

Anton Bruckner's Symphony No. 1 in C minor is perhaps the least-known of the nine-pronged symphonic output which constitutes the composer's principal bequest to the world. The "original version" — referred to as the "Vienna version" when first published by R. Haas in the Complete Edition of Bruckner's works — is the result of a revision, undertaken by the master himself, of a score that had been completed 25 years earlier. It would be completely wrong, though, to regard it as a work of the composer's later years, just because he was 66 when he did the revision. Even in this late version it has preserved in its entirety the carefree, youthful freshness which inspired the composer to write it in 1865—66 when he was cathedral organist in Linz. It can be looked on as authentic evidence of Bruckner's first appearance as a symphonic writer. (This is, of course, to omit the little Symphony in F minor, dating from 1863 when Bruckner was studying composition with Otto Kitzler, the Kapellmeister of Linz theatre. Bruckner himself called this work a "school exercise", thus implying that it should not be included among his proper *œuvre*.)

After the great success of his D minor Mass in Linz cathedral on 20 November 1864 Bruckner immediately turned his attention to the C minor Symphony and thereby took the first steps along the road to world-wide fame. Before even completing the first movement he wrote on 29 January 1865 to his Viennese friend R. Weinwurm, telling the latter that he would be pleased with the new work "if the other parts are no worse".

Separated as we are by this distance in time we see that the Symphony in C minor, which kept the composer busy until April 1866, represents a not easily definable turning-point in Bruckner's creative course. Whereas his "Kitzler period" compositions were strictly traditional in form, the D minor Mass and, above all, the C minor Symphony point in a new direction. For a long time it was considered that this could be accounted for by Bruckner's becoming acquainted with the works of Richard Wagner — "Tannhäuser", "Lohengrin" and "The Flying Dutchman" had been performed in Linz theatre — but even in the late works of his Linz period one searches in vain for characteristics that remind one of the music of these operas (quite apart from features of

"Tristan" which Bruckner heard in Munich in 1864). In the late works of his Vienna period, however, the tonal influence of the "Ring" is quite apparent. Bruckner's "awakening" points much rather to the orchestral works of Franz Liszt and Hector Berlioz with which he had become acquainted thanks to Ignaz Dorn who came to Linz theatre for a while after Kitzler's departure for Brünn. Even during his Linz period Bruckner was strongly impressed by Wagner's use of tone-colour and by the dramatic power of his music. But what Bruckner was looking for as a pure musician he found in the symphonic works of the other two composers mentioned. These provided him with the possibility of conquering entirely new realms of absolute music.

It was not thanks to, but rather in spite of, Wagner that Anton Bruckner completed his C minor Symphony, a work in which, as he put it, he "did not worry about anything" but just followed an inner urge to create an entirely new sort of tonal language. As regards underlying sentiment one cannot help noticing the deep cleft dividing Bruckner and Wagner. Bruckner certainly held Wagner's music in high esteem but showed little sympathy for the spiritual background to the latter's art which was entirely foreign to him. One is almost inclined to say that profound disagreement led, in this instance, to the highest degree of understanding. In his C minor Symphony Bruckner appears before the world as a Wagnerian in the broadest sense of the word, without being in any way an imitator of the Bayreuth master.

Even when the score had been completed, and the work performed, Bruckner never stopped making alterations. The première of the Symphony was given on 5 May 1868 in the Linz Redoutensaal. No sooner had the composer come to Vienna, though, than he pulled out the score again, started making revisions, and went on doing so until 1877. In 1884 the composer once more cast a stern critical eye on the work. When Hans Richter talked about performing the work in Vienna, Bruckner insisted that his "naughty little broom" — as he called the Symphony — would first have to be "cleaned up a bit". Between 1889 and 1891 a score based on the "original version" then appeared. The first printed edition (it appeared in 1893, during Bruckner's lifetime) diverges in some respects however from the "original version". Since the engraver's MS is no longer extant the authenticity of this first printed edition has recently been queried.