



*Anton Bruckner*

*Original: Wien, Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*

General opinion regards Bruckner's Eighth symphony as one of the master's greatest works — not only in its proportions but also for its artistic value. Beyond doubt it marks the summit of Bruckner's creative mastery and craftsmanship. His Eighth ranks second to none of Bruckner's symphonies as regards wealth of inspiration, grandeur of architecture, fervour of expression and powerful climaxes. A certain dramatic element is unmistakable in this work which may well be termed Bruckner's "Tragic Symphony". The gloomy resignation in the first movement; the demoniac and fantastic mood of the Scherzo; the solemn grandeur of the Adagio; the powerful, belligerent mood of the Finale, with its gigantic struggle and triumphant victory; and, interspersed between such varying moods the many moments of beautifully lyric and melodic inspiration — viewing this symphony in its totality one is inclined to share the opinion of those who consider Bruckner's Eighth the equal of the greatest symphonies of all ages. It is only in the three movements of his Ninth that Bruckner's has surpassed this supreme artistic achievement.

Bruckner began work upon his Eighth symphony as far back as summer 1884. The draft of the first movement was completed on October 1st of that year, and that of the Adagio on February 16th, 1885. The remaining movements were written during the same year: the Scherzo was completed on July 23rd, the (first) Trio (which Bruckner replaced by a new one in 1889) on August 25th; the great final movement was written between July 9th and August 16th, and the last page of the draft of this movement bears the inscription: "Steyr, Municipal Parsonage, August 16th, 1885. A Bruckner. Halleluiah!" — During the years of 1886/87 and 1889/90, and again in 1891, the symphony was thoroughly revised and rearranged. Therefore the MS embodied in the National Library at Vienna and inscribed by Bruckner as "revised original" does not constitute the ultimate reading of this symphony.

The first performance of Bruckner's Eighth took place on De-

ember 18th, 1892, at a Philharmonic concert at the Großer Musikvereins Saal, Vienna, under Hans Richter's baton. The production was marvellous and was received with the greatest enthusiasm. Endless applause compelled Bruckner again and again to appear and acknowledge the ovations of the audience. The criticisms, also — aside from a few uncompromising adversaries — were unanimous in their praise of the work.

Regarding the notation of the Tubas, Bruckner's MS adopts two different modes: they are written in the normal way or one octave higher. The frequent notes "8 va bassa" refer to the latter mode. Where the first-named method is adopted, the Tenor Tubas, e. g., should be read in the same manner as the B flat Clarinets, viz. a major second lower. Where Bruckner chose the last-named mode of notation, the Tenor Tuba should be read like the B flat Bass clarinet, viz. a major ninth lower. These instructions apply, with the necessary modifications, to the Bass Tuba in F. — In one place of the Finale — bar 8 following letter C — Bruckner has employed both methods of notation. At the second half of that bar the MS of the Vienna National Library bears the word "loco" in the first B flat Tuba — which neutralizes the preceding "8 va bassa". In the original printed edition this fact was overlooked; the undersigned arranger has reinstated it in the present edition.

Bruckner's Eighth symphony was dedicated to Emperor Francis Joseph I. who also defrayed the cost of its first publication.

Vienna, July 1927.

Josef V. Wöss.