

Halleluja Music throughout Bruckner's Ninth Symphony

.....Halleluja music can be heard throughout the Bruckner's Ninth symphony.

Though I don't know how many times I've listened this Bruckner's posthumous work, every time I do, I have been struck by a kind of unsolvable, strange feeling – because even though this symphony should, as Bruckner himself once told his friends, be dedicated to his "Dear God", I couldn't hear any sense of praise or glory in the first three complete movements. Instead, I perceived a lurid sound texture beyond the normal human experience.

Similar to the prior movements, the incomplete fourth movement also begins with a troubling perplexity (see the excerpt score below); and it again gave me no impression of praise. Bruckner couldn't complete composing this last movement, and here and there we see sketchy orchestration, gaps, etc. - especially the coda of this movement which is wholly lacking. If he was planning to show the most splendid of God's glory in its last thrust like in the finale of his Eighth, we deeply feel a loss as for Bruckner passed away without leaving us the desideratum of the music, whereas all the preceding movements had been written for.

It is said that Bruckner told his friends that if he couldn't finish writing the fourth movement, his Te Deum can be played as a replacement. His Te Deum is a true praising of God to be sang jubilantly as delineated as a "great shout of praise"(David Doughty). Also, in his last religious choral work, Psalm 150, Halleluja is sang with the great joy manifestly and expressively throughout the music.

Thus, Bruckner has been longing for the sacred praise throughout composing this symphony. I was wondering what kind of psyche he was in during the course of the composition. It was said that until the last day, he meticulously noted how many times he prayed Ave Maria and Vater Unser (The Lord's Prayer).

Thereupon, I thought that possibly Halleluja music may be sounding throughout this symphony from beginning to end. So, I have just tried to mutter "Halleluja" at the beginning of each movement. Unexpectedly, the word has fit into the melodies. (See the scores below.) I don't know whether such a manner is musicologically appropriate, but as the composer wished to dedicate this symphony to his God, he might also have been, I imagine, desperately murmuring "Halleluja, Halleluja" day and night during composing this symphony.

Since this experience, every time I listen the Ninth, I almost unconsciously murmur to myself "Halleluja, Halleluja", and thought that Bruckner who is laying beneath the St. Florian's chapel may forgive me for what was deeply inspired to feel from his music.

The secretly strange sound of this symphony seems to be directly connected to the most fathomless depth of the world itself.

And, what if Halleluja music is sounding from such quintessence of the world,

- First Movement:

Feierlich, Misterioso

ha lle lu ya

- Second Movement:

Bewegt, lebhaft

h a lle l u j a h a l l e l u j a

- Third Movement:

Langsam, feierlich

ha l l e l u j a h a l l e l u j a

- Fourth Movement:

Misterioso, nicht schnell

ha lle lu ja ha lle lu ja

Note: Various recordings of the completed four-movement versions of this symphony are available, e.g., William Carragan's version performed by Yoav Talmi conducting Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra (Chandos 8468/9, 1986). Even though they are the only possible way to experience the "whole" symphony at its substitutive best, it is good to listen the real sound of the music – we can hear the quoted melody from Te Deum played just before the termination of the Bruckner's writing, which sounds like joyful steps of an innocent child. That part leaves the dearest impression on me, reminding the Jacob Böhme's last words on his deathbed, "Now, I go to the Paradise!"

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