

Jan Peter Marthé
Anton Bruckner
Symphony IX
Reloaded*

(*NEW FINAL)

Peter Jan Marthé:

**„THEY’LL GET ANGRY ON THAT!”
or THE SECRET OF A SUNKEN CATHEDRAL**
(Remarks on the Ninth with new finale)

“The hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me forth in the spirit of the Lord: And set me down in the midst of a plain that was full of bones...

And I saw, and behold the sinews, and the flesh came up upon them: And the skin was stretched out over them, but there was no spirit in them. Book of Ezechiel

“THEY’LL GET ANGRY ON THAT!”

...Bruckner said once regarding his Ninth. For a long time I was unable to understand what he meant by these words. On what all the friends and opponents, experts and know-alls – who Bruckner obviously meant by that – should get angry? On possible formal or harmonic boldness in this symphony dedicated to “The Good Lord”? Concerning the musical and formal language there is nothing to find in the Ninth which isn’t already to find in his other symphonies. So, what did Bruckner really try to say?

I immediately discerned the meaning of Bruckner’s laconical remark on the Ninth – that quite all will get angry on that – when I was in the midst of working on the finale in November 2005. Like lightning the true secret of this millennium masterpiece revealed to me. But, later more on that.

My first confrontation with this large set of difficulties of Bruckner’s unfinished Ninth happened ten years ago, in late autumn 1995.

It was no one else than the late Augustinus Franz Kropfreiter - himself Augustinian friar, first-class Bruckner expert, internationally successful composer and legendary organist of St. Florian - who acquainted me with the fragments of the finale of Bruckner’s Ninth.

A thorough study of the material followed. After that I fully agreed with Kropfreiter’s opinion. However severe it was to realize it: But these loose drafts were the shattered image of a terribly suffering man already handed over to his own mental, psychological and physical decay. Late in the evening Kropfreiter and I sat together in one of St. Florian’s inns which was once also one of Bruckner’s most beloved places. We both agreed: In those loose drafts a wilderness of dead remains was laid before me. No hope for coming to life again. So, keep hands off! Dona eis requiem.

THE SACRILEGE

But then it all came as quite a surprise. It happened after the overwhelming and unanimous success of the première of my completely revised version of Bruckner's Third during the "Bruckner Days" at St. Florian in 2005. From all possible sides I was confronted with the request to see to Bruckner's unfinished Ninth. But it was not only my memory of the meeting with Kropfreiter. I thought of all previous attempts to complete the Ninth and of the results so familiar to me. All that encouraged my conviction to say "NO" to such plans. But there was one thing I hadn't reckoned with.

"Do it! Open your ears and write down what you hear inside you! I have already bequeathed the cover". That inner voice was Bruckner. Firstly only vaguely I heard this voice becoming clearer and clearer. And it reached the degree of an inexorable command. At first I had to clarify for myself: Such a challenge needs a daredevil insolence, but also the imperative humility of an uninhibited and curious child. Was I able to do that? But above all, was it really possible for me to produce the courage to ignore any musical scientific scruple and to be prepared to be led by Bruckner's spirit? Finally, the inner voice of Bruckner was more powerful than any "ifs" and "buts".

SUNKEN CATHEDRAL

Of course, after the first people heard of my work on the Ninth's finale all the self-styled grail guardians charged me with presumption, sacrilege and blasphemy. Like they already did when I worked on Bruckner's Third. But I couldn't have cared less. All of a sudden I was thunderstruck. After reading and empathising I saw the revelation of Bruckner's entire plan for his symphony. It was nothing else than a complete revision of symphonic principles.

Before my mental eye the symphony's true secret rose to incredible greatness like a sunken cathedral from the depths, and turned my previous views on Bruckner completely upside down. Without really knowing what he did, Bruckner manoeuvred his final symphony to a point which was unthinkable within the whole western history of music that time: A symphony as an act of initiation.

FIRSTLY EARTHWARDS, THEN HEAVENWARDS

Well, I cracked the code, but the essential still lay before me. And so I started with the same feelings like the people who started to rebuilt the Frauenkirche of Dresden. Like them, I was standing in front of a chaotic mass of single stones of which I had to erect a splendid building. Bruckner knew quite well why it was impossible to close this symphony with the Adagio. The first movement confronts us with the entire and thronging powers of the cosmos. In the following Scherzo the unleashed powers of underworld and overworld hurl against us in our own world in all thinkable heights and depths of our own insides. Indescribable yearning and despair of the Adagio leads our souls to the doors of paradise to experience peace and reconciliation with ourselves in its final times.

Not until that we are ripe for a new expanse of life. Firstly earthwards, then heavenwards. That was Bruckner's intention for the four movements of the Ninth.

AN ACT OF INITIATION

"To The Good Lord", - that is the dedication of Bruckner's definite Ninth. But what Bruckner originally thought to offer to "The Good Lord" by his four movements of the Ninth was nothing else than one of the most powerful symbols of all religions and cultures. But just on a musical level. The universal symbol of the cross as a magical instrument of initiation. So it is the process of saying "YES" to your own life in all its heights and depths, breadths and lengths. Whatever that might mean for the people themselves.

The Ninth's message is really as unequivocal as the secret and almost inscrutable rituals of initiations of all cultures. From the Egyptian books of death to the Freemasons initiation rituals man never finds his salvation through faith from second hand, but only through the personal crossing of the threshold after which he is expecting underworld and overworld, God and devil, heaven and hell – regardless of any confession. The completed Ninth as a four-piece act of initiation. That was the secret Bruckner took down to his grave. A message which exceeds all achieved so far.

Is it a kind of presumption, sacrilege and blasphemy to try to make all that open to the people more than a century after Bruckner started? Quite the reverse! Together with Bruckner I share the belief that our western view in which all areas of life are "materialistic" obstructs the view on true reality. And that reality – in complete contrast to materialistic views – is nothing else than that "mind is unlimited, immortal and drifting anywhere and at any time" - in the past as today and in eternity!

As with the Third I had nothing else to do as being the "slate-pencil" in Bruckner's hands. Time is ripe that Bruckner reveals another side of himself never really known before. And by that to play himself into the hearts of as many people as possible. Especially people who have not known his name so far, let alone his music. Because no one else than Bruckner stands for the music of the third millennium.

THE FORMAL BODY OF THE NEW FINAL

In his drafts of the finale Bruckner clearly instructed the formal body of this movement. So if seen formally I just had to follow his traces. There was nothing surprisingly new: Exposition with three themes, carried out by integrated fugue, reprise and coda. And that's that! An intro precedes the first theme group. The second was a compository work out from the existing, but more visionary indicated line of melody. The incomplete instrumented third theme group was finished accordingly by myself. The carrying out is a synthesis of Bruckner's fragmentary instructions and my own creative following of an indicated region full of boldness given by Bruckner himself. From the shortened reprise I only had quite fragmentary original material from Bruckner to lean on. As is well known in the midst of the third theme group Bruckner broke off his work on the finale once and for all.

The sensational new feature of Bruckner's conception is to find with regards to the content: The three theme groups are no longer interpreted as three wisely arranged and contrasting musical types. They now represent three different "stages", levels which we have to stride through like an initiation. The previous stage is the condition to enter the next.

By that the open and attentive listener gets integrated step by step into striding forwards and upwards until, in the coda, he reaches a level which is fundamentally mind-expanding. No wonder that especially this finale is orientated towards the coda. And the way there is the way of all life, no matter if it refers to the individual or the whole creation: By the magic of sounds the finale makes comprehensible for everyone the way from Becoming or searching to the ultimate revelation of what essence, object and sense of life really mean.

THUNDER AND EARTH SOUNDS

The finale starts with an introduction. By an *fff*-thunder on the sound G the kettledrum pulls us out mercilessly from the spheres of light of the gone Adagio. As if God threw us out from heaven and we find ourselves back on the hard earth.

By a threefold wave-like moving of the strings *pizzicato* – starting with the smallest interval of a second – a whole octave is filled by this single tone.

You get nothing donated on this way of initiation. Much more, the individual is forced to create the according "space" and to assert himself. The following first theme group offers anything else than a firm "main theme". The thematic material is engraved by the interval of Tritonus as well as by a rhythm characteristic and punctuated for the whole movement.

Like at the beginning of the creation, where chaotic matter tries to orientate itself to an order or a forming centre, the impression of Becoming is predominant. Powerful march-like sounds attempt to encourage themselves. A match of forces, a kindle with fire without finding any order or stability. Even the first climax of the octave theme is no expression of stability – quite the reverse, this monumental theme becomes involved in energetic turbulences and mutations.

The destruction of illusory security proves to be the fundamental character of this first theme group. It is the experience which the master from Nazareth put into words: The birds of heaven have their nests, the foxes have their dens, but the Son of Man (by which we all are meant!) has nothing to lay down his head on. A taste of true reality to which we stride when we have turned our backs to the illusory Towers of Babel.

In contrast to all previous symphony movements there is no break or gentle transition between the first and the second theme group, much more we get pushed into it. We find ourselves in a sphere which is beyond any description: A pointed "Melos" without special characteristics let us breathe the fresh mountain air, as if we had to clean our minds to reflect other realities. The second theme does not change the body, but it permanently changes its aura as if a wonderful princess becomes more and more mysterious by the varied beauty of her precious clothes.

MUSIC LIKE A LAVA STREAM

We searched and fought (first theme group), we dared to enter unknown regions (second theme group). Now it's time that we become receiver of energies not of this world by the following "choral of light" (third theme group).

At the beginning we have the famous "Te Deum motive", actually an

octave which falls on a quint. But this motive gets a transformation which becomes more and more important during the piece: The octave becomes inverted and increases – accompanied by a mysterious ppstring sound – upwards. After this phase of entering a mysterious space of sounds (intonation of trombones) the further course is dedicated to the great “sound rituals” like ancient people have celebrated all times to conjure up heavenly and earthly powers for the community’s welfare. Produced from the whole piece’s musical nucleus, the centre – a precisely punctuated rhythm module – is a “power motive” which becomes “heated up” until the energetic-musical lava stream exempts itself by a wild five-voiced fugue.

In his drafts Bruckner himself gave this fugue a surprising, exciting turn: After a splendid climax in fis-Moll the fugue turns into a marchlike sequence of a Haydn-like cheerfulness. But the latently concealed and rumbling forces come back and take us once more to a tremendous climax which directly leads into a very short reprise of the first majestic theme group.

After the varied second theme group and the choral, music explodes in a huge archaic sound of “nature music” in beaming C-Dur - now with a converted theme of octaves from his third symphony (later Richard Strauss – who conducted Bruckner’s Third himself – took the Third as main motive for his “Zarathustra”). This “nature theme” now gets contra pointed by the known “Te Deum motive”. Nature and spirituality find together again. Let no man separate what God has joined.

Of the Coda there is almost nothing useful left by Bruckner. But Bruckner let knew his environment how he had pictured the finale of his Ninth: As a tremendous overlapping of all important themes from the symphonies V, VII, VIII and IX. And above all that, the bright singing of the “NON CONFUNDAR IN AETERNUM”. What I did was just the attempt to meet Bruckner’s wish.

EUROPEAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA – AMBASSADOR OF AN ELEMENTARY KIND OF MAKING MUSIC

The EUROPEAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA - founded by Yehudi Menuhin - unites around 100 brilliant young talents from 27 nations today and stands for a highly motivated community to make music. By its very specific sound profile it ranks among Europe’s young first class orchestras. The spectacular success of this musical body led by its conductor Peter Jan Marthé confirms the correctness of its way taken since the foundation in 1994.

Peter Jan Marthé: “From the begin we always claimed nothing else than to become an ambassador of a new elementary kind of making music. Our orchestral work’s fundamental objective target is to grant the profoundly “emotionalising” of orchestral sounds and the abstract scores an absolute priority against any stylish questions. By that the interpreted works get an directness for the listener which obviously is becoming more and more one of the exemption.”

Yehudi Menuhin, 1994 on the occasion of the European Philharmonic Orchestra’s formation: “Especially today in the classical music operations we are dependent on a sovereignly demonstrated composition

of technical and musical flexibility. A composition of an unconsciously corporality of sounds and more than ever an essential spirituality of the heart! If this program is lived by all who are involved it will give the making of music an extraordinary depth and effect. That's why I see in this highly motivated community making music one of the most promising orchestra projects in Europe."

THE CONDUCTOR PETER JAN MARTHÉ CELEBRATING CLASSICAL MUSIC AS ARCHAIC RITES OF SOUNDS

A symphony concert on the 1400m high-lying mountain plateau in the Tyrolean Wetterstein massif, a Bruckner symphony on the 2000m high Swiss mountain "Rigi" at the Vierwaldstädter Lake or the projects of "Kathedrale der Klänge" inside Vienna's Saint Stephen's Cathedral, where Bruckner's works are performed as "archaic rites of sounds" – by his spectacular classical projects "the eccentric conductor of Bruckner and follower of Sergiu Celibidache" Peter Jan Marthé again and again makes sustainable sensations. Peter Jan Marthé, conductor of the European Philharmonic Orchestra founded by Yehudi Menuhin in 1994 – "in his earlier life an avantgarde organist always accompanied by artistic scandals and, as conductor refuses completely today's commercial music business..." (Süddeutsche Zeitung)

– sees his main challenges in "...by opposing the music business which gets more and more lowbrow by a new emotionalising of music and finding new interpretations by a consequently alternative rehearsal work. And that interpretations will get under the people's skin existentially. One thing is clear: Marthé leaves no one cold."

(Dolomiten/Bozen)

Alongside concerts in France, Deutschland, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Mexico and India especially his solo performances at Notre Dame in Paris, Saint Marc's Cathedral in Venice and the Grand Hall of Vienna's "Musikverein" are among the peaks in his career. Furthermore his appearances as conductor and soloist at renowned festivals like Klangbogen Vienna, Festival Estival de Paris, Festival d'Avignon, Festival International des Musiques Experimentales/ Bourges, Steirischer Herbst/Graz, Musica Viva/ Munich or Sagra Musicale Malatestiana/ Rimini Marthé became a most exposed interpreter of contemporary music as well as of Anton Bruckner's symphony. Main focus of his composing work are: "How do you do, Monsieur Marchand" (1981/Vienna's Musikvereinssaal), "Phantom Blues" (1990), "Alpen-Rausch-Symphony" (1991 Klangart-Festival Osnabrück), „Kaiser des Anfangs“, "Ein Klangtheater" (1992 Münster/ Cologne), „Blasophrenale" for three marching bands, 50 blowers and 30 drummers (1992), "Sonnengesang", Oratorium (1993), "Klangdom-Prolog" 2001, "Stamp Music" for large orchestra (2001 Mexico), "CONCERTO IMPERIALE – Variations on the Imperial Austrian Anthem" (2003). Furthermore film music for the documentary „Feuer der Menhire" und „Geheimnis der drei Frauen" (RAI, BR, ZDF, ARD, ORF). Not only his period of training with Sergiu Celibidache (1981/82), but also his two-year stay in India (1987/88) with Ustad Ameer Mohamad Khan in Jaipur/Rajasthan, led Peter Jan Marthé into "new unexpected and fascinating regions of making music", which affect importantly on his following artistic work as conductor and composer.

1994 Peter Jan Marthé and Yehudi Menuhin founded the EUROPEAN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA which he led soon to spectacular success by the extraordinary and disturbing interpretations of Bruckner and, by that became precursor for a "new elementary kind of making music" (Yehudi Menuhin). In 1995 Yehudi Menuhin appointed Marthé to be member of the board of trustees of Menuhin's project "LIFE MUSIC NOW". 2005 première of the completely new version of Bruckner's III symphony at the "Bruckner Days" at Saint Florian.

English translation by Hannes Marcel Bichler