

This performance of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony represents the first-ever complete electric recording of a Bruckner Symphony. It represents also, a reminder that Jascha Horenstein was a master of Bruckner style by the time the conductor had reached his thirtieth year. Between the time of this recording and today, a great deal of research has gone into the problem of Bruckner editions, a most valuable contribution to our new understanding of Bruckner's intentions in his Symphonies being a series of authentic publications between the years 1934 and 1944 under the general editorship of the great musicologist Robert Haas. These editions corrected, in a most dramatic way, the common misconceptions hitherto promoted by publications incorporating the cuts and revisions forced upon Bruckner by his well-meaning friends. Fortunately there are very few textual problems in the case of Symphony No.7. There are a few questionable details such as some modifications of tempo noted, especially in the finale, by a hand other than Bruckner's. In his edition Robert Haas rightly ignored them as does Horenstein in his recording. Even in later publications such as those of Leopold Nowak, these markings have brackets round them, giving conductors justification to ignore them. There seems no more reason for modern musicians to observe such notions than there is for one conductor to obey another's pencilled notes on a previously used full score. Similarly, there is no "authentic" answer about the theory that the words "gilt nicht" written faintly one bar after the cymbal clash and three stave-widths above it in an unidentifiable hand, is meant to cancel the whole of the breathtaking onslaught by timpani, triangle and cymbals at the peak of the slow movement. Neville Cardus, in describing this glorious moment says: "the climax is achieved by a stroke on the cymbals which elevates this usually, anonymous instrument to a radiant height". This moment is the focal point, not merely of the slow movement but indeed of the whole work, an opinion also held firmly and expressed vehemently by the great Bruckner conductor Eugen Jochum.

Bruckner's individual sense of form is as satisfying in its way as the symphonic structure of a Haydn symphony, but immensely more expansive. The very first melody of the work is over twenty bars in length and by the time the whole of the thematic material has been expounded (and there are three main themes not counting linking passages with melodies of their own) we are halfway through the movement and Bruckner sets out upon his telescoped development and recapitulation which is imperceptibly welded to the coda. Even such a contracted "telescope" is represented by twelve minutes of music and the four-minute coda over a continuous timpani roll may be considered, in the larger context, as the beginning of the build-up to the cymbal clash of the following movement - a point still some twenty minutes away. The opening of the *Adagio* is intoned by two Wagner tubas, two bass tubas, contrabass tuba and violas. Devout and funereal though this beautiful movement may be it is not possible to confirm the traditional belief that it was written as a Wagnerian Funeral March, for Bruckner would not have heard of Wagner's death until after he had composed beyond the climactic point. With the Scherzo, the composition avoids metaphysical implications and the earthy rhythms beneath a trumpet fanfare typify Bruckner's ability to write peasantish dance-rhythms, thereby championing Austrian folk-art no less than promoting his own symphonic facility. That the trio is slow and expansive is usual enough, although this particular example needs a firm hand to retain its impulse. The finale sums up the music most succinctly. Its initial rising scale is very similar to that which represents the opening of the Symphony but in the last movement it skips upward with the maximum of optimism. There are plenty of alternative ideas including a recurrent barrier of block chords, but the sense of impetus is, by this time, so intense that nothing can hinder the forward sweep to the final paean of brazen glory which stands as coda to the whole work.

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