

Bruckner

SYMPHONY No. 5,
IN B-FLAT MAJOR

SAXONIAN STATE ORCHESTRA

conducted by

KARL BÖHM



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NORMAN H. ROBERTS

IT has been known for some time among students of Bruckner that the scores from which his works have been played, as well as the miniature scores, varied in certain respects from the manuscripts. The nature, the full extent, and even the causes of these differences between the manuscripts and the printed scores and parts are not yet all known, but the publication of several volumes of the Critical Complete Edition of Bruckner's works of the Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag of Vienna, under the editorship of Robert Haas and Alfred Orel has revealed in the older scores a mass of editings, discrepancies, alterations and falsifications without precedent or parallel in the history of music.

It is as well here briefly to review the relation between the scores by which Bruckner's Symphonies have hitherto been known and upon which the existing estimate of him has been based, and the recent published scores which are held to be authentic Bruckner, "founded on the last known wishes of the composer." The old scores are the result of editings made by at least three men—Franz Schalk, his brother Josef, and Ferdinand Loewe. Bruckner's simplicity and servility are proverbial—in his naïve gratitude he tipped Hans Richter a thaler for conducting the first performance of this Fourth Symphony. Bruckner was not well treated by the majority of his Viennese contemporaries. Brahms despised him, and Hanslick, as the avowed anti-Wagnerian and loud-speaker of the Brahms party, saw to it that Bruckner was well and thoroughly damned in the most widely read section of the Viennese press. Bruckner had a small but brilliant group of admirers who regarded him as Wagner's symphonic counterpart. The leading lights of this group of young progressivists were Hugo Wolf and the aforementioned editors of his scores. To the end of his life Bruckner lacked complete confidence in his power and he craved performances of his music. His childlike and pathetic reverence for men of any eminence made him wax in the hands of such cultivated and already well-known young men as the Schalks and Loewe. They, for their part, acted with the best of intentions. They were above all things Wagnerians, their ideal of instrumentation was that it should make music sound like Wagner's, and since Bruckner's scores were not Wagnerian enough they altered them until they came nearer to their ideal specification. Their line of reasoning seems to have been that this process of Wagnerization was the only satisfactory and speedy way of establishing Bruckner in the esteem of the important section of the public which shared their Wagnerian tastes. It is not known with any degree of certainty to what extent Bruckner himself willingly acquiesced to these emendations—it is . . . probable that he would have agreed, to get his works performed, to alterations even more drastic than those to which the Schalks subjected his works: but there is evidence which leads one to believe that he regarded the alterations as a temporary measure. Only in the last few years have some of Bruckner's original scores been published. . . .

The principal importance of the publication of the authentic scores is that they compel a re-estimation of each of Bruckner's orchestral works and of Bruckner as a composer. The weightiest and most often repeated criticisms of Bruckner have been directed at the frequent long pauses—his habit of stopping, drawing a line and taking a deep breath before starting again—his too frequent employment of pedal points, his

many changes of tempo and his Wagnerian orchestration (c.f. Professor Tovey's suggestion that Bruckner would make a welcome substitute in the concert repertoire for bleeding chunks of butcher's meat chopped from Wagner's operas). Nearly all these charges upon which Bruckner has been arraigned and condemned are the faults of his editors, not of Bruckner himself. He had his faults, but they were not those for which he has been blamed, and the publication of the new scores and of these records are most important steps to the revaluation of a great composer long neglected, underestimated and misunderstood in this country.

REPRINTED FROM HIS MASTER'S VOICE.

Bruckner's music has been the subject of extended and often bitter controversy both during his lifetime and for several decades after his death. As in Wagner's case, the partisans and the opponents of Bruckner made liberal use of the kind of overstatement which served to sharpen personal antagonisms rather than to clarify the issues involved. One critic advised his public to turn the Allegro of Beethoven's Ninth on its head and watch the Finale of a Bruckner Symphony come tumbling out, while a contrary minded colleague solemnly assured his readers that the composer's work constituted one of the noblest musical legacies of the nineteenth century. Composers as well as critics were lured into extravagant opinions, and here the line of demarcation followed sharply the split between the Brahmsians and the Wagnerites. Wagner accepted the dedication of Bruckner's Third Symphony, invited him to Bayreuth and pontifically sanctified him as the "only one symphonist who approaches Beethoven . . ." The Brahms camp was up in arms, and even Brahms himself, unusually reticent in matters of public controversy, was goaded many years later into the following uncharacteristic outburst: "Bruckner? That is a swindle which will be forgotten a year or two after my death . . . after Wagner's death his party naturally had need of another pope, and they managed to find no better one than Bruckner. Do you really believe that anyone in this immature crowd has the least notion what these boa-constrictors are about?" It needs only this culminating counter extravagance—"a cymbal crash by Bruckner is worth all the symphonies of Brahms with the serenades thrown in"—delivered by one of the most admirably detached and critical of composers, Hugo Wolf, to demonstrate the extent to which uncritical and undetached partisanship dominated musical judgment.

A distorted view of Bruckner's music was the inevitable result. More often than not, he was condemned or glorified without a hearing, and, needless to say, the distorted "arrangements" made after his death did very little to clarify the thick fog of ignorance and confusion surrounding Bruckner's work. The listener now has the

opportunity to make his own decision in the clear light of an authentic manuscript authentically performed.

Bruckner laid the foundations for his *Fifth Symphony in B-flat Major* in 1875. The work was elaborated during the following two years and finally brought to completion in 1878. The work waited a long while for a hearing. It was not given until 1894 at Graz under the direction of Franz Schalk, upon whom, incidentally, must be placed the heavy responsibility of having made the extensive alterations of Bruckner's original manuscript which we find in the edition of this work published in 1896. In the published edition, Bruckner's dynamic indications were discarded in favor of those in more general use, with a consequent weakening of the composer's intentions. Cuts were made in the *Scherzo* and especially in the *Finale*. In the latter movement, cuts were made in four different places totaling no less than 222 bars, and the recapitulation was further shortened by an additional 68 bars. Bruckner had himself recognized the possibility of a cut in the final movement; but, in order to preserve the sonata-form structure of the movement, had specified the suppression of the double-fugue, if necessary, rather than the shortening of any other portion of the movement. Needless to say, in the published version, both double-fugue and recapitulation suffered. It is worth bearing in mind that Bruckner had consented to these extensive alterations for the first performance of the work, but there is positively no indication that he intended the deletions to be permanent. The present recording is, of course, entirely faithful to the composer's original manuscript.

The symphony opens with an *Adagio*, strings pizzicati providing a background for a series of sonorous suspensions. There is a resonance and a warmth to the music which successfully counter-balances the impression of austere aloofness which might easily result from the severity of the contrapuntal writing. A vigorous ejaculation in the full orchestra, which we quote for it is a motive of importance,



alternates with a chorale solidly orchestrated for woodwinds and brass. This is followed by another motive of importance in the movement, or rather by two motives, for it is Bruckner's habit to provide the listener with a pair of melodies given simultaneously as subject and counter-subject.



This is brought to a climax leading to the *Allegro* (very end of record side 1), and a subject which is one of the most basic in the movement.



The conclusion of the section devoted to this melody is followed by a pizzicati passage (slower than the established tempo for the *Allegro*) over which emerges in the violins one of those typically Brucknerish melodies



whose curious loveliness is compounded entirely out of a kind of sensitive awkwardness in its rhythmic and chromatic structure. One other subject deserves citation and the reader can be referred to the records themselves as the best guide to the structure of the movement. This melody occurs at the opening of record side 3.



The slow movement (*Adagio*), for all of its great length, is a simple A-B-A-B-A form. The movement opens with a pizzicati background (this is a favorite device with Bruckner) over which is heard a quiet and simple melody.



The entire of the sixth record side is devoted to this first section, the second main subject appearing at the opening of record side 7.



Record side 7 is, in turn, occupied entirely with the complex elaboration of this second portion of the music. The first part (Ex. 6) returns with the opening of record side 8. Ex. 7 recurs at the very close of the eighth record side and continues through record side 9. The final side of the movement (record side 10) is concerned with the elaborated recapitulation of the opening section. The movement closes with the return of the opening pizzicati and the melody of Ex. 6.

The third movement is a typical *Scherzo* and *Trio* and needs little comment. The *Scherzo* is a *molto vivace* with occasional lapses into slower time; the *Trio* is an

Allegretto. The *Finale* opens with a recollection of portions of the earlier movements. It is a prodigious sonata-form movement which is here performed in its original uncut version. It was this movement which suffered most at the hands of Bruckner's editor. The listener now has the opportunity to verify how fitting a climax the movement forms for the symphony as a whole.

A. Veinus

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