

ANTON BRUCKNER, whose Seventh Symphony was played last night in Carnegie Hall by the Philharmonic under Artur Rodzinski, became a cause in his own lifetime and has remained one ever since. The public has never either accepted or rejected him. Musicians have always loved or hated his music; they have never quite classified it. And yet its virtues and its weaknesses are admitted by all.

A high songfulness in the melody of it is one of its charms. A great suavity of harmonic figuration (one can scarcely call it counterpoint) is another. Real seriousness of thought and a certain purity of spirit it undoubtedly has. There is nothing vulgar, cheap, or meretricious about it. And it sounds extremely well; it is graciously written.

On the other hand, the eight symphonies, which constitute the major body of Bruckner's work, are none of them well integrated formally; they barely hang together. And their unvarying pattern of four-measure phrases brings them, like Cesar Franck's two-measure monotony, dangerously close to a doggerel meter. Also, the melodic material, for all its grace, is derivative. Schubert, Brahms, and Wagner are never wholly absent from the memory as one listens. The music is intended, I think, to feel like Brahms and to sound like Wagner; and unfortunately it more often than not does just that.

It does another thing, however, which is probably not intentional but which gives it what personal flavor it has. It evokes, by orchestral means, organ registration. Bruckner uses his brasses exactly as an organist uses the reed stops; and he uses the woodwind more often than not as a choir organ, or *positif*. His masterful cleanliness in the antiphonal deployment of the different kinds of sound is the work of a great organ player, which he was. The looseness of his formal structures is due, no doubt, to the same professional formation, as is certainly his unvarying use of the apocalyptic climax to finish off his longer works.

There is a pious theatricality about all Bruckner's symphonies that, combined with his constant reverence toward his masters, makes them most attractive. They represent esthetically a philosophy of quietism, musically the ultimate of humility. They rest one; they are perfect to daydream to. Of real originality they have, I think, very little.

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