

Brahms never lost his gruff North German manner, nor his Hamburg accent. Yet he became the leader of the renaissance of Viennese music and a prophet in his adopted country.

On the other hand, Anton Bruckner, the most magisterial symphonist after Beethoven, had to go outside Vienna to gain recognition. The Viennese public would not take seriously this little schoolteacher from Linz, and it was not till late in his life, after his Seventh Symphony had impressed Leipzig and Munich, that the local concertgoers began to perceive the stature of their compatriot, though they knew him to be a uniquely superb organist and though a few of the young musicians—Hugo Wolf, Gustav Mahler, the conductor Franz Schalk—understood and loved him. It was easy to make fun of Bruckner: he was an ungainly man, speaking a peasant's dialect, with a head which seemed to belong on a Roman coin, a nose which began to trace an emperor's profile and then lacked the courage to go on, and blue eyes which were forever expressing timid astonishment. That head was placed on a body which was too small to carry it. Everything about his appearance was ill-fitting. He dressed in a black suit of a cut fifty years out of date, and from the back pocket of his baggy trousers he would draw a seemingly endless red handkerchief stained with remnants of snuff. Unlike Brahms or Mahler, who were educated men, Bruckner's mind was concentrated on the staves of music paper; he was uninterested in poetry or science or painting or philosophic conversation of the kind beloved by the Viennese. He seemed a simpleton, and he was a genius.

He was excessively devout, constantly making the sign of the cross and kneeling when the Angelus sounded. Thus he composed, as it were, under the eye of God, who helped him, timid of life, to be bold in music. There is something incantatory about his work, as if a high priest who did not have to worry about holding the attention of his audience had penned these notes. Bruckner thought high thoughts while drinking a glass of beer. Perhaps his occasional fulsomeness served him as compensation for his meager external life. Perhaps he recognized his prolixity: he had a curious habit of numbering each bar of his compositions, as if he were in search of arithmetical order. Indeed, he was always adding: the number of steps of a staircase, the number of cups of coffee standing on the tables of a *Kaffeehaus*, the number of fiacres passing the corner. He longed for written proof of his ability. He was ecstatic when, as a young man, after an examination in organ playing, one of his examiners exclaimed in admiration, "He should have examined *us*." After that he insisted on submitting to at least eight additional examinations, in each case asking for a written *Zeugnis*, a testimonial document, and celebrating each occasion as a triumph. No doubt his maladjustment, which twice or three times brought him close to a nervous collapse, had a sexual origin. He was very much attracted to women, but the objects of his desire were almost always young girls under twenty, and they would have none of him. When he was nearly seventy, he underwent an experience as ridiculous as that of Mr. Pickwick with Mrs. Bardell. A chambermaid in a Berlin hotel claimed he had promised to marry her, and it was true that he actually became engaged to her for the length of a whole afternoon. He had to be extricated by a friend who generously undertook the task of buying the girl off. Bruckner remained unmarried.

In his diaries are records of how many carnival balls he attended, how many waltzes and polkas he danced; and these notations are intermixed with the numbers of *A*'s (*Ave Marias*) and *V*'s (*Vater unsers—Pater Nosters*) he said.

He admired Wagner so much that he was virtually subservient to him, and he probably suffered more from the loud propaganda of Vienna's noisy *Wagnerverein* than he did from

Hanslick's vituperation. His Third Symphony was dedicated to Wagner, and accepted for performance by the Vienna Philharmonic, only to be discarded after one rehearsal. When he was fifty-three, he himself conducted this symphony: most of the Viennese audience walked out. When it was over, only about a dozen people were left in the hall; one of them was Mahler.

Bruckner was sixty-two when his Seventh Symphony was successfully performed in Vienna by Hans Richter. And it was in that year that Franz Joseph, who had heard him play the organ in Ischl, finally awarded him an order and a small stipend. When Franz Joseph asked what further favor he wanted—the conventional and meaningless question asked at such audiences—Bruckner is supposed to have replied, "Please, Your Majesty, tell Hanslick not to write all those terrible things about me." The story may be as apocryphal as the one concerning a rehearsal of his Eighth Symphony, when the conductor turned to him and said, "Is this note supposed to be a C or a C sharp?" and he replied, "Whatever you like, Herr Kapellmeister."

By the time success came to him, when the Seventh Symphony and the *Te Deum* were acclaimed in Berlin, when an honorary degree was conferred on him by Vienna University, when the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna elected him to membership, and he was given the freedom of the city of Linz, in short, when the honors came, they came too late. He was by that time ill and marked for death. During his illness, he composed the marvelous "Adagio" of the Ninth Symphony, which stretches to a remote but penetrable horizon.

Valerie, who liked him, offered him free lodging in the Belvedere. He moved there in July of 1895. His mind became clouded and he was increasingly subject to religious mania. In October of the following year he died, without having completed the Ninth Symphony. He was laid to rest in the church of St. Florian, beneath the organ which he had played so often.

This seemingly ingenuous man, who after the performance of his Fourth Symphony rushed up joyfully to the conductor, Hans Richter, and offered him a gulden as a tip—Richter wore the coin on his watch chain ever after—left a heritage of music worth countless gulden. However plump the symphonies may

appear here or there, they are works of a tall and an ecstatic master.