# BRUCKNER'S SYMPHONIES: THE REVISED VERSIONS RECONSIDERED
## --A LISTENER'S PERSPECTIVE

by David Aldeborgh

That I am present here in this hall as a participant in this symposium should be a matter of some mystification to the other participants, since I am not a musicologist or even a musician. The most I can claim is to be an avid listener who has dabbled in musicological research, but whose principal orientation is aesthetic rather than philological. My subject today is the first edition versions -- the Revised Versions -- of the Fourth, Fifth, Eighth and Ninth Symphonies of Anton Bruckner.

The hegemony of the critical editions of Bruckner's symphonies in the standard repertory is long since an accomplished fact ( there remaining today only a residual battle between the Haas and Nowak editions), and it is not the purpose of this paper to challenge the rightness of this preeminence. That is not to admit, however, that the versions these editions represent are free of aesthetic problems. The fact remains that Bruckner's closest associates and ardent disciples, most notably the brothers Schalk and Ferdinand Loewe, deemed it necessary to subject Bruckner's original manuscripts to revisions -- in some cases with the composer's permission and cooperation, and in other cases without -- in order to arrive at versions which they deemed audiences would be more likely to accept. Were they totally wrong in this judgment? What was it about Bruckner's original manuscripts that they found problematic, and what principles did they apply in the revision process? Before attempting to answer these questions, it must be recognized that these disciples -- persons without whose devoted apostleship Bruckner's music might never have become part of the standard repertory -- were themselves highly qualified musicians (two of them destined to become Vienna's leading conductors), and that the revisions they made in the course of preparing the first published editions represent, at the very least, a sophisticated commentary on the composer's original manuscripts, as seen from a conductor's perspective. This is not to be dismissed lightly, nor does their work deserve the contempt that has been heaped upon it by so many critics, scholars and commentators over the past half century, as I will endeavor to show. What needs to be recognized is the enormous amount of labor these disciples devoted to promoting Bruckner's cause and to establish his reputation as a composer --labors which, among other things, included the preparation of piano reductions of all the symphonies in both 2-hand and 4-hand arrangements, this being the principal means in those days of bringing a composer's music into the hands of musicians and the homes of music lovers. (As one who has many of these piano arrangements in his possession, I can testify that the amount of labor they represent is considerable).

What was it then about Bruckner's manuscripts that they found problematic? Obviously it was not the music itself, or they would not have bothered with it. Indeed, they worshiped it. Leopold Nowak notes in his preface to the critical edition of the Fifth

Symphony that, in the first published version, "the work in many places sounded softer than Bruckner had intended." As if to confirm this, Bruckner is reported to have said that he wanted his music to "overwhelm" the listener. Such an attitude on the composer's part might well point to the nub of the problem that the revisers found in the autograph scores. To overwhelm a listener with beauty and power is one thing; to overwhelm him with loudness is another. This can be offensive to sensitive ears. When one is engaged in conversation with someone who speaks very loudly, one is likely to become more aware of the loudness than of the substance of what is being said, and so it is with music.

My acquaintance with Bruckner's music dates back to 1959, and one of the recordings of his music that was early in my collection was the Vox release of the Fourth Symphony performed by the Vienna Symphony under Otto Klemperer. While there was much in the music that I found beautiful, I was disturbed by the unrelieved intensity and loudness of the first movement -- a movement which, despite some beautiful passages, did not fulfill the promise of the opening horn call -- and the finale seemed to fare no better. A musically sensitive friend for whom I played the record had the same reaction to the symphony. The problem was exacerbated by Klemperer's brutish approach, although I did not realize this until a couple of years later when Bruno Walter's recording with the Columbia Symphony became available-- a performance that put a friendlier face on the music. Meanwhile I was buying every Bruckner recording I could lay my hands on because, despite some problems I had with certain pieces, there was something profoundly spiritual and wonderful about this composer's music -- it was like no other, and I was, as they say, "hooked." In addition to reading the album notes, I also acquired a number of books and learned about what a great guy Robert Haas was, about the not-so-nice Leopold Nowak, and about the possibly sincere but certainly misguided pupils of Bruckner, Franz and Joseph Schalk, who together with Ferdinand Loewe had cooked up the first editions (for motives not quite clear) and foisted them on an unsuspecting music world. While the foregoing representation may be a verbal cartoon, it is not so far off the mark as to how the disciples of the composer are generally represented, not to mention the intense partisanship expressed by certain admirers of Robert Haas as against Leopold Nowak -- but that is another story. Like most Bruckner fans, I tended to side with whatever versions seemed to represent the more "authentic" Bruckner and selected as best I could from available recordings for my listening pleasure.

Then one evening in March of 1964, I attended a concert by the New York Philharmonic in what was then called Philharmonic Hall, in which the final work on the program was Bruckner's Fourth Symphony. The conductor was Josef Krips. This was to be my first exposure to the 1889 edition: the so-called Loewe version. As the music began, I did not know that it was to be anything different from what I had heard before, but then, every once in a while, a little something would occur that I had not noticed before -- a little retard here, an expressively handled wood wind solo there, a delicate blend of sound

in another place, and a growing sense of benevolent charm. Since I had previously heard Krips conduct the Eighth, I knew that he was an outstanding Bruckner conductor, and I was attributing the beautiful effects that now graced my ears to his conducting skills. These effects, however, were all written into the score, but I didn't know that yet. I knew, however, that what I was hearing was noticeably more captivating than what I had previously encountered in this movement, and the question began to intrude in my mind as to whether this might not be the notorious Loewe version! It wasn't until the chorale in the first movement, however, where the violas play pizzicato instead of arco, that I knew I was hearing the Loewe edition for the first time. I was quite overwhelmed by the beautiful effect of hearing the chorale thus accompanied -- like a great profile set against a tapestry of stars -- and as the movement continued I was increasingly conscious of the way the orchestration added interest to the music. Gone was the brassy tonal monotony that becomes downright oppressive in the hands of many (if not most)conductors, and gone was the excessive tension created by the relentless forward drive of the original version, replaced by a considerably more variegated pace and a more dynamically controlled texture -- the net effect of which was to heighten the drama as well as to allow the real charm inherent in the music to emerge. This vastly improved quality and the principles that sustained it continued throughout the remaining movements, and I was converted on the spot! My ears told me that what I had just heard was magnificent -- note for note and bar for bar superior to the 1878/80 version -- and I said to myself that these first edition versions deserve to be reviewed on their own merits, philological considerations to the contrary notwithstanding! I could not imagine that anyone, with the possible exception of a musicologist, would continue to prefer the so-called original version after having heard this one. With respect to the aforementioned "possible exception", it was Sir Thomas Beecham who once quipped that a musicologist is someone who can read music, but can't hear it. (I think I may have just offended everybody in this room!). In actuality, the two versions are, note for note, almost identical for the first two movements, Loewe following Bruckner's original orchestration far more closely than the experience of hearing both versions would lead one to think. Thus the various salient features, such as the horn and woodwind solos, the extended string passages and tremolos, brass ensembles, unison passages, etc., are nearly all to be found in the corresponding locations in the revised version. The real differences lie in myriad subtle changes, a large percentage of these being in phrasings, dynamics and verbal directions in the score and parts, instrumental changes often being in the form of deletions or supplemental additions, as well as alterations in blends of large ensembles. The final result, however, is an orchestral texture that is far more interesting to the listener, and which reveals Loewe's genius as an orchestrator. Bruckner himself referred to Loewe as "my Berlioz."

In the next two movements we find some changes in form. The Scherzo is given a first and second ending, and there is an unexpected cut in the reprise of the scherzo,

creating a sudden hush that Tovey describes as "highly dramatic." Also, the instrumentation includes the addition of a piccolo which, according to one editor, Bruckner tolerated but did not originate. In any case, it is used very tastefully. In the Finale, the differences in orchestration are more extensive than in the preceding movements, and include the addition of cymbals which are used in three places. With respect to form, the recapitulation of the first theme is eliminated, and since some authors characterize this as a "mutilation", it deserves some comment. In the original version, this recapitulation appears as a completely disconnected brass enclave which, musically speaking, goes absolutely nowhere. It utterly fails to function in a true sonata-form manner, namely as a welcome return to home territory from which the development has led the listener, as one finds in a Mozart, Beethoven or Schubert symphony, but because the sonata form requires it, Bruckner stuck it there. I can see no other reason for its presence, and musically, it's dead on arrival: a stillbirth that unfairly invites questions as to Bruckner's grasp of the sonata form -- a form that seems to have given the composer trouble only in finales (probably because he was reaching for something else). In any case, it was rightly removed. Other refinements include an ascending 3-note unison arpeggio at bar 394 which, though fortissimo, actually eases in an otherwise horrendously abrupt, full-orchestra, triple-fortissimo entrance that rudely intrudes on an evanescent triple-pianissimo passage. The initial effect in the original version is almost unbearably crude, although the extended 45-measure section it introduces is one of great power and majesty. Loewe's 3-note arpeggio is like the crack preceding the crash of a falling tree: it heightens the dramatic impact of the triple-fortissimo event and, in terms of one's ears, gives the listener a little warning. Then Loewe proceeds to enhance the extended dramatic passage with a series of crescendoed tympani rolls, creating the effect of heaving seas. This awesome passage is brought to an end with a Wagnerian tremolando descent of the strings to pianissimo, the tremolando marks being the only difference vis à vis Bruckner's original. The effect is superb. The last important change is the suppression by Loewe of the climax immediately preceding the coda. The music is the same, but played piano instead of the fortissimo of Bruckner's original. Apparantly Loewe thought that too many climaxes detract from the effect of the important ones, and with that it's hard to disagree. It is interesting to note Bruckner's own after-the fact description of the movement, which he invented to satisfy those who sought literary meaning in his music: "Fourth movement: Nature itself, with all its splendor and grandeur, and over all of this, 'the Spirit of the Lord that hovers on the waves.'" It's remarkable how Loewe's tympani rolls bring fulfillment to that statement. In actuality, we cannot say which of these alterations are Loewe's and which are Bruckner's, as the two worked closely together. We know from a letter from Joseph Schalk to his brother Franz, dated May 9, 1887, that the revision of the Fourth was taking place and that Bruckner himself was supporting the emendations, and we know from a letter from Bruckner to Hermann Levi, dated February 22, 1888 that he made some changes of his own initiative, and requested

Levi have them incorporated into the parts. In any case, whatever the amount of Bruckner's input, we know that the guiding spirit behind the revisions was that of Ferdinand Loewe, whose abilities Bruckner held in such high regard. In summary, we can say that Loewe's revision, for the most part, comprises extremely perceptive retouches that allow the more subtle beauties inherent in the score to emerge to a fuller light. In the letter from Joseph Schalk to his brother, just referenced above, he refers to Loewe's "enormous meticulous exactitude", which apparantly was causing a delay in getting the score to the printer. The symphony in its revised form was performed 17 times in Bruckner's lifetime, several of which performances he attended. In the aforementioned letter to Levi, he writes, in reference to the premiere of the revised version held January 22, 1888, "the success in Vienna is unforgetable to me." This version obviously delighted audiences and represented a great triumph for the composer. I doubt that the original version would have fared as well.

Before taking leave of this symphony, a word needs to be said about Bruckner's first version, which he composed in 1874. I will limit my comments to the first movement, except to say that the second movement is very similar to that in the 1878/80 version (except for the coda), whereas the scherzo is a totally different piece from the famous hunting scherzo, and the finale, while utilizing much of the thematic material of the later version, is also a totally different piece. The first movement opens with the familiar horn call set against the tremolando strings, and the second and third themes follow the pattern of the 1878/80 score quite closely. The exposition is developed more lyrically and extensively, however, with cheery counter-melodies and contrasting dramatic sections, and comes to a close with a greatly relaxed passage which ends with hushed, church-like chords in the strings, reminiscent of the sleep-motive from Wagner's Die Walkuere. What we have thus far is a piece that is happier and more varied in content than the later revision, and one which better fulfills the title "Romantic." While it offers plenty of drama, it also offers something completely missing from the 1878/80 version, namely repose -- a repose which we encounter again in the development, following the chorale, with an even more explicit reference to the aforementioned sleep-motive. After the recapitulation, which contains beautiful variants of the exposition material, something wonderful begins to happen: the listener is taken for an incredible ride through the clouds, with kaleidoscopic changes in harmony, the horn theme resounding against pulsating ostinato figures in the strings, along with trumpet fanfares and a sense of ever-brightening skies, bringing to mind the prophet Elijah's ascent to heaven in a flaming chariot. It goes on for about 120 measures, to the end of the movement. Why Bruckner chose to revise this piece the way he did is truly bewildering to me. Leopold Nowak, in the preface to this score, states that "Bruckner's revisions and substitutions represent a substantial tautening of the whole structure." An understatement if ever there was one! From the listener's point of view, what Bruckner did was to strip out most of the passages that provide lyricism, warmth and repose; harden the sound and replace the spontaneous charm with an almost Calvinist austerity. Interestingly, Loewe's revision of the 1878/80 version,

while it does not change the music, does much toward restoring the sense of charm and sponteneity that Bruckner had bulldozed under in the course of making his revision. With respect to making revisions, Bruckner was often his own worst enemy. His first versions typically reveal excellent and sensitive musical instincts, but they also tended to be very complex; and in the process of tightening the structures he often excised the very passages that reveal the sponteneity of his initial inspiration, the trend invariably being toward austerity. The two published versions of the First Symphony reveal this tendency very clearly -- and Bruckner himself was the sole reviser. The first version, known as the Linz version, was composed in 1865 and 1866, and received a successful premiere in 1868. (When one realizes that Brahms did not finish his own First Symphony until 1876, one can appreciate the incredible boldness of Bruckner's First Symphony). Before allowing it to be published, however, Bruckner, very late in life, subjected it to extensive revisions, aimed at tightening up the structure and regularizing the metrical periods. As a result, we once again see the excision and suppression of the spontaneous passages that give the Linz version its fresh vitality. The following examples should illustrate this. In the first movement of the Linz version, there is a beautifully prepared preliminary climax toward the close of the recapitulation's developmental extension (already the coda according to Robert Simpson's analysis) in which a full orchestral fortissimo (bar 308 Linz) is anticipated by an impassioned, four-measure crescendo in the strings -- like a gust of wind before a cloudburst. In the revised version, known as the Vienna version, this anticipation is suppressed in favor of a pianissimo ostinato in a lower register, so that the orchestral fortissimo bursts in rudely, without passion ("like a brazen harlot!" -- according to Simpson). In the second movement -- an exquisite sonata -- there are two passages of exceptional beauty, the first of which occurs in the recapitulation of the second part of the first theme, which begins softly in the horns, against oscillating violins, is picked up by the oboe and then taken up by the 'cellos in an impassioned digression into the treble clef, accompanied by ascending staccato arpeggios in the violas -- a passage that can only be described as luminescent; in the Vienna version, this digression is completely suppressed and replaced by a continuation of the theme in the horns -- possibly because the composer thought the digression to be stylistically inconsistent, whereas it is precisely this type of diversity that gives the score its freshness. The second of these moments of exceptional beauty is the coda, the ending of which is serene and radiant, but which in the revision emerges less beautiful, its inspiration sacrificed to fussy adjustments.

In terms of orchestration, it should be noted that the Vienna version tends to replace solo passages with sectional ones, resulting in some loss of intimacy and, hence, warmth. The Vienna version was published in 1893, whereas the Linz version had to wait until 1935 for publication. It is interesting to note that Bruckner's own revisions tend

to move in opposite directions to those undertaken by his disciples, who invariably sought to develop more variety of tone and expression, whereas Bruckner's tended toward greater economy, simplicity and austerity, even though it is highly doubtful that he explicitly wanted his symphonies to be characterized by this last-named quality -- certainly not one with a title like "Romantic."

We now come to the Fifth Symphony. Aesthetically considered, and from the listener's perspective, the original version of this work has the same problems as the 1878/80 version of the Fourth Symphony, namely its stentorian brassiness and tonal austerity. As one who has been present at a total of six live performances of the original version by three different orchestras -- specifically the New York Philharmonic under William Steinberg in 1965 (for 2 performances), the Hudson Valley Philharmonic under Imre Pallo in 1979 (for 3 performances as well as all the rehearsals), and the Cincinnati Symphony under Michael Gielen in 1983 (for 1 performance) -- I can testify that the piece brings mixed reactions from both audiences and critics. After the Hudson Valley Philharmonic concert in February of 1979, the critic for the Poughkeepsie Journal wrote a review (for which I have searched in vain -- the issue in question being absent from the microfilms at both the public library in Poughkeepsie and the Vassar College library, where these records are kept), in which he criticized the symphony as being one of those pieces in which every brass player has a chance to do his thing before an audience, the implication being that the symphony taxes one's patience and is inherently of less-than-first rank because of this intrinsic distraction. While the review was unnecessarily sarcastic, I think that his response to the brassiness of the

piece was shared by many in the audience, whose applause was less than overwhelming -- even though the performance was really quite good. (It was the first time a Bruckner Symphony had been performed in Poughkeepsie). At the William Steinberg performance fourteen years earlier in Philharmonic Hall, that being the first time I heard the piece live, eleven extra brass players filed onto the stage behind the orchestra during the finale. This was handsomely done and generated excitement in the audience, but when the brass players finally played, the effect -- rather than the crowning glory we had been led to anticipate -- was simply a larger dose of what we had already heard. On a Monday evening in March, 1983, our host, Bill Carragan and I attended a concert in Carnegie Hall in which the Cincinnati Symphony, under Michael Gielen, performed the original version of the Fifth Symphony. He and another friend sat in the Parquet and I, with a friend, sat in the balcony. As we met leaving the hall, he had tears in his eyes and said "it's so cold, it's so cold." He couldn't get over the lack of warmth that the orchestra had projected, and was blaming Gielen. I had thought the performance to be quite good, but it was the sixth time I had heard the piece live, and with respect to warmth it had been no worse than the other performances I had heard. Believe me, it takes a long time for a Bruckner lover to admit, let alone come to terms with, the existence of a serious flaw in one of the master's universally acknowledged masterpieces, yet the experiences I have just related certainly point to some kind of problem. The fact of the matter is that the music itself is not cold. The principal theme of the first movement is airy and uplifting; the second theme of the Adagio is as impassioned as any Bruckner ever wrote, while the transformation of the caterpillar-like first theme at the end of that movement can only be described as radiant; the laendler-rich Scherzo, with its gemuetlich Trio has much folksy charm. Only the Finale seems formidable, but even that has cheerful moments, most notably the fast-trotting second theme. There is, nonetheless, an objective quality to the music which, in places, tends toward the impersonal, and for this reason the orchestration should be such as to minimize this quality. Bruckner's penchant for heavy brass writing does just the opposite, and Franz Schalk was very astute to perceive this in the score during his preparations for the premiere performance, which was scheduled to take place in Graz in April of 1894. Actually we do not know the full extent of the revisions in the score that Schalk used at that performance. In the program notes for the Steinberg performance, Edward Downes writes "...during the rehearsals for the Bruckner Fifth, Schalk ran into difficulties. The parts for the brass instruments were so strenuous that the players were unable to hold out for the entire work. This gave Schalk the idea of having the climatic chorale of the finale performed by twelve brass players, whom he proposed to place apart on a raised platform at the back of the orchestra. Schalk obtained Bruckner's permission for this measure and he wrote out the brass parts himself." [end of quote]. This would suggest that for this performance, the

orchestration was all Bruckner's except for that detail, but this is not the case. There is solid evidence in correspondence from Franz Schalk to his brother Joseph, dated July 21 and 27, 1893, that he was at work on a revision of the Finale and that it was nearly done; and in further correspondence from the autumn of that same year, he is asking Joseph to try to arrive at some arrangement with Max von Oberleithner to cover the cost of copying the parts. Clearly, the premiere performance was to serve as a proving ground for some, if not all, of the emendations. On April 8, 1894, an announcement appeared in the local newspaper (the Grazer Tagblatt) that the symphony would receive its premiere performance and that the composer would be in attendance. How much of the revision Schalk communicated to Bruckner is not known, but it is highly unlikely that he planned to ambush a totally unprepared composer, whom he revered, with a massive fait accompli at the premiere. It seems much more likely that Bruckner had knowledge of the emendations and had decided to allow his disciples have their way for the time being, with at least some degree of approval, meanwhile bequeathing his original manuscripts to the Imperial Library, thereby protecting his legacy "for later times" -- as was his wont to say.

With respect to Schalk's emendations, it must be admitted that they are very far reaching, amounting to a substantial re-casting of the work which leaves scarcely a bar untouched. Except for the Finale, the net effect of the changes is quite subtle, however, amounting to a softening of the tone without any changes in the music. As with Loewe's revision of the Fourth, the salient passages are all there, with important solo and ensemble passages in the same location as in the original. There is much more blending of instruments, however, and a tendency in ensembles to transfer to the woodwinds many passages that were in the brass -- even in quiet passages. In the first three movements there are no changes in form, except that in the third movement, the conductor is directed back to bar 246 of the Scherzo for the da capo, therby limiting the Scherzo's reprise to its recapitulation. There is nothing to prevent a conductor from going back to bar 1, however. In the Finale, the changes have a significant effect on the form, transforming it from a carefully balanced, though very complex, 4-theme sonata form, with triple counterpoint fugal development, a full recapitulation and extended coda, to an Exposition and Fugue, with only a partial recapitulation which completely omits any restatement of the second theme, plus, of course, the coda. He accomplishes this by cutting 122bars from about the middle of the fugue to the end of the second theme recapitulation. The size of the cut should not shock anyone, however, since Bruckner himself, in the original manuscript, authorizes a cut of 103 measures, omitting most of the fugal development, but preserving all of the sonata-allegro. Schalk's cut, however, is very skillfully made, and even a person fairly familiar with the music would have difficulty recognizing the exact point where the cut begins. In terms of orchestration, Schalk greatly reduces the role of the

brasses, particularly the trumpets -- and often to the disadvantage of the music if a point-by-point comparison is made. There is, however, an aesthetic logic to his over-all plan which greatly benefits the piece as a whole. I think he mistakenly changed Bruckner's orchestration of the first statement of the chorale, however, which, being distant from the coda, would not have harmed Schalk's over-all plan, that being to focus the power of the brass on the coda. Although I remain critical of the excessive brassiness of the original versions of the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, the fact remains that Bruckner wrote superbly for the brass -- superbly. It's just that in these two symphonies there is too much of it. This problem does not afflict his later symphonies, especially beginning with the Seventh, when he started to employ the wonderfully mellow Wagner tubas. With respect to the Fifth, however, Bruckner's first statement of the chorale cannot be improved upon, and the Schalk re-casting of that passage sounds asthmatic by comparison. As I have already indicated, however, Schalk's over-all plan works very well, and the enormous power of the coda, with the added brass and percussion, has an effect that is extraordinary. Up until the coda, the music has been pressing the listener towards a new tonal dimension that the original version utterly fails to deliver, whereas Schalk's emendations provide that new dimension of sound that is so liberating. After the premiere, Schalk wrote an enthusiastic letter to Bruckner, who had been too ill to attend the performance, in whichhe said "No one who has not heard it can imagine the crushing power of the finale." [End of quote]. While I know what he meant, I would change the word "crushing" to "liberating." It is the original version that crushes the listener.

On January 13, 1995, the American Symphony Orchestra, under Leon Botstein gave an all-Bruckner concert in Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center in New York City. The final work on the program was the Schalk version of the Bruckner Fifth Symphony, and the event attracted musicologists from as far away as Berlin. I knew the version from the old Hans Knappertsbusch recording on London Records (which recording, by the way, has been newly re-mastered and just released on CD -- I recommend it). I felt that the sound on the old LP was a bit opaque, and I anticipated that I would experience some of this opacity in the live performance, because of Schalk's blending of instruments in his orchestration. However, while attending the rehearsals, I was struck by the radiance and gentle warmth of the sound -- very much the impression I remembered from the Josef Krips performance of the Fourth. Again I was thrilled. One has to hear the piece live to experience the incredible atmosphere that fills the concert hall -- a quality that existing recordings do not capture. There is no way that the original version can deliver the sense of enveloping sound that this version yields, and its instant success at the 1894 premiere is no wonder to me at all. Theodor Helm, a critic and contemporary of Bruckner, attended the premiere and reported that [quote] "the enthusiasm of the audience grew with each successive movement; again

and again the orchestral players had to rise from their seats to acknowledge the tumultuous applause." [end of quote]. In 1911, the composer Jean Sibelius wrote in a letter: [quote] "Yesterday I heard Bruckner's B major symphony and it moved me to tears. For a long time afterwards I was completely enraptured. What a strangely profound spirit, formed by religiousness! And this profound religiousness we have abolished in our own country as something no longer in harmony with our time." [end of quote]. Suffice to say, it was the Schalk edition that the Finnish master heard.

We now turn to the Eighth Symphony, which was first published in an edition supervised by Max von Oberleithner, a former pupil of Bruckner. He consulted with Joseph Schalk in the preparation of the edition, which follows Bruckner's autograph score of 1890 quite closely, except for a number of phrasings, dynamic indications and conductorial instructions. The only structural change is a cut of six bars from the exposition of the Finale (bars 93-98), this change resulting from a request by Joseph Schalk in a letter to Max von Oberleithner dated August 5, 1891. These bars, an apparant reminiscence of the Seventh Symphony, had been omitted by Bruckner in the recapitulation in his revision of 1890, and it therefore seemed to Joseph Schalk to be inconsistent to retain them in the exposition. One result of their elimination is a less smooth transition to the chorale-like passage at bar 99, which is possibly why Bruckner carried them over from his 1887 version. The emendations to the score are most noticeable in the Finale, where a more rhythmic tympani part greatly enhances the recapitulation of the first theme, replacing Bruckner's less imaginative tympani roll. More often than not, the tympani in in Bruckner's symphonies function as an organ pedal point to underscore an important passage, and the part itself is seldom very interesting. All of the revisers tended to re-write the tympani parts, invariably to the music's advantage. Other emendations include the aforementioned phrasings and accents which add interest to the score, and there is even a breath pause, which appears as a small comma before the full orchestra entrance at letter Y in the Finale (bar 333 Nowak); there is also a cymbal clash added in the Finale at the climax of the recapitulation of the first theme (two bars before letter Hh; bar 479 Nowak). All in all, it is the conductorial instructions and agogics that make this score interesting for the listener, as these reflect 19th Century practices. They are all clearly audible in the studio recording that Hans Knappertsbusch made with the Munich Philharmonic for Westminster Records. The symphony received its premiere in Vienna on December 18, 1892 by the Vienna Philharmonic under Hans Richter. It was a great triumph for the composer, and received critical acclaim in the press. There was a total of three performances in the composer's lifetime, which came to an end in less than four years from the date of the premiere.

On Sunday, October 11, 1896, Bruckner worked on the finale of his Ninth Symphony, and in the early afternoon he took a walk in the garden that surrounded the Gate Keeper's lodge on the grounds of the Belvedere Palace where he had lived for the past year, which the Emperor had personally made available to the composer because of his inability to climb stairs. When Bruckner returned from his walk, he lay down to take a nap, and quietly died. The finale lay unfinished, but the first three movements were complete, and a few years later, Ferdinand Loewe decided to undertake the premiere performance of this gigantic torso. It was very likely Bruckner's approval of Loewe's work on the Fourth Symphony that led him to presume a spiritual "license" to make similar changes to the unfinished Ninth, since it can be shown that the changes follow the same pattern as in the 1889 edition of the Fourth: e.g., more variety in instrumental textures, accomplished through more doublings on the one hand and dramatic contrasts on the other, as in the antiphonal effect between the winds and the strings just before the coda of the first movement (bars 505-508); a thorough re-writing of the tympani part, adding interest and drama at critical moments (note the endings of both the first and second movements), and a first and second ending for the Scherzo. Some of the changes were made to facilitate performance, such as the taking of the pizzicato eighth notes from the strings in the Scherzo and giving them to the woodwinds (which works quite well),but most were undoubtedly made to conform to Loewe's artistic sensibilities that had guided the revision of the Fourth. While many of his alterations are indeed felicitous, a few seem ill-advised, notably the elimination of the sustained portion of the dissonant woodwind chords that had set the mood for the opening of the Scherzo, and the abrupt crescendo/diminuendo indications governing the chords and trumpet blasts that follow the great ascent after the opening theme in bars 17 to 24 and 121 to 123 of the Adagio, resulting in a curious "wowing" effect that undermines the solemn declamatory character of the passage. Most unfortunate, however, is the melodramatic fpp (with a violent pizzicato note) at bar 207 of the Adagio immediately after the great climax: an ill-conceived intrusion that contradicts what should be the awesome silence of the moment. Other emendations are quite wonderful, however, such as the the breathtakingly exquisite treatment of the second part of the Trio, this being the result of a slight reduction in tempo ("Etwas ruhiger"), not indicated in Bruckner's original, and a delicate retouching of the instrumentation. (Such serenity may not have been part of Bruckner's conception, but it certainly is welcome!). Loewe's extensive revisions were undoubtedly motivated by a desire to enhance the piece's reception in the music world, and he doubtlessly felt that his alterations revealed more clearly the beauties inherent in the music, and that they would hve been approved by the composer, had he still been alive, as was the case with the Fourth Symphony. Loewe made these changes prior to, and during the course of rehearsals in preparation for the symphony's premiere performance on February 11, 1903, and had them incorporated into the first edition of the score, which was published by Ludwig Doblinger

in August of that same year. As for the emendations themselves, the unprejudiced ear will find that they are not without considerable appeal. Comparing this version with the original is a bit like viewing the Matterhorn in the Spring and again in the Fall: the mountain is the same but the foliage is somewhat different. In his biography of Anton Bruckner, Werner Wolff states that Max Auer (also a Bruckner biographer and the first President of the International Bruckner Society) "could not refrain from admiring the conductor's skill in revising the Ninth", and quotes him as saying "the rough Bruckner has become elegant through Loewe."

In conclusion, I think that the time has come to honor these disciples of Bruckner, not condescendingly for their sincerity or their efforts on his behalf and the good intentions behind them, but for their very real achievements. It's time to review their editions not only because of the place in the history of Bruckner performance that they occupy, but for their intrinsic aesthetic worth. The men behind these first published versions knew Bruckner intimately, and understood what he had intended, and their editions surely reflect this in important respects not to be found in the purified editions. While they undoubtedly tried to influence him in a particular direction, the idea that Bruckner was intimidated by them, or that he was ignorant of the character of their work in the preparation of the first editions, is increasingly difficult to sustain. Of course there was give and take in their relationship and undoubtedly some benevolent subterfuge, but they were his true disciples -- they loved him and he loved them, and love covers a multitude of sins. He, of all people, would be outraged by the treatment they have received at the hands of his latter-day "friends": scholars, historians and musicologists. Their editions have far more validity than has heretofore been acknowledged, and, in my opinion, the scores should be republished, complete with parts, by the International Bruckner Society and made available to the music world. It would be to the delight of the audiences that get to hear these versions. Finally, these editions should be granted a deutero-canonical status by the International Bruckner Society, "deutero-canonical" being a term used in Biblical scholarship relating to those books in the old Latin Vulgate Bible that were, for historical reasons, deemed secondary but God-inspired and therefore part of the canon. In the Protestant world, these books found their way into the so-called "Apocrypha" of the English Bible. In short, they should be studied for what they are --- not for what they are not.

I thank you for your attention.

David Aldeborgh