

## BRUCKNER DISCOVERIES AT THE DEUTSCHES RUNDFUNKARCHIV

By John F. Berky

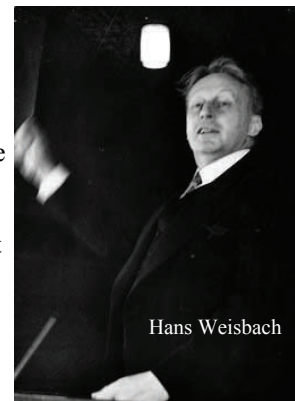
In recent years, I have had the good fortune to be able to comb through the Bruckner collection of the Deutsche Rundfunkarchiv (DRA) in Frankfurt, Germany.

Much of this searching was simply done with an e-mail request and that was possible thanks to the fact that I had recovered some Bruckner recordings that the DRA did not have and I sent the original transcription discs to them.

While most of the DRA collection contains complete or partially complete performances (partially complete usually means that one or more 78 rpm transcription matrixes are missing for a set), there were two very short recordings that offered sections of the Symphony No. 9 that peaked my interest. They were requested and quickly received.

The first one requested was a complete surprise. It took a second of recognition to realize that I was listening to the opening exposition to the Finale of the Bruckner Symphony No. 9. Since it was recorded on October 12, 1940, this was clearly the first recording that the finale had ever received! The recording is just 3'16" long and was recorded in the studios of the Reichssenders Leipzig with Hans Weisbach conducting the Grosses Orchester des Reichssenders Leipzig. The score used was of the opening exposition prepared from the manuscript by Fritz Oeser. The recording is described as a "versuchaufnahme," or an experimental recording. These were made occasionally to test equipment or music but were not intended for broadcast. The recording is incomplete since the very opening is missing (the first matrix was lost). But the short document is fascinating, not just because it is the first recording of any part of the Bruckner Ninth Finale, but the fact that in October of 1940, at a time when Germany's Luftwaffe was fully engaged in the Battle of Britain, someone in Leipzig who had the authority to pull together the Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra for a "versuchaufnahme" was checking out Bruckner's incomplete sketches. The work can be auditioned on the DRA website at:

<http://www.dra.de/online/dokument/2007/november.html>



A few weeks later, I requested another such recording. This one contained some part of the Bruckner Ninth but the performers were members of the Max Strub Quartet. [Max Strub (V), Hermann Hubl (V), Hermann Herschfelder (Va), Hans Münch-Holland (C), zusätzlich Emil Seiler (Va)]. When this recording arrived, it was another revelation. The music being played was from the discarded trios to the Scherzo. Bruckner completed two trios prior to composing the trio used in the actual publication. In the DRA recording, Mr. Strub prepared an A-B-A scherzo of his own. He performed the first trio, followed by the second trio and then completed the performance by playing the first trio again – sort of a Bruckner scherzo of trios! Unfortunately, the second playing of the first trio is incomplete (another missing matrix) but I quickly pointed out to my colleague at the DRA that since the first trio was already performed, one just needed to use the first playing to recreate the second playing. The work, once reconstructed, runs for 9'42".

The music can be auditioned on the DRA website at: <http://www.dra.de/online/dokument/2008/dok2008-1.html>



As with the first recording, this was a "versuchaufnahme." But the most interesting thing was that the recording was made in the Reichssenders Studios in Leipzig on October 13, 1940, just one day after the orchestra recorded the Finale exposition. So now we have someone who is not only pulling in the entire Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra but Max Strub and his quintet as well—all in a period of two days. Naturally, we wanted to know who this Bruckner enthusiast was and why were the recordings made at that time. My colleague at the DRA, Jörg Wyrchow, began digging and while he was able to locate some documentation, he could not link the operation to any one person. However, what he did tell me was something quite simple.

At that time (October, 10 to 13) a Bruckner Festival took place in Leipzig, the "Zweites Leipziger Brucknerfest, veranstaltet von der Leipziger Bruckner-Gemeinschaft in Verbindung mit der NS-Gemeinschaft Kraft durch Freude, dem Gewandhaus zu Leipzig und dem Reichssender Leipzig". Just how these two recordings were used in the festival, we do not know, but at least we now know why they were created.

According to Bruckner scholar, Crawford Howie, one of the background features of this festival seems to have been a quasi-political struggle between the Leipziger Bruckner-Gemeinde und Verlag (Leipzig Bruckner Association and publishing house; they were opposed to the original versions of the symphonies and had not been allowed to become part of the IBG - the International Bruckner Society - in the mid-1930s as a result) and the DBG (Deutsche Bruckner-Gesellschaft / Germany Bruckner Society). The DBG, supported by the Ministry for Propaganda, accused the LBG of not including them in the planning of the festival, and three weeks before the beginning of the festival, the Ministry for Propaganda threatened to cancel the festival unless the DBG was involved.

This struggle between those in favor of the 'original versions', vs. those published by the Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag under the editorship of Haas, and those who wished to retain the first edition versions, seems to have continued for some time throughout the 1940s. However, the Ministry for Propaganda made it clear that they wanted to be involved in discussions with the different Bruckner societies in Germany at the time.

It may seem unusual that such activities would be taking place in Germany during the war. However, in 1940 the situation of the German radio symphony orchestras was not as critical as one might imagine. Later in the war most of the orchestras were disbanded and the members had to fight at the front. But a few fortunate musicians continued to have the opportunity of playing in an orchestra throughout the war. The Berlin Rundfunkorchester continued its operation right into 1945 and by 1944 was beginning its series of "Stereo-Versuchsaufnahmen" including a portion of a Bruckner 8th conducted by Herbert von Karajan

Lzg. 61780/81

*80 fehlt*

Anton Bruckner,  
Finalefragment (Skizzen) zur IX. Symphonie  
Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, Leipzig

Abteilung 11: Versuchsaufnahmen

12.10.40

Raum I

6'49"

Grosses Orchester des Reichssenders Leipzig unter  
GMD Hans Weisbach.

Recording note from the October 12, 1940 session showing that the entire recording was 6'49". Only 3'16" of the recording still exists.