

Anton Bruckner

**SYMPHONY NO. 7
IN E MAJOR**

Performed by

Eugene Ormandy

and the

Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra



MUSICAL MASTERPIECE SERIES

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Anton Bruckner

(1824-1896)

BECAUSE he came of a line of schoolmasters it seemed inevitable that Anton Bruckner should follow in the footsteps of his forbears. But Nature had endowed the lad with unusual musical gifts, so that when he began preparing himself for the work of teaching, his musical talent elbowed its way to the foreground with an urgency too strong to be ignored. At the age of twelve he attended the Jesuit Abbey of St. Florian, and no doubt much of the loftiness and magnitude of his compositions were the result of his life there.

At the age of twenty-five Bruckner was appointed organist of the Cathedral at Linz. Here he became friendly with Kitzler, conductor of the opera, whose extensive experience was of great benefit to him. Kitzler introduced Bruckner to the music of Wagner — a shrine at which the composer never ceased to worship.

During the years his fame grew slowly but steadily. In 1867 he was made professor of organ, counterpoint, and composition at the Vienna Conservatory. Later he was appointed lecturer on music theory at the Vienna University. A group of his admirers helped establish him further, in the face of the opposing Brahms faction, who particularly disliked him because they regarded him not only as an adherent of Wagner, but also accused him of attempting to apply Wagner's theories to symphonic art.

While it is true that in many instances a resemblance to Wagner is evident, it has been proved that both men oftentimes had the same musical idea, Bruckner in some cases having had it first. Be that as it may, the grandeur of Bruckner's music is undeniable. It is different. And that is perhaps the reason why it has been long in moving from the realm of infrequent performance to the place on orchestral programs it so richly deserves.

Bruckner's music is not identified by the characteristics that mark symphonic works of the 19th century. While not lacking in lyrical and dramatic touches, it is essentially epic. Two distinguishing features are outstanding, an expression of rustic naïveté, the result of atavism; and a religious ecstasy which had its origin in the cathedral organ, the mass, and other contributing influences of his environment at St. Florian.

His symphonies are not the sensuous, amorous expressions of a highly nervous nature; they are not vehemently revolutionary like Beethoven; nor are they flavored with the sweetness of Schubert. They are more like the outpourings of some forthright medieval believer, disturbed now and then by the torment of doubt and despair.

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The E MAJOR SYMPHONY was composed between 1881 and 1883. It was published in 1885 and was dedicated to Ludwig of Bavaria, the friend and patron of Wagner. Artur Nikisch gave it its first performance in 1884 in

Leipzig, and its first American performance occurred in Chicago in 1886. The work is scored for the following instruments: two flutes, two oboes, three clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, four tubas, contrabass tuba, three kettledrums, triangle, cymbals and strings.

RCA Victor is proud to present this beautiful album set played by Eugene Ormandy and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, the first complete Bruckner symphony thus available, for the recording of which Charles O'Connell, musician and author in charge of recording at RCA Victor, was awarded a gold medal by the American Bruckner Society.

FIRST MOVEMENT

(*Allegro moderato*, E MAJOR, 2-2 TIME)

It is characteristic of Bruckner that he does not employ an introduction in this symphony, but states the first theme immediately, if not in its entirety, at least in part, building to its completion as the music progresses. The principal theme of the first movement of the E MAJOR SYMPHONY is given out by the 'cellos, reinforced successively by horns, violas, and clarinet against a tremolo accompaniment of the violins. The theme is then stated in fuller orchestration, reaching a climax and fading away to give place to its successor. This subject is announced by oboe and clarinet over a soft accompaniment of horns and trumpets (not quite halfway through Record One). Strings and certain woodwinds develop this material, and then the violins present an inversion of the second subject (near the end of Record One) over an organ point on F Sharp in the basses. A long *crescendo* terminates in the statement of an episode by the woodwinds (beginning of Record Two), which strings accompany in a figure of the same rhythmic pattern that is generously utilized as the music advances. A burst of brass precedes a quieter mood in the strings (about one and one-half inches from the beginning of Record Two), which leads to the Development section. Here themes are adroitly inverted, rhythms give interesting variety, and in the Recapitulation (which begins near the middle of Record Three), the music builds to a powerful climax through a tremendous *crescendo* and brings the movement to a close.

SECOND MOVEMENT

(*Adagio, sehr feierlich und langsam*, C SHARP MINOR, 4-4 TIME)

The slow movements of Bruckner's symphonies are filled to the brim with deep religious feeling. They are in reality hymns on a grand scale, and are not so much music of the world, as of the world beyond.

In the *Adagio* of the E MAJOR SYMPHONY, the principal theme is presented at the very beginning of the movement (Record Five) with majestic solemnity by tubas and violas, with an answering phrase assigned to strings alone. A new section—Moderato F Sharp Major, 3-4 time—heard near the beginning of Record Six, follows the development of the first subject. Violins accompanied by other strings state a melody of unusual warmth and beauty that is richly developed throughout the duration of the sixth record surface. Record Seven brings a return of the opening theme of the movement with oboes, clarinets, and horns prominent in the statement of material derived

from the main theme. About one inch from the end of Record Eight the lovely melody of the moderato section returns, this time in A Flat. It is followed by a repetition of the first theme (about one inch from the beginning of Record Nine) presented by tubas, second violins, and violas, against which first violins play a sextolet figure. As the music progresses, it builds to an inspiring climax and leads to a passage for brasses (Record Ten) from which horns emerge near the end of the record surface and close the movement with a phrase reminiscent of the opening subject.

THIRD MOVEMENT

(*Scherzo*, A MINOR, 3-4 TIME)

In direct contrast to the religious fervor of the *Adagio*, the *Scherzo* is imbued with the gaiety and light-hearted melody of a merry peasant dance. Strings softly set the pulse with a rhythmic figure over which the trumpet proclaims the first portion of the main theme. The second section is brought forward *forte* by the full orchestra through which the opening trumpet theme is heard at intervals. Development of this material ensues and leads to the *Trio* (end of Record Eleven). Here the tempo slackens and the strident jubilation of the opening measures is replaced by a gentler melody announced by the strings. This theme, one of the loveliest of the entire symphony, furnishes the material upon which the *Trio* is constructed. Not quite half-way through Record Twelve the rhythmic violin figure ushers in a return of the first portion of the *Scherzo*, which ends the movement.

FOURTH MOVEMENT

(*Bewegt doch nicht schnell*, E MAJOR, 2-2 TIME)

The first subject of the *Finale* is not unlike the theme with which the first movement opened. It is presented by the first violins and after considerable working over, leads to the second subject, heard about three-quarters of an inch from the beginning of Record Thirteen. Strings state this hymnlike melody with 'cellos and double-basses accompanying *pizzicato* to which occasional interjections of brasses and woodwinds add color. An outburst, *fortissimo*, for the entire orchestra (about two-thirds through the thirteenth record surface) marks the beginning of the Development section, which brings forward previously heard themes in varied forms. After a *fortissimo* for all the instruments (near the end of Record Fourteen) there is a general pause which is followed by the Recapitulation introduced not as one would suppose by the restatement of the first theme but by the second, the hymnlike subject. Material from the opening subject is then worked over, and finally the actual theme itself is heard. As originally presented it re-enters with the strings which later give place to various wind instruments in maintaining the prominence of the principal subject which persists until the close of the movement.