (live recording)

Issued on Delta Entertainment, DCCA-0032





William Carragan; 2010 revision of his 2006, itself a reversion of his 1983 original version.

Philharmonia Festiva, conducted by Gerd Schaller (live recording).

Issued by Hänssler Profil, PH 11028

Unfortunately, as far as I know, Carragan did not provide any notes as to the how and why of his completion (as compared to SPCM and Letocart). Moreover, he seems, in his first version of 1983, to have produced sometimes rather overly long insertions of his own for the various gaps. Whilst it is

impossible to determine the precise number of bars on any of the music full score sheets, these sheets were pre-ruled by Bruckner's assistant Meißner with 16 bars per bifolio. Whilst Bruckner did sometimes split bars (in Aart van de Wal's essay on the Finale there is a nice photograph of a full score page from the Finale where the original 4 bars have been split into 8), it seems unreasonable to fill in a single gap with 50, as Carragan did at one spot in his first version. He did so on the notion of the structural necessity that he perceived. However, as these gaps represent bifolios completed by Bruckner, the composer must have "solved" any structural problems to his satisfaction. Thus, although an exact number of measures cannot be established, an approximate maximum can. Since a bifolio contained minimum of 16 measures and – with some jamming – perhaps as many as 32, it seems reasonable that no supplementing of those lost bifolios contains more than 30 bars and, in most cases, rather fewer. In his second version of 2006, he seems to have realised this and has made his fill-in section of a more correct length. The Coda remains pretty much as it was in the very first version. Contrary to Letocart but not SPCM in their latest version, he chooses the moment to start the final pedal-point of the Coda at the very spot where the third and last great climax in Bruckner's hand is to be found, thus, by way of an almighty wrench, forcing the utter negative into the utter positive.

All that notwithstanding, Carragan's vision is a convincing one that perhaps tries to give us the most positive solution to the Coda, it being mostly a long "Steigerung"⁵⁸. That said, as such it is not quite successful, and seems to be somewhat anaemic. Possibly because it seems to negate rather than solve the darkness and troubledness of the Finale, thus making a positive sound that does not quite fit to truly dispel the despair of the work.

The recording of the Utrecht performance of Carragan's original version has never been issued on CD so, for those wanting to have it, it is a matter of trying to find the record set second-hand

⁵⁸ A typically untranslatable German word, meaning something like "build-up", the most famous and perhaps most successful example of which can be found in the Adagio of the Seventh, with the (in?)famous (and questionable) cymbal-cum-triangle crash at its peak.

or download a transfer of it from the site www.abruckner.com. The second version in its Japanese première performance is currently not easy to obtain (it is issued only on the Japanese market) but, again, the www.abruckner.com website can help here.

The Utrecht performance is in my opinion a fine one, even when one has to keep in mind that, in this version, Carragan has supplemented gaps in the score with stretches of music longer than they should be. The second version has been considerably tightened and the “fillers” now seem to have a more correct length. The performance of this version is a rather good one, if perhaps somewhat on the faster side (it is the only version of the complete Ninth that, at 77 minutes, fits on one CD!⁵⁹). The performance, at first impression, may seem to lack some of the drama and grandeur that one may encounter in a “European” performance (say Haitink with the Concertgebouw Orchestra), but that impression is not entirely true, for the performance, for all its “coolness”, is a very serious and dedicated one, but one which takes the expression farther than just below the surface, yielding it after several serious hearings.

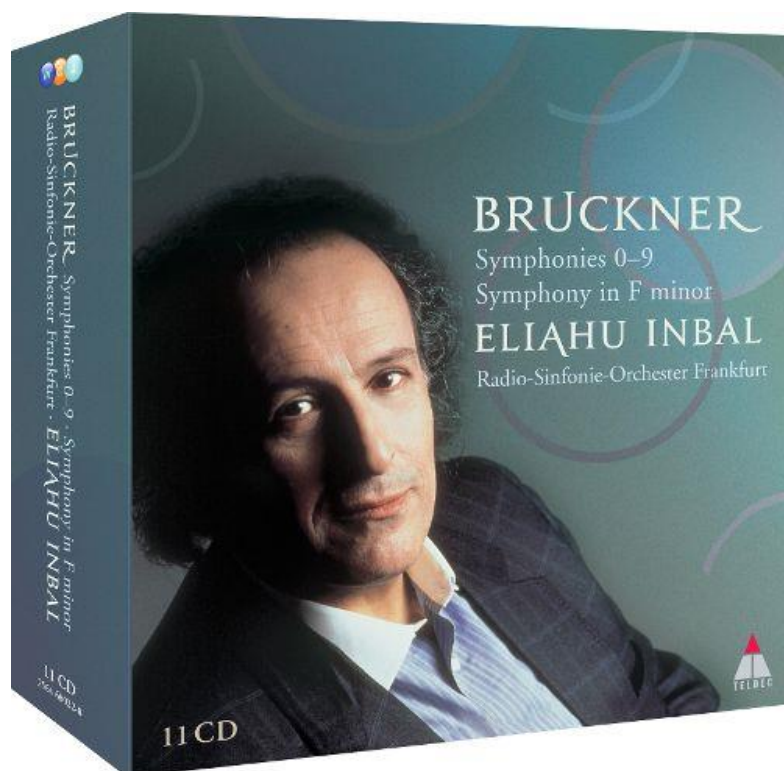
Since the writing of the first version of this essay, a third, and very important, new release of Carragan’s version has been recorded by Gerd Schaller and the Philharmonia Festiva. This version contains Carragan’s (currently) latest thoughts on the Finale, completed in 2010. This is a live recording, but sounding very good sonically, and having the benefit of being a bit slower than Naito’s performance, clocking in at almost 84 minutes, thereby given the music some more sense of space. The benefit of this recording is that it is readily available everywhere, so could be (and should be) taken in by anyone interested in Bruckner’s last Finale. For some reason, this Ninth isn’t available separately, but comes in a box containing both the Fourth (in its last, 1878/80 version) and the Seventh, which already saturate the market, and may be regarded unnecessary ballast for those willing to get the Ninth but not wishing to spend the extra money for yet another Fourth and Seventh Symphony. A separate issue would be welcome!

All three recordings are proof of the fact that Carragan, too, must be taken quite seriously as completer of Bruckner’s final masterpiece. His is perhaps the most “optimistic” one, despite sounding somewhat “stuck on” after the Finale gets to its most intense and despairing point, and turns a black vision upside down into the most radiant light. That might sound a bit too much like the *Deus ex Machina* from the antique plays and, as such, also somewhat artificial⁶⁰. In all three versions, this “turning point” sounds, at least to me, like the point at which Man has been struck down beyond salvage – and all his hopes and expectations with it – only to encounter a force greater than his granting him salvation. Unfortunately, Carragan’s version of this Coda is not entirely up to fully realising this intentions, and good as it is, it sound a bit lacklustre after all than has gone before. Nevertheless the less than completely convincing Coda, the remainder of his version of the Finale does offer many very noteworthy insights in the not completed bits of the Finale, and should convince everyone that having only the first three movements is not having the complete work!

⁵⁹ To compare, Celibidache took 77 minutes for the first three movements alone!

⁶⁰ Part of this perceived artificiality might be due to the fact that all completers have had to emulate Bruckner here as well as they can, something that will, even in the best cases, be an approximation; no doubt Bruckner’s own final solution, if not resolution, would have sounded totally natural and convincing.

Nicola Samale, John Alan Philips, Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, Giuseppe Mazzuca (SPCM)



Samale and Mazzuca - Early Draft 1984

Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra

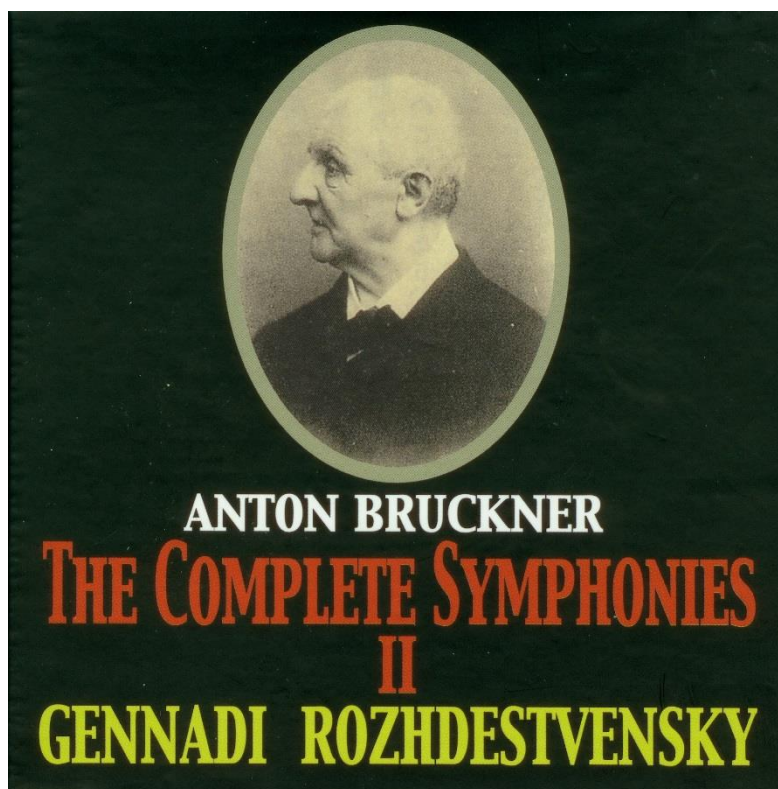
Eliahu Inbal

Teldec 2564 68022-8 (boxed set of all symphonies)

(NB: the names of Mazzuca and Samale or not named, or the fact that the Finale is a completion. Both the box and the booklet state 'original version' without further explanation about the Finale)

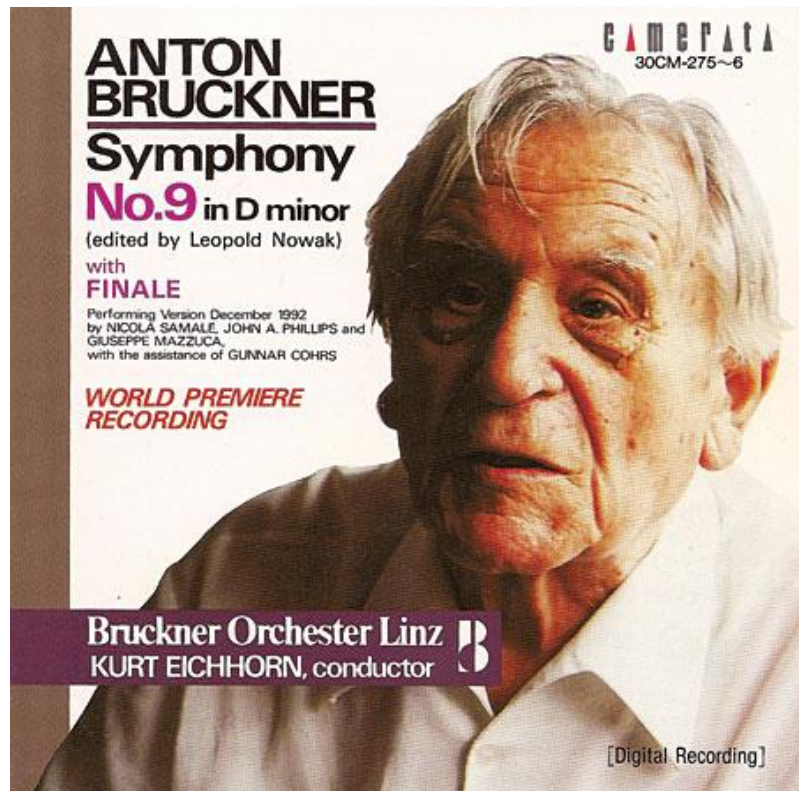
Samale and Mazzuca - Early Draft 1984

**USSR Ministry of Culture
Symphony Orchestra
Gennadi Rozhdestvensky
Venezia CDVE 04368 (boxed set of all symphonies)**



**Samale-Phillips-Cohrs-
Mazzuca Performing
Version 1992**

**Bruckner Orchester Linz,
Kurt Eichhorn.
Issued by Camerata 30CM-
275-6**



BRUCKNER
Symphony No. 9
(with reconstructed Finale)

**New Philharmonic Orchestra of Westphalia
Johannes Wildner**

DDD
8.555933-34

**Samale-Phillips-Cohrs-
Mazzuca Performing
Version 1992**

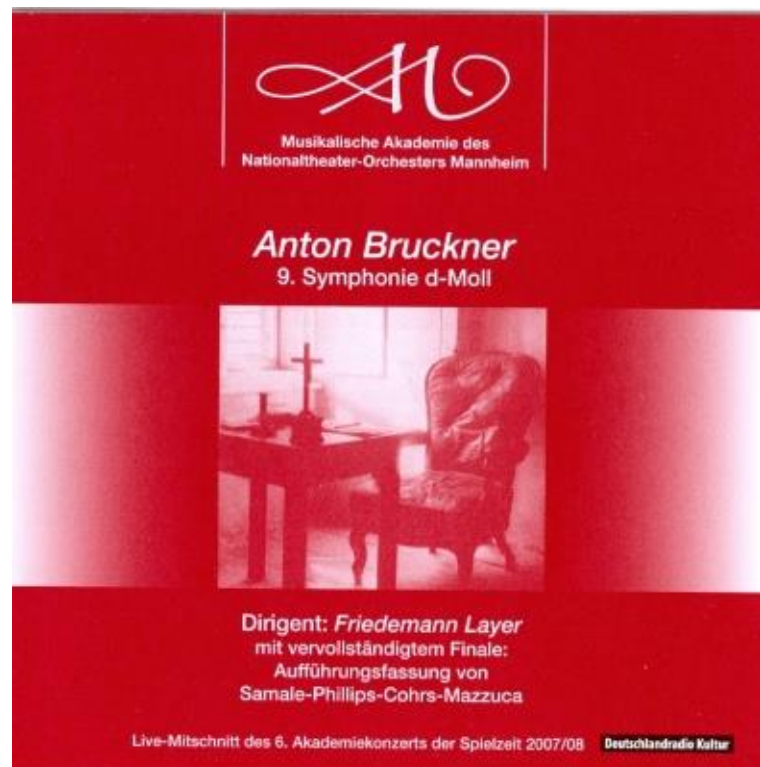
**New Philharmonic Orchestra
of Westphalia, conducted by
Johannes Wildner (live(?)
recording).
Issued by Naxos 8.555933/34**

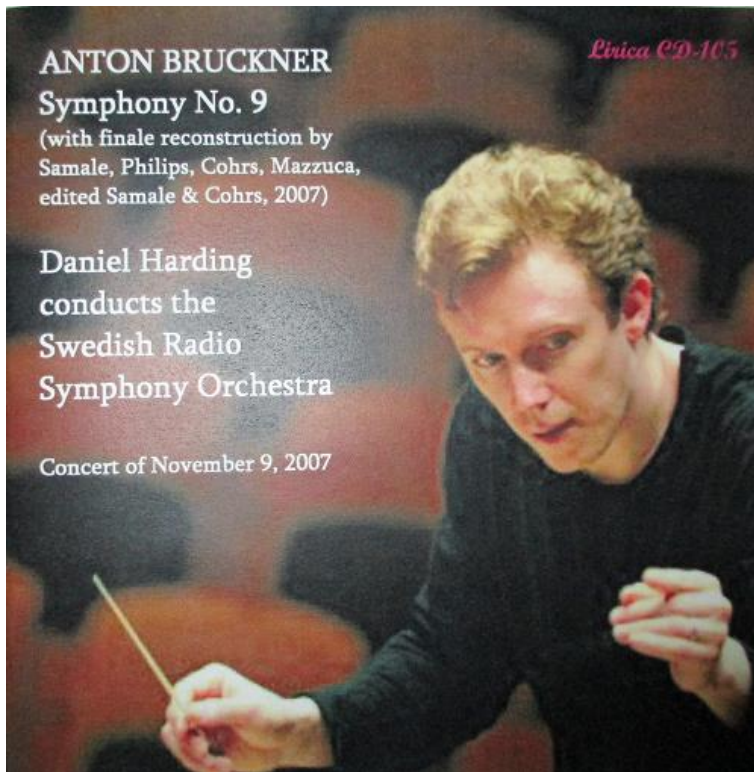




Samale-Philips-Cohrs-Mazzuca, Performing version, revision 2005
Sinfonieorchester Aachen
Marcus Bosch
Coviello Classics COV 31215
(boxed set of all symphonies)

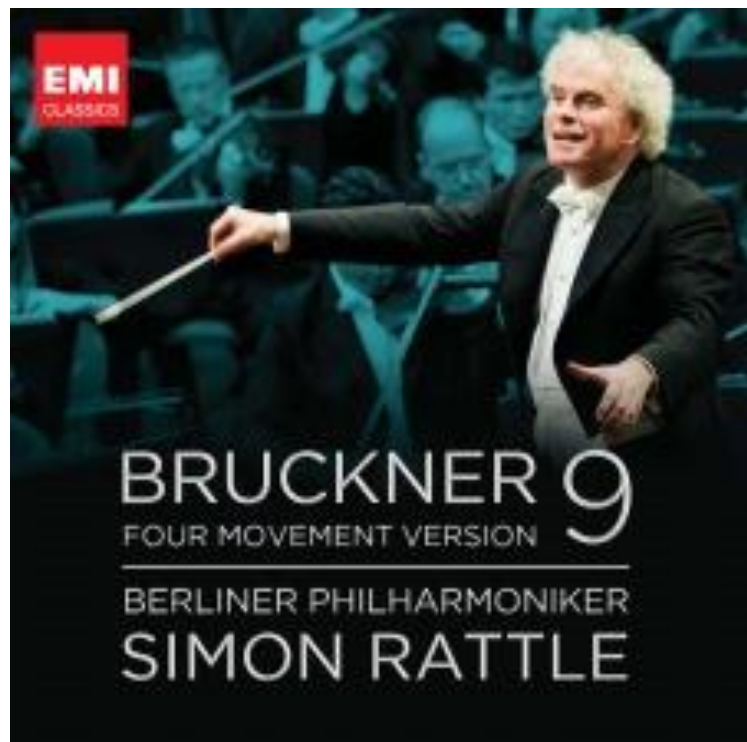
Samale-Philips-Cohrs-Mazzuca
Performing Version, revision
2007.
Musikalische Akademie des
Nationaltheater-Orchesters
Mannheim, conducted by
Friedemann Layer
Live recording
Issue by the orchestra, no
number.





Samale-Philips-Cohrs-Mazzuca Performing Version, revision 2007. Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Daniel Harding Lirica CD-105 (Live recording of the World Première Performance of the 2008 version, 9 November 2007)⁶¹

Samale-Philips-Cohrs-Mazzuca Performing Version, “Conclusive Revised Edition” 2012. Berliner Philharmoniker, conducted by Simon Rattle. Live recording Issued by EMI Classics 50999 9 52969 2 0



⁶¹ Although the CD (an exclusive issue from the www.abruckner.com website) states that it contains a “live recording from Berwaldhallen”, it is more correct to say that it contains an off-air recording of the radio broadcast of that performance, including an opening interview with Cohrs. As is the custom in radio broadcasts of classical music, the volume levels have been compressed so as to ensure that the differences between maxima and minima are reduced – hence this is also the case on the CD.

The history of the Samale-Phillips-Cohrs-Mazzuca (SPCM for short) is a long and complex one, starting in 1983 and, for now, being ‘conclusively’ finished in 2012 and on which at no point along that 29-year history did all four musicologists work together(!). For the details and history of this version and its various stages (something that is too long and complex to present here), the reader is kindly referred to the essay that Cohrs has written on the subject in the published score (Explorer Series score 444, which can be found and obtained from www.musikmph.de).

The earliest version recorded was a ‘draft version’ of the Finale by Samale and Mazzuca of 1984, recorded by Eliahu Inbal and Gennady Rozhdestvensky. At this time, an important sketch to the Coda was still to surface some years later, making the Coda in this version more speculative than later versions. The Wildner recording on Naxos and the Eichhorn on Camerata set presents a later version of the realisation; the Mannheim and Swedish sets each present the same, penultimate version, and Simon Rattle recorded the (at present) latest version

The Eichhorn and Wildner recordings are of the 1992 version, now by the whole ‘team’, including Philips and Cohrs. The booklet with the Eichhorn recording is very complete, and gives a very detailed insight into how this version came to be. These early attempts are interesting insofar as they were the first attempts by SPCM to present a fully performable Finale, but clearly they had yet to get a deeper ‘feel’ for Bruckner’s possible intentions. The places they had to fill out can be “felt”, because there the music becomes noticeably stiffer and less naturally flowing. This is most apparent in the Coda, for which (virtually) no autograph material is presently known and must thus be fully composed by the completer. Added to that is the present writer’s feeling that these particular recordings are not ideal. Eichhorn has a first rate orchestra at his disposal, but stretches the Finale to some 30 minutes, which makes the music sound strained and losing momentum. The Wildner recording has a good but not excellent orchestra, despite it doing its best. Unfortunately, Naxos has opted for putting movements 1-3 on CD1 and the Finale on CD2, thus separating the Ninth as we once knew it from the completion of the Finale. All other double-CDs have the Adagio and the Finale together (the SRSO/Harding CD-set also has the Scherzo on CD2, due to the interview that is also on CD1, preceding the Symphony itself), thus allowing the listener to go naturally from the former to the latter without any “break up” due to having to switch CDs.

The MANO Mannheim / Layer and Swedish RSO / Harding CDs are each of the 2008 version of the SPCM Finale, the performance under Harding being the actual world première performance thereof.

Despite the somewhat disadvantageous sound of the Swedish RSO/Harding recording, this is a formidable performance. The Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra is a very good one and Harding clearly has the right feel for this music, presenting as he does a stunning and gripping account of this music. The performance lays bare the spare and tragic quality of the music as well as the demonic, the moments of tenderness as open as the moments of blackest despair. Moreover, his rendering of the Finale is a natural one, thus making it a truly coherent four-movement journey. Also, it is abundantly clear from this reading how very modern a composer Bruckner was and how far into the future he looked (many things we find in – later! – Mahler for example, find their origins here). There are a few orchestral mishaps, especially in the brass, but Bruckner was fully aware of instrumental limitations and how to push those instruments to those points – and in no work more so than in the Ninth. It is really to be hoped that the same combination will one day (soon!) be able to make an “official” recording of this work. If Harding’s recording of Mahler’s Tenth (Cooke III version) on DG – played by the Wiener

Philharmoniker – is to be taken as an example, such a recording of Bruckner’s final work would be a stunner and, hopefully, an ear-opener to all those who as yet doubt the validity of its Finale.

The recording from Mannheim is of the same version as the Stockholm one and is also of decent quality. However, whilst in technical execution it may be better than the Stockholm one, it does not reach its intensity; also, the orchestra seems to be rather on the smallish size and the hall in which the recording was made sounds somewhat lacking in reverberation, making the sound a bit flat-end lifeless. Still, it is a very nice recording and one that treats the work as a four-movement whole.

By far the most important recording is the last, of the (currently) final version of the SPCM completion from 2012. Added to that the orchestra is a fine one as can be desired and Rattle, while perhaps not the ultimate Bruckner conductor, gives a very convincing and thorough rendering.

Several details in this version are slightly different again from the 2008 version, but the most important is the deletion of 16 bars (a whole ‘Bogen’, so to say) in the Coda, in which they originally had realised a build-up from *pp* up to the final *fff* pedal point, but now connect the final pedal point-peroration directly to the grinding ‘crisis’ that came just before, and skipping the ‘final crescendo’ that had been part of the SPCM completion since its beginnings. This goes to show how radical different opinions can differ, and thus how much of this Coda is conjecture. I had the pleasure of hearing this latest version for the first time in a live concert by Het Brabants Orkest under Friedeman Layer in Eindhoven, The Netherlands, in 2011; the same orchestra and conductor had given the world première performance of this version shortly before in Breda, The Netherlands. The effect of skipping the crescendo and having a ‘hard edit’ from crisis to resolution was a most electrifying one, jolting me almost out of my chair. I had always found the final crescendo as realised by SPCM, resting on figuration based on the ‘*Te Deum*’ motive, rather forced and unconvincing, but deleting it now makes for a most satisfying peroration in their version, and the sudden, almost wrenching shift from destruction to glorification gives us, I think, a convincing idea of what Bruckner might have in mind⁶².

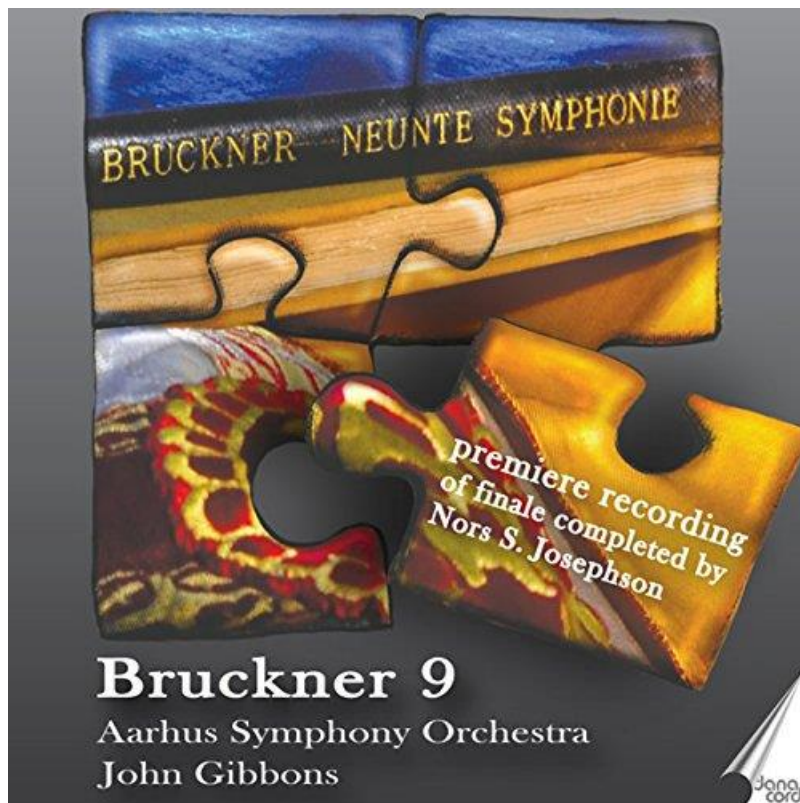
Rattle’s rendition leaves little to be desired in presentation of this completion, even when his sense of the mysterious in Bruckner is not the most probing. But with this version now available for everyone to take note (especially performers and conductors), there no longer seems any excuse for presenting the Ninth without a Finale!⁶³

Since the original version of this essay was published, two new completions of the Finale have seen the light of day.

⁶² The careful reader will find this to be in contradiction with what I wrote about the Letocart Coda, in which the final pedal point does also begin with a crescendo. However, bear in mind that what Bruckner himself had in mind is not known, and can never be known unless more material of the Coda is found, and that the solutions found by Letocart and SPCM are different, and reached and worked different. Hence, these two separate solutions must be judged on their own merits. Personally, I find Letocart’s final crescendo convincingly done, and SPCM’s – now deleted – crescendo not so.

⁶³ There is an interesting interview with Simon Rattle about his performing the Ninth with the Finale to be found here: <https://www.abruckner.com/articles/articlesEnglish/vanderwalrattle/>

Nors S. Josephson



Performing Version (1979-92).

Aarhus Symphony Orchestra
John Gibbons
Issued by Danacord
DAC OCD 754

Josephson's Performing version dates from 1992, yet this is the first (acceptable) recording of his version. His approach is somewhat different than the above versions, in that he has incorporated less of the speculative material the other completers have used. In the first roughly one-third of the Finale, his version sounds very much like the other versions, which is to be

expected, as Bruckner did (virtually) complete all the score pages in this section. Of course, Josephson too had to prepare the currently missing pages of score manuscript in this section, but since so much material pertaining to these gaps is available, his filling out of these gaps is not so different from the other versions. Yet in that first section of the Finale, Josephson has taken on less of the available material than the other versions. It seems as if he has decided that not fully worked out pages are more 'optional' than the more completed pages. Hence, some sub-sections are shorter in his version as compared to other versions. A notable example is the Fugue, which in Josephson's version is quite shorter than in, say, the SPCM version. This Fugue sounds somewhat truncated in the SPCM already (one might speculate whether Bruckner would have written a more expanded Fugue here, had he been able to finish the Finale), so the even shorter, more truncated version of Josephson sounds really too short. Perhaps Josephson felt that too little material of this Fugue was available to work out a more complete or elaborate Fugue, or, looking at the date of his completion, he had not all material currently known available to him?

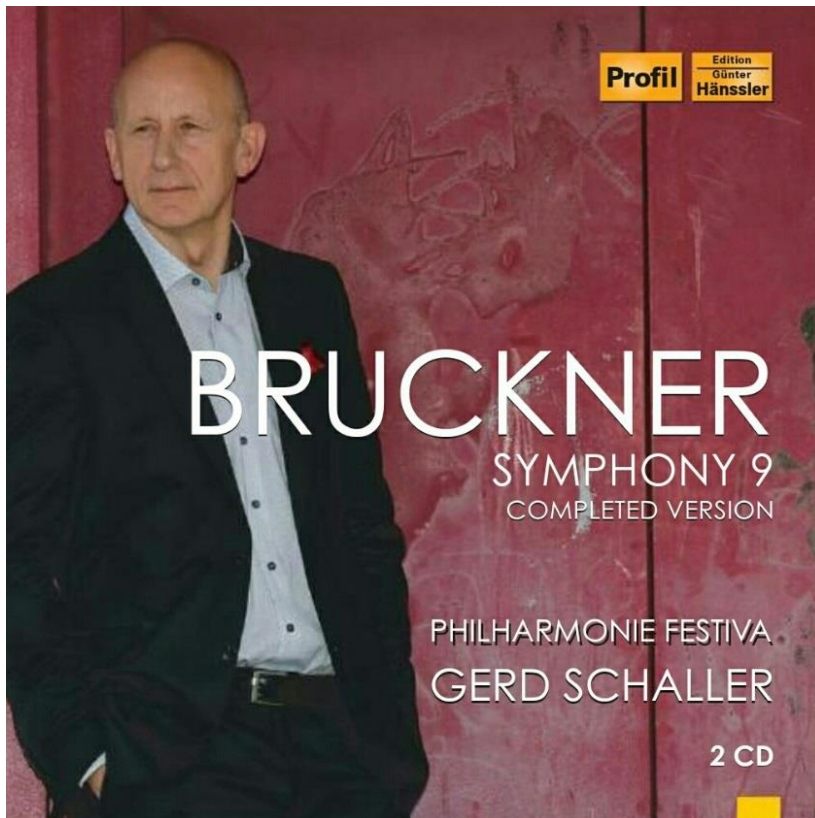
The remainder of the Finale sounds as if Josephson wanted to add as little material as possible of his own, but rather, where need be, opted to fill out by using repetitions of earlier material. Unfortunately, this results on music that sound too static and, indeed, repetitive to be convincing musically.

The Coda is, for anyone wishing to complete the Finale, the most daunting task, as very little material (to put it mildly) has been left to us. So any Coda is almost pure invention on the side of the completer. Josephson, himself a composer, has decidedly not tried to write a (full) Coda, but rather chose to close the Finale with an almost exact repeat of the ending of the first movement. Bruckner did often refer to earlier movements in the Codas of his symphonies, but then only as noticeable yet small snippets (a few bars at most, or some notable figuration) embedded in the material of the Finale/Coda. A lengthy, complete and literal quote he never did, and indeed it does not fit here. Working the Finale to get to this quote is, therefore, also

unconvincing. For a moment it seems as if Josephson will indeed let the Finale end with the ending of the first movement, but that, thankfully, he does not. Rather, he lets the quote from the first movement dwindle away, and then ends the Finale with a short, fanfare-ish flourish. Instead, therefore, of a Coda proper and hence, without giving any sort of final peroration that Bruckner would have provided to end the Finale and, with it, the symphony as a whole. The result may be keeping true to the (lack of) sources, but having come this far in the Finale and then being left with a sort of stunted ending rather than Coda is almost more jarring than leaving the Finale out altogether.

In conclusion, while one may in principle accept the idea of ‘adding nothing if not from Bruckner’, Josephson’s completion leaves quite much to be desired musically throughout the Finale, and too much in the way he ends, but not completes, the Finale.

Gerd Schaller



**Gerd Schaller completion
Philharmonie Festiva
Gerd Schaller
Issued by Hänssler Profil
2CD PH16089
(live performance)**

This is currently the most recent of completions, dating from 2015. Gerd Schaller had previously, with the framework of recording all of Bruckner's symphonies, sometimes in unusual versions, recorded a complete Ninth, using the Carragan version of the Finale. In this new recording, he presents his own version, stated in the booklet as "(...)Finale based on original sources,

supplemented, completed and premiered by Gerd Schaller". From this, one might unjustly suspect Schaller had used more original material than any other completer - which is not true, as Schaller had the same material available as all other completers. Meaning he had to find solutions to the exact same problems all other completers have faced: filling in the gaps of the missing (complete) score pages, filling out existing but incomplete score pages (increasingly much so as the available autograph progresses) and finding/providing a convincing solution for the end, the Coda to both this Finale and the symphony as a whole.

For every completer it is the question how much of the (sketchy) material is used, and how; especially how much freedom does he give himself to elaborate on or even modify the material at hand. Schaller has treated the available material quite freely, it seems. Already in the initial section of the Finale, where the manuscript as we have it is quite complete, very noticeable differences with all the other versions are present, mostly in the form of added material, or instrumental lines not heard in any other version, which means these extra lines come from Schaller, not Bruckner. As the Finale progresses, the divergences become more pronounced, to the extent that at some places the Finale is hardly recognisable in comparison to other versions (the present writer, when hearing this version for the first time, actually lost track at where he was).

While the sound is certainly Bruckner-ish, this version sounds, especially towards the end, more like a composition based on Bruckner's material, rather than an attempt at presenting as much of Bruckner's material as possible and his intentions as perceived. Especially the many additions to the music, making the music rather thickly scored, sound rather too much and unconvincing. The writer of the booklet may find that these "additions are not perceived as alien features" but to my ear, they are. The writer of the booklet notes further adds that all this is "resulting in a truly performable version of the final movement of the Ninth", which is so

much to say that all other versions apparently are not ‘truly performable’, which is stating a bit much. Truth be told, while Schaller’s version sounds Bruckner-ish enough, he, at least to the ears of the present writer, wants too much, and treats the available material too freely. There is a difference between adding material to achieve a convincing sound worthy of what the composer might have done without it sounding too much like free composition by someone else (as has been so excellently done in the Cooke version of Mahler’s Tenth). Schaller, despite his evident great knowledge of the sound world of Bruckner and devotion to it, has crossed that line too far, especially towards and into the Coda. For someone who has never studied the material left by Bruckner, and has never heard any of the other completions, Schaller’s version is convincing enough to let anyone rethink their feeling the Ninth is complete in three movements. For someone who has studied the material, and has knowledge of other completions, Schaller’s version, despite its most honest intentions, cannot stand scrutiny⁶⁴.

Lastly, Dutch Bruckner-enthusiast Joan Schukking has made his own version of the Coda alone, which deserves more than glancing interest. Since the chances of a performance of this Coda on its own seems remote, one must make do with reading his score alongside a MIDI representation thereof. One may find this Coda at the ABruckner site at <https://www.abruckner.com/downloads/OtherDownloads/joanschukkingscoda/>. This coda has been tagged onto the last ‘pro-Coda’ bars of the SPCM-completion, but proceeds then in quite original and interesting manner. Interesting enough to hope Mr. Schukking will one day provide a complete(d) Finale of his own!

CAUTIONAIRY NOTE.

What may be clear from the above listing is that the attention the various completions have got is vastly divergent. The SPCM version has been recorded, in its various stages, by far most often (and, most likely, publically performed). At that, it has been performed by several conductors of note and fame, with well known, indeed (in the case of the Berliner Philharmoniker) of world renown, and two versions have been issued by big labels (Naxos and EMI). But an important factor here may be the connection between the four people working on this version and all the centres of Bruckner studies and publications. The Carragan completion has been recorded far less, but at least one (under Schaller) is readily available. Two (Josephson and Schaller) are both recorded only once, but are quite easily got, and in the case of the Schaller completion, has the benefit of being recorded with completer as conductor. One, the Letocart completion, has been recorded only once, by a less than prime orchestra under less than desirable circumstances, and is on a non-main stream label (in fact an issue by the ABruckner site itself).

Solely based on exposure, someone might come to the conclusion that the SPCM completion, due to the performing and recording attention it has had, “must” be the best completion, the most authoritative, the most correct, the one most like Bruckner himself would have written it. And the Letocart, for lack of such attention, the least authoritative etc.. Not so; level of exposure is in and of itself not a measure as to how ‘correct’ this or that completion is. The fact is, that none of the completions has the final answer, nor could have the final answer. Only Bruckner

⁶⁴ An interesting comparison could be made here with Mahler’s Tenth Symphony as completed by Cooke and Barshai. Barshai’s version, despite his deep devotion to the music and evident knowledge thereof, also sounds as ‘too much’, if only through the employment of instruments not yet existing when Mahler died.

could have provided that, and it may well be he did not yet have that answer at the time of his death. Each completion is conjecture, and while one may discuss the various completions in musicological terms, for the vast majority of people it is the sound of the various completions that will be compared. And, indeed, must be compared.

What the SPCM completion has managed, more so than any other, is to get attention to the fact that the Ninth is in fact a *four* movement work, that it *needs* the Finale an integral part. For many people, hearing and/or having that completion may well be enough. But for anyone more deeply interested in Bruckner in general, and (the 'problem' of) his Ninth in particular, it is of utmost importance to get *all* completions, and compare them against each other in a serious way. Which may only be done by listening to them all, several times, and decide which version he or she likes best. There is in this no real 'competition' between the various completions, because, as said, any completion is by definition conjectural, and subject to the completers own ideas, tastes, preferences and suchlike.

Addendum; how not to do it: Peter Jan Marthé



Peter Jan Marthé
Issued by Preiser records
PR70928
Recorded live in Stiftskirche St.
Florian
Contains Bruckner's
Ninth Symphony, movements 1-
3 plus freely composed Finale by
Peter Jan Marthé.

Marthé, insofar as I can understand from his rather overheated booklet notes, seems to claim that he has not merely “completed” the Finale but rather written it as Bruckner had intended but could not; moreover, he has apparently done this not merely from a personal impulse

but was pressed to do so by no less than Bruckner himself who, one is intended to believe, appeared to him in some sort of visions, coaxing him on to write the Finale.

In writing his Finale, Marthé simply abandoned the idea of utilising the score as left by Bruckner, preferring instead to take various ideas from it to produce a new score. After listening to the product I can only say that what Marthé produced is not so much a Finale to the Ninth but more a hotchpotch – a big, overloaded and loud hotchpotch – of a contraption, and the best that might be said about it is that it occasionally – but *only* occasionally! – manages to sound vaguely like Bruckner, sometimes even slightly of what actually exists of the Finale to the Ninth. This contraption is stylistically all over the place, an amalgamation of disconnected bits and pieces that at best sound vaguely Bruckner-ish, Mahler-ish and various other –ishes, but mainly one hears Marthé. The impression that one derives after tortuously traversing this 30 minutes of rubbish is that of a huge amount of grandiloquence (something entirely alien to Bruckner!) and one that has little or nothing to do with what Bruckner left us of his Finale or, for that matter, with Bruckner in general. To add insult to injury, this whole shebang was performed and recorded in St. Florian itself, receptacle of Bruckner's earthly remains.

No doubt this piece – which Marthé himself describes as an example of “Bruckner reloaded” (whatever that may mean – was Bruckner some kind of firearm?) has its supporters and admirers; however, with any respect for the legacy of Bruckner or, for that matter, with Bruckner in general, this “Finale” has very little, if anything, to do. To be avoided!

Final thoughts

The journey through all of these various Finales has been exhilarating. One thing is for sure; I cannot hear the three-movement torso – for that is precisely what it is, an incomplete torso – as even approaching a complete work in itself. Of course, the full vision and glory of this work died with Bruckner, and cannot be obtained note for note, but the various completions presently offered at least give some idea of what Bruckner intended with the Finale and, thus, with the whole work. Luckily, large parts of the Finale have come down to us in a fully worked out state and, from what remains, a fairly good idea of the rest can be obtained. It is an eternal disgrace that considerable parts of the Finale have disappeared, but it may be hoped that (some of) those parts may resurface someday, thereby allowing for a clearer image yet.

Of course there will always remain those who prefer, from a somewhat twisted sense of “respect for the composer”, not to perform or hear the completion of Bruckner’s Ninth, or any other completion (curiously, such people have no trouble performing or listening to “Mozart’s” Requiem). So be it – and it is their loss. Thankfully, there are those orchestras and conductors who do want to know what might have been and present the results of research that has been accomplished. In the case of Mahler’s Tenth, the completed version has acquired a strong foothold in the canon of his symphonies, with only a few rather zealous “puritans” denying its right to exist, yet in the case of Bruckner’s Ninth things are, presently, nowhere near as far developed. One must accept that even knowledge of the very existence of a considerable portion of the Finale is only just emerging, well over a century after it was conceived. Happily, however, several people are determined that its remains contain enough to justify an attempt at completion and an increasing number of conductors seem willing to present it; not unusually, and perhaps not surprisingly, these are of the younger if not youngest generation of conductors who have not (yet) a ground in opinion of what should or should not be done. This too happened with Mahler’s Tenth, in which case Simon Rattle in particular played an important role in presenting the Cooke-et-al completion to the waiting world. He has now done the similar to the completed Ninth of Bruckner. My special dream it would be that Bernard Haitink, one of the foremost living Bruckner conductors, would take on the latest version of the SPCM (if possible with the Concertgebouw Orkest), and give us perhaps the definitive performance of the complete Ninth! I would also love to obtain the Letocart completion performed by a truly “up-to-it” orchestra and conductor.

Until then, the various presently available recordings more than sufficiently justify the worthiness – and indeed the *necessity* – of having that completion of the Finale. Anyone who is *truly* interested in Bruckner the symphonist in general and the Ninth Symphony in particular should get to know the whole work such as is now available, in any of the three completions and, preferably, all three versions!

Do I think that any one of those three versions may gain upper hand (as with the Cooke-et-al version for Mahler’s Tenth or, for that matter, Süßmayer’s version of Mozart’s Requiem) and, if so, which one would I think that would be, or should be? I have no idea. But the versions are each so powerful and convincing that I’d be happy if all three would find their way to the orchestras, conductors and audiences. Frankly, I do not care which one they play, as long as they play one. Surely, within the forest of versions of his Symphonies, Bruckner can suffer several versions of his Ninth’s Finale!?

Illustrations:

The image shows a page of handwritten musical score for the Finale. The score is written in Bruckner's handwriting and includes measures 3 through 10. The instruments listed on the left are:

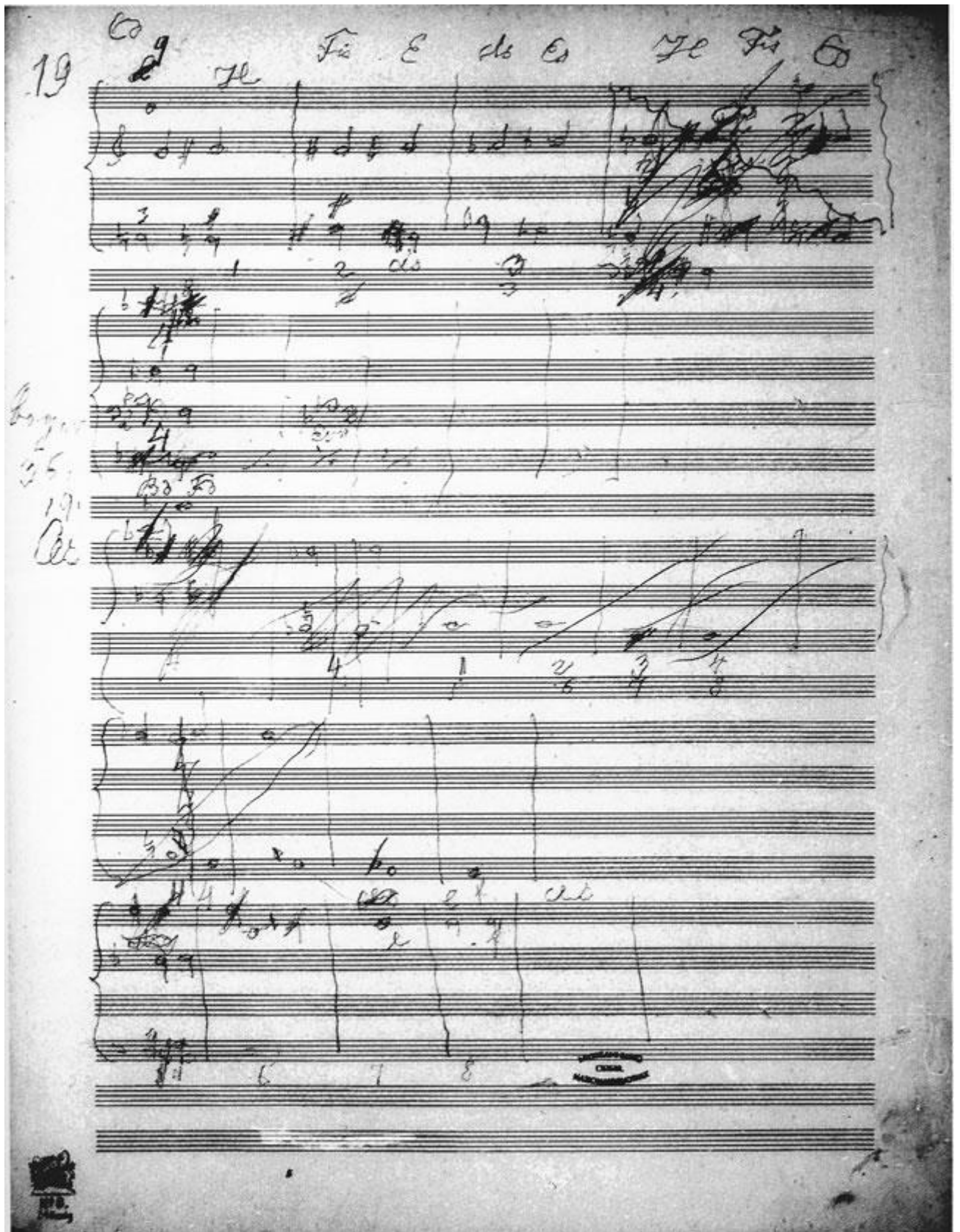
- Fl. 1. - 2. 3.
- Ob. 1. - 2. 3.
- Clar. 1. - 2. 3.
- Fag. 1. - 2. 3.
- C. 1. 2. - 3. 4.
- Fb. 1. 2. - 3. 4.
- T. 1. - 2. 3.
- Tromp. 1. 2. 3.
- C. B. 3.
- I. II. III. C. D.

The score is written in a single system with multiple staves. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The page is numbered 3 through 10 at the bottom. The text 'Mus. No. 6037' is written in the bottom right corner.

A page from the Finale, showing a fully completed score. On the left, the names of the instruments were written by Bruckner's assistant Meißner, the music itself is wholly in Bruckner's handwriting. Clearly, Bruckner's hand (and mind!) were quite steady here! (The rights of this image remain with the Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, and the image is used with kind permission thereof)

The image shows a page from a musical manuscript, numbered '6.' in the top right corner. It contains 14 horizontal staves. The bottom two staves, labeled 'I' and 'II' on the left, contain handwritten musical notation for the first four measures. The notation includes notes, stems, and some markings like 'f' and 'p'. The top staves are mostly blank, with some faint markings. A stamp is visible in the middle of the page, which reads 'ÖSTERREICHISCHE NATIONALBIBLIOTHEK'. At the bottom of the page, there are four small numbers: 1, 2, 3, and 4, corresponding to the four measures of the handwritten notation.

A later page from the manuscript, showing Bruckner's initial 'line' in the Violin (I) part, with some jottings for other instruments. In part, the filling out here can be done based on both these jottings and the sketches regarding these bars, if available. (The rights of this image remain with the Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, and the image is used with kind permission thereof)



A sketch showing the deterioration of Bruckner's handwriting and giving a clue as to the difficulty of deciphering Bruckner's (possible) intentions. (The rights of this image remain with the Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, and the image is used with kind permission thereof)

Some suggestions for further reading.

I would most heartily encourage anyone interested in the matter of the Finale to Bruckner's Ninth and the problems of trying to complete it to the various essays to be found on John Berky's most excellent site www.abruckner.com/articles. Some thereof I would here wish to highlight for special interest. These being:

<https://www.abruckner.com/articles/articlesEnglish/beckermartynmusing/>

Quite substantial and highly readable 'musing' by Martyn Becker (I have been unable to find more about him) on the Ninth symphony, without invoking in-depth musicological debate and considerations, its place in Bruckner's work with an extensive section about the Finale and the various completions thereof. Hence, not unlike the scope and intent of the present essay. Makes some very pertinent remarks about how the material of the Finale, even in the complete folios, may very well be considered a 'first draft score' rather than a final score. His remark, for example, that Bruckner's material for the Fugue may be initial, to be considerable expanded in a final version, I find very convincing. And that Bruckner, had he finished the Finale (in such 'draft' form), might have then revised the whole symphony, altering more or less great details in the whole work might very well be true; consider the 'original' version of the Fifth or the first version of Eighth as compared to their final versions.

https://www.abruckner.com/Data/articles/articlesEnglish/cohrsB9finale/BG_Cohrs_Introduction_SPCM2012.pdf

An exhaustive and utterly interesting (84 page) "Introduction" to the completion by the Samale/Phillips/Cohrs/Mazzua 'team', fully up to date for the 2012 version. Contains a detailed account of the history of this Finale and its materials (and the substantial loss thereof), and a page by page account of the state of each folio (if extant), and how each folio was treated (some 'finished' pages needed some tweaking in term of phrasing, dynamics, errors obvious corrected), or filled out, or (re)constructed. Includes the full score for the SPCM2012-Finale. Essential, even for those who find another completion more convincing! Equally essential for those interested in Bruckner's symphonies in general. And especially for those who (still) feel the Finale is either impossible to complete, or find such endeavour unnecessary or even undesirable.

https://www.abruckner.com/Data/articles/articlesFrench/letocartthesis/Letocart_Mar%C3%A9alisationduFinaledela9%C3%A8mesymphonie_Id.pdf

Letocart's thesis about how he came to his solutions and reconstruction. Even more extensive than the SPCM "Introduction", with an extremely in-depth exposition as to the hows and whys over Letocart's decision and findings. Without the score itself, which is a pity, but, as with the SPCM article, mandatory reading for anyone interested in this matter.

<https://www.abruckner.com/articles/articlesEnglish/carraganwilliamess/>

An essay by William Carragan for the world premiere performance of his completion of the Finale in 1984.

<http://carragan.com/composer-anton-bruckner/ground-rules-for-the-successful-completion-of-a-great-work/>

An insight in how William Carragan came to his decisions and conclusions when preparing (the final version of) his completion.

https://www.abruckner.com/Data/articles/articlesEnglish/letocartsebastienn/letocart_finale9sv_cd_booklet_text.pdf

These are the liner notes to the recording of the completion by Sébastien Letocart. Short, but to the point.

<https://www.abruckner.com/articles/articlesEnglish/beckermartynmusing/>

Describes the Finale in the context of the whole symphony, and gives some highly original and thought-provoking musings how the state of the Finale we now know may deviate from what it might have become had Bruckner been able to finish it. Contains also a discussion of various completions.

https://www.abruckner.com/articles/articlesEnglish/schukking_joan_reflections/

Joan Schukking, a Dutch Bruckner enthusiast, not only wrote a highly readable essay, published in *the Bruckner Journal*) about the problems surrounding finding a solution for the Coda, something any completer faces when trying a completion of the Ninth Symphony. Since very little material has reached us, such a Coda must be made almost from scratch, using the sparse sketches presently available. Schukking did not stop there, but presents his own solution, in the form of a separate Coda, the score of which and a MIDI rendition thereof can be found alongside the article. It is interesting enough to hope that, one day, he will present a completion of the whole Finale, and it finding an orchestra ready to present it!

<https://www.abruckner.com/articles/articlesEnglish/roelandsjacques/>

Regarding another, as yet unperformed, completion of the Finale. Including the complete score of this completion. Also by a Dutchman, who chooses not present a solution to the problem of the missing Coda, hence his reconstruction does not reach the double bar. Considering the fact that another Dutchman provides a solution to that Coda, without completing the Finale before it (see the link before this one), one wonders if the two could in some workable way meet...

https://www.abruckner.com/Data/articles/articlesEnglish/vanderwalaartthefi/van_der_wal_finale_article.pdf

Yet another Dutchman's views about the Finale and its completion.

https://www.abruckner.com/Data/articles/articlesEnglish/vanderwalrattle/van_der_wal_abruckner_odyssey.pdf

An interview with Simon Rattle regarding his preparing and conducting the SPCM-Finale.

Besides these, there is the exhaustive 750+page biography of Bruckner by Dutch⁶⁵ Bruckner-specialist Cornelis van Zwol, **Anton Bruckner 1824-1896 Leven en werken**, published by Uitgeverij Thoth in 2012, to which is added an equally exhaustive overview of all Bruckner's compositions, their versions and (published) history. Sadly, currently only available in Dutch; one may hope an English translation will become available in the near future.

⁶⁵ The Netherlands, besides having a great Mahler tradition going back to Mahler's day itself, have an equally impressive history of performing Bruckner; how a small country became a treasure house of performing the most expansive symphonies around, something very much alive today!

Post scriptum: acknowledgments

This above essay could not have been written had it not been for various resources available to the writer. Besides various liner notes to the CDs in the writer's possession, several resources need to be named specifically, and various people giving their advice, information and helpful critiques; these are:

- 1) The amazing site www.abruckner.com, set up and maintained by John F. Berky. The breath, width and depth of this amazing site are truly gargantuan and, as such, a Walhalla to any lover of the music of Anton Bruckner. Various essays have been essential to the present writer, of which particular mention must be made of that by Aart van der Wal on the Ninth's Finale.
- 2) The Study Score of the SPCM completion ('Revidierter Nachdruck 2008; Musikproduktion Hoeflich, Study Score 444'), with its exquisitely detailed account of Bruckner's own work on the Finale and the editors' processes in completing it. Since the original publication of this essay a new version (see main text) has become available, and may be downloaded including the score; see 'Suggestions for further reading'.
- 3) A special thanks to Dr. Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, who not only read the original (2010) version of this essay, but provided a host of additional information – up to and including generously sending me his dissertation on the Finale, which includes a complete score of the original material of the Finale such as presently known, as well as suggestions and corrections, from which the original version greatly benefitted!
- 4) Also special thanks to Sébastien Letocart, who also read the first version of this essay and kindly provided a number of corrections, suggestions and additional information which also have greatly benefitted the original version of this essay, and enhanced the content of this revised version!
- 5) Many thanks also to composer David Matthews, who kindly read through the finished draft of this second revision, and made some highly useful suggestions and corrections!
- 6) Special thanks to Joan Schukking, whose reading of an earlier draft of the revised text lead him to ask some pertinent questions and make some critical remarks, due to which the author was in turn lead to extend and amend various section, from which this essay benefitted!
- 7) Last but not least, a most warm "thank you" to my amazing friend, the composer Alistair Hinton, without whose encouragement and amply given help and support this essay, also with this again revised and expanded third edition thereof, would be much shorter and worse still, although this admission should not be taken as any indication that he is to be held accountable for anything in the essay!