

THE ASCENT OF ANTON BRUCKNER

RECORDING: Bruckner Organ in St. Florian, Austria

You are now listening to the sound of the organ in the church of the monastery in Sankt Florian. In the musical ascent of Anton Bruckner, there are building-blocks that have led to his greatness as a composer and the organ is one of them.

Anton Bruckner was born in the year 1824. His father was a schoolteacher and, as it was in those days, he was also the town's musician. On Sundays and holidays, he played the organ in the village church. Bruckner's first contact with music began here and the organ became his favorite instrument. In his later life, he was considered one of the great organists of his days and his reputation led to trips to France and England where he gave organ concerts. It was, therefore, the organ which built a foundation in the musical development of Anton Bruckner as a composer and one can trace the sound of this king of instruments in some of Bruckner's symphonic compositions.

A second building-block in Bruckner's unfolding as a man of music was his religion and his love of god. He was brought up in a religious home and in a village of church-goers. When his father died, he became a resident choir-boy at the monastery of Sankt Florian. The years in this religious and devotional environment - his formative years - were decisive for Bruckner's spiritual attitudes. He was never a religious fanatic, this was not his nature, but he practiced religion in his daily life. When he later taught at the conservatory in Vienna, he sometimes interrupted his lectures to kneel down to say a prayer when the near-by church-bells rang to remind worshippers to come to pray.

No wonder then that Bruckner's first compositions were not secular, but church-music: Compositions for the organ, masses, religious songs and his first major work, a Requiem which he wrote when he was 24 years old. A friend of Bruckner, whose grand piano he always admired, passed away and left the instrument to Bruckner. To thank him for this gift, he wrote a Requiem in his honor. The grand piano remained with Bruckner all his life and the visitor to Sankt Florian still sees it to-day in the so-called Bruckner Room.

We like to play now part of the Requiem by Anton Bruckner, This composition showed for the first time the sparks of a genius.

RECORDING: REQUIEM BY ANTON BRUCKNER - AGNUS DEI / REQUIEM AETERNAM

Bruckner had a mania for written diplomas and whenever possible, he asked that these proofs of his knowledge and ability be given to him black on white. This peculiarity points to another building-stone in Bruckner's ascent: His unbelievable diligence, his passion to learn and his ambition to bring his musical knowledge to absolute perfection.

Bruckner never attended a formal school of music. His musical education began in the home of his parents, continued with a relative who was a musician and composer himself, then in the monastery of Sankt Florian where as a choirboy he received violin lessons, and he acquired a general musical knowledge in the preparatory school in Linz when he was to become a gradeschool-teacher. When he finally decided to devote himself entirely to music, he became the pupil of the most respected teacher in theory, harmony and contrapunt in Vienna, Simon Sechter. By the way, Franz Schubert, two weeks before his death in 1828, approached Simon Sechter to take lessons in contrapunt. Finally, it was a young conductor in the Theatre in Linz by the name of Otto Kitzler who introduced Bruckner to the 'New Music' and this was at that time Richard Wagner and his innovative instrumentation and orchestration.

When the opera 'Tannhaeuser' by Richard Wagner was to be performed in Linz, Kitzler went with Bruckner over the score. The performance was so impressive upon Bruckner that he decided to venture into more important works. It was not the drama that fascinated him, not what took place on the stage, it was the music that overwhelmed him. Whatever he knew in musical theory and what

his great teacher Simon Sechter had taught him, he now wanted to combine with what he heard in Wagner's 'Tannhaeuser': A new sound, a larger orchestra, modern harmony and orchestration. He now aspired to amalgamate his knowledge of musical theory with the new sound he experienced in Wagner's music. This was the beginning of Bruckner as a symphonist.

Bruckner wrote first a study-symphony, then a symphony later called Number 0. Finally his first major work: Symphony No. 1 in C Minor. Bruckner called it later the 'Rascal', because " he could not care less about musical rules and regulations ". The first performance took place in Linz under unfavorable circumstances. There were not enough musicians for the required large orchestra and needed brass had to be drawn from a near-by stationed military band. Anton Bruckner conducted himself before a sparse crowd on a Sunday afternoon. The reason was: The day before, the bridge over the river Danube, that flows through Linz, had collapsed and this was an exciting happening for the people of Linz. Few came to the concert, they all had to see that fallen bridge.

We will now hear the Scherzo from the first Symphony. It reflects an Austrian dance - the Landler - in which you trample with heavy shoes on the dance floor and make a lot of noise. Bruckner does it symphonically. We may call this movement ' The Joy of Life '.

RECORDING : SCHERZO FROM THE 1ST SYMPHONY

Another contribution to Bruckner's inspirations was made by the beautiful Austrian countryside. Bruckner knew the hills around Sankt Florian and Linz, the nearby forests, the lakes nestled within the high mountains of the Alps. He often hiked from village to village, following the paths of little brooks with trees and birds around him. He remembered these lovely landscapes and the sounds of nature in his music. An example is the Scherzo from his 4th Symphony. Bruckner sketches a hunting-day with fanfares of hunting-horns and other instruments echoing. Bruckner named the 4th Symphony the 'Romantic'.

RECORDING: SCHERZO FROM THE 4TH SYMPHONY

Bruckner's 1st Symphony was written in Linz, all the others from No. 2 to the unfinished 9th were composed in Vienna. When his former teacher Simon Sechter passed away, he was chosen to succeed him as teacher for music theory at the Conservatory in Vienna and also became the organist at the Imperial Court. For Bruckner who had come from farming-country and had lived in villages and the small, provincial city of Linz, Vienna, the capitol of the Austrian Empire, was an unaccustomed environment, a new intellectual surrounding and one would have thought, it would influence Bruckner. But, of course, Bruckner was now middle-aged and well set in his ways and he remained what he appeared to the outsider: A country pumpkin. He spoke with a heavy regional dialect. His lectures became a magnet for students because of his 'funny language'. He continued to wear over-sized pants and shapeless jackets and looked like an oddity from the hicks. He cut his hair close though the mode was long hair and a beard. He hardly read newspapers. His world remained the same as before: Music, nature and 'The Good Lord'. And when he formerly eternalized his 'Almighty' in Masses and church-hymns, he now honors his 'Father in Heaven' in symphonic form, above all in his Adagios, the slow movements of his symphonies. It is music that does not reflect life on this earth, but looks to another world. One could call it a dialogue with the Beyond. If you wish to forget your worldly problems, close your eyes and listen to the music of the spheres.

RECORDING : ADAGIO FROM THE 8TH SYMPHONY

We are at the end of our review called 'The Ascent of Anton Bruckner'. The building-blocks that led Bruckner to be one of the greatest composers ever, are all accounted for. If many music-lovers have not yet discovered the enormity of his creative genius, it does not diminish his importance.

When Bruckner died at the age of 72 in the year 1896 in Vienna, the church where the funeral service was held, was filled with mourners. Johannes Brahms, who died a few months later, attended and he was seen in tears. At Bruckner's request, his remains were buried in a crypt under the organ in the church of Sankt Florian. Where he began as a musician, he found his eternal resting place.

Above all, I would like to thank all those of the Music Department of the California State College in San Bernardino who were instrumental in programming a major work by Anton Bruckner which you will hear later. We appreciate greatly the effort of conductors Loren Filbeck, Keating Johnson and Thomas Miller and, of course the combined choirs. This performance will be recognized and registered by the International Bruckner Society in Vienna, Austria.

DIE BRUCKNER ORGEL ( BACH FANTASIA) (Full sound for 20-30 Seconds, then **BACKGROUND**)

THE ASCENT OF ANTON BRUCKNER is the title of this introduction to the man Bruckner and his music.

My interest in Bruckner and my affinity with him goes back many years. I was born and grew up in the city of Linz in Austria which is called the Bruckner City because this composer spent the greater part of his life in the vicinity of Linz. Nearly all places mentioned in his biography are known to me from my own youth. Among them is the monastery of Sankt Florian where Bruckner spent a number of years as a choir-boy.

You are now listening to the sound of the organ in the church of the monastery in Sankt Florian. In the musical ascent of Anton Bruckner there are building blocks that have led to his greatness as a composer and the organ is one of them.

(WAIT FOR THE LOUDER PART AND LET IT PLAY FOR A WHILE)  
THEN CONTINUE WITH BACK-GROUND

Anton Bruckner was born in the year 1824, 156 years ago. His father was a schoolteacher and, as it was in those days, he was also the town's musician. On Sundays and holidays, he had to play the organ in the village church. Bruckner's first contact with music began there and the organ became his favorite instrument. He was later considered one of the great organists of his days. He assumed the position as organist in the church of Sankt Florian, was then the cathedral-organist in near-by Linz and his reputation led to trips to France and England where he gave organ-concerts. It was, therefore, the organ which built a foundation in the musical development of Anton Bruckner as a composer and one could trace the sound of this kind of instruments in some of Bruckner's symphonic compositions.

A second building-block in Bruckner's unfolding as a man of music was his religion and his love of god. He was brought up in a religious home and in a village of church-goers and when his father died, he became a resident choir-boy at the monastery of Sankt Florian. The years in this religious and devotional environment, his formative years were decisive for Bruckner's thinking and spiritual attitudes. Bruckner never was a religious fanatic, this was not his nature, but he practiced religion in his daily life. He had written notations on the sequence of his prayers. When he later taught at the conservatory in Vienna, he sometimes interrupted his lectures to kneel down and to say a prayer when the near-by church-bells rang to remind worshippers to come to pray.

STOP THE ORGAN MUSIC

No wonder then, that Bruckner's first compositions were not secular, but church-music: Compositions for the organ, masses, religious songs and his first major work, a Requiem which he wrote when he was 24 years old. A friend of Bruckner in Sankt Florian, whose grand piano he always admired, passed away and left the instrument to Bruckner. To thank him for this gift, Bruckner wrote a Requiem in his honor. The grand piano remained with Bruckner all his life and the visitor to the Monastery of Sankt Florian still sees it to-day in the so-called Bruckner Room. (STOP THE ORGAN)

We like to play now part of the Requiem by Anton Bruckner. The composition showed for the first time the sparks of a genius. It is a recording with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Hans-Hubert Schoenzeler who is a great admirer of Bruckner and has also written a book about the composer available in English.

REQUIEM BY ANTON BRUCKNER - AGNUS DEI/ REQUIEM AETERNAM/CUM SANCTIS TUIS

① side 2

2. AGNUS DEI 3. REQUIEM AETERNAM

Anton Bruckner never attended a higher school of music and yet, he was appointed to teach musical theory at the Conservatory in Vienna and later was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Vienna. This unusual achievement points to another building-stone in Bruckner's ascent: His unbelievable diligence, his passion to learn and his ambition to bring his musical knowledge to absolute perfection. Bruckner had a mania for written diplomas and whenever it was possible, he asked that these proofs of his knowledge and ability be given to him black on white.

That Bruckner never attended a formal school of music, did not handicap him in his urge to study. Bruckner's musical education began in the home of his parents, continued with a relative who was a musician and composer himself, then in the monastery of Sankt Florian as choirboy where he received violin-lessons, and he acquired a general musical knowledge in the preparatory school in Linz when he was to become a grade-school-teacher. When he finally decided to devote himself entirely to music, he became the pupil of the most respected teacher in theory, harmony and contrapunt in Vienna, Simon Sechter. By the way, Franz Schubert, two weeks before his death in 1828, approached Simon Sechter to take lessons in contrapunt. Finally, it was a young conductor in the Theatre in Linz, by the name of Otto Kitzler, who introduced Bruckner to the 'New Music', and this was at that time Richard Wagner and his innovative instrumentation and orchestration.

The opera "Tannhaeuser" by Richard Wagner was scheduled to be performed and Kitzler went with Anton Bruckner over the score. When the performance took place, Bruckner was so impressed that he decided to venture into more important works. It was not the drama that fascinated him, not what took place on the stage, it was the music that overwhelmed him. Whatever he knew in musical theory and what his great teacher Simon Sechter had taught him, he now wanted to combine with what he heard in Wagner's 'Tannhaeuser', a new sound, a larger orchestra, modern harmony and instrumentation. He now aspired to amalgamate his knowledge of musical theory with the new sound he heard in Wagner's music. This was the beginning of Bruckner as a symphonist.

Bruckner wrote first a study-symphony, then a Symphony later called Number 0. Finally his first major work: Symphony No. 1 in C Minor. Bruckner called it later the 'rascal', because 'he could not care less about musical rules and regulations'. The first performance took place in Linz under unfavorable circumstances. There were not enough musicians for the required large orchestra and needed brass had to draw from a near-by stationed military band. Anton Bruckner conducted himself before a sparse audience on a Sunday afternoon. The reason was: The day before, the bridge over the river Danube that flows through Linz had collapsed and this was quite a happening for the people of Linz. Few came to the concert, they all had to see that bridge. By the way, on the stage of the concert-hall where this performance took place, I played myself in local theatre performances as a youngster.

We will hear now the Scherzo from the 1st Symphony. It reflects, in symphonic form, an Austrian dance - the Landler - in which you trample with heavy shoes on the dance floor and make a lot of noise at times. Bruckner does it symphonically. We may call this movement 'The Joy of Life'.

3) THE SCHERZO FROM THE 1st SYMPHONY - CLAUDIO ABBADO CONDUCTS THE VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

SIDE 2 SCHERZO 20

Another contribution to Bruckner's inspirations was made by the beautiful Austrian country side. Bruckner knew the hills around Sankt Florian and Linz, the nearby forests, the lakes nested within the high mountains of the Alps. He often hiked from village to village, following the path of little brooks with trees and birds around him. He remembered these lovely landscapes and the sound of nature in his music. An example is the Scherzo from his 4th Symphony. Bruckner sketches a hunting-day with fanfares of hunting horns and other instruments echoing. Bruckner named the 4th Symphony the 'Romantic'.

THE

4) WE WILL NOW HEAR PART OF SCHERZO FROM BRUCKNER'S 4 TH SYMPHONY, EUGENE ORMANDY CONDUCTS THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA.

(SCHERZO SIDE 2 , BAND 1 )

Bruckner's 1st Symphony was written in Linz, all the others from No. 2 to the unfinished 9th were composed in Vienna. When his former teacher Simon Sechter passed away, he was offered the position to succeed him as teacher for Music Theory at the Conservatory and he also became the organist at the Imperial Court. For Bruckner, who came from ~~faraway-country~~ <sup>in villages and</sup> the provinces and had lived in the comparatively small city of Linz, Vienna, the capitol of the Austrian Empire, was an unaccustomed environment, a new intellectual surrounding and one should have thought, it would influence Bruckner. But of course, Bruckner was now <sup>to the outsider</sup> middle-aged and well-set in his ways and he remained what he appeared to be: A country-pumpkin. He spoke with a heavy provincial dialect and his lectures became a magnet for students because of his 'funny language'. He continued to wear over-sized pants and shapeless jackets and looked like an oddity from the hicks. He cut his hair close though the mode was long hair and a beard. He hardly read newspapers. His world remained the same as before: Music, Nature and 'The Good Lord'. And when he formerly eternalized the Almighty in Masses and church-hymns, he now honors his father in Heaven in symphonic form, above all in his Adagios, the slow movements of his symphonies. It is music that does not reflect life on this earth, but looks to another world (Start recording)

~~START RECORDING: ADAGIO FROM THE 8th SYMPHONY - LET IT PLAY FOR A WHILE~~  
~~THEN: LOWER VOLUME TO BACK-GROUND MUSIC~~

You are listening to the Adagio from the 8th Symphony by Anton Bruckner performed by the Vienna Philharmonic under Georg Solti. It is a masterpiece ranking with the best of Beethoven and Brahms. It shows Bruckner in all his greatness. One could call it a dialogue with the Beyond, And if there is a heaven, Bruckner has described it gloriously. I would like to give you a bit of advice: If you wish to forget all worldly problems, close your eyes and listen to the music of the spheres.

(LET THE RECORDING PLAY FOR A FEW MINUTES FULL STRENGTH)

THEN: (LOWER VOLUME TO BACKGROUND MUSIC).

We are at the end of our review called 'The Ascent of Anton Bruckner'. The building-blocks that led Bruckner to be one of the greatest composers ever, are all accounted for. If many music-lovers have not yet discovered the enormity of his creative genius, it does not diminish his importance.

When Bruckner died at the age of 72 in the year 1896 in Vienna, the church, where the funeral service was held, was filled with mourners. Johannes Brahms, who died a few months later, attended and he was seen in tears. At Bruckner's request, his remains were buried in a crypt under the organ in the church of Sankt Florian. Where he began as a musician, he found his eternal resting place.

LET THE RECORD COME TO A LOW VOLUME POINT - THEN STOP IT.

We hope that this hour of meeting with Anton Bruckner and his music will help you to find more enjoyment and satisfaction when you hear some of Anton Bruckner's compositions in the future.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.