

A glimpse into Takashi Asahina's Bruckner "The Birth of Performance."

2025/06/05

I received some valuable information about Takashi Asahina from Mr. D, the organizer of the BRUNO WALTER HOMEPAGE...

As Asahina fans already know, this is about Bruckner's Symphony No. 8, which was an important part of his repertoire, and includes recordings of it.

First, please take a look at this.



BRUCKNER SYMPHONY VIII

名古屋大学交響楽団 第30回記念定期演奏会
指揮 朝比奈 隆

'76.1.20(Tue.) 6:30 P.M. 名古屋市民会館大ホール

後援：名古屋市 愛知県教育委員会

名古屋市教育委員会 (FM) FM愛知

演奏曲目

アントン ブルックナー

交響曲第八番 八短調(ハース版)

第1楽章

Allegro moderato

第2楽章 SCHERZO

Scherzo……Allegro moderato

Trio…… Langsam

Scherzo……Allegro moderato

第3楽章 ADAGIO

Feierlich langsam; doch nicht schleppend

FINALE

Feierlich, nicht sehr schnell

指揮 朝比奈 隆

作曲過程および出版

- 第 1 稿 1884年9月4日着手
1887年8月9日完成
- 第 2 稿 第1稿を改訂90年3月10日完成
1892年 「改訂版」出版……第2稿を更に変更・削除したもの
1935年 「ハース版」出版……第2稿を基に第1稿からの数箇所
を復元したローベルト ハース校訂による原典版
1955年 「ノヴァーク版」出版……第2稿に基づくレオボルト
ノヴァーク校訂による原典版

※今夕の演奏は無削除の「ハース版」による。

January 20, 1976. The Nagoya University Symphony Orchestra held its 30th regular concert.

The program consists of one piece: Bruckner's Symphony No. 8.
The conductor is Takashi Asahina.

That was the day, in his younger days, when Nekopapa first heard Mr. Asahina perform live. Of course, it was also his first time hearing a Bruckner symphony performed live.

On record, I first heard Symphony No. 7 conducted by Lovro von Matačić with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra on a Nippon Columbia LP. That was Nekopapa's "awakening" to Bruckner, but I first heard the complete Symphony No. 8 on a TV broadcast in 1975, conducted by the same Matačić with the NHK Symphony Orchestra. It was broadcast on the morning of January 15th of that year, Coming-of-Age Day.

This Nagoya University performance took place five days later. I had some prior knowledge that "Takashi Asahina's Bruckner" was supposed to be good, but I was still somewhat skeptical. The program's statement that it was "based on the unedited 'Haas edition'" didn't really resonate with me either.

My impression of that day's performance...of course, I don't remember the details.

All I remember is that it was slow, the sound was consistently thick, there were few changes in volume, and the second movement was outstanding. But there's no doubt that I had the feeling that I had heard something truly extraordinary.

Little did Nekopapa at the time imagine that this would lead to a 50-year-long interest in and affection for Bruckner, even after Asahina's death...

The performance was recorded for archival purposes. It was then independently produced as an LP by the orchestra members at the time and made available to those involved. The discography included in the later published mook " **Takashi Asahina: A Glorious Journey** " (1997, Ongaku no Tomo Sha) contains the following description:

ブルックナー：交響曲第8番ハ短調（ハース版）

名古屋大学交響楽団

録音：1976年1月20日 名古屋市民会館大ホール(L)

タイミング I 15:00 II 16:56 III 26:20 IV 23:09

原盤：名古屋大学交響楽団

名古屋大学交響楽団第30回定期演奏会ライヴ。この曲の名古屋初演と記されている。

Anton Bruckner

SINFONIE

NR. VIII

レコード

This became available to listen to in August 2010 when it was uploaded to ABRUCKNER.COM, a fan site run by John F. Berky in the United States. Judging from the rotation noise and scratching sounds, it is likely based on the original self-produced LP from that time.

It's now also uploaded to YouTube, but after comparing it, it seems to be the same audio source as ABRUCKNER.COM. If you're interested, please give it a listen.

You can hear the surprising underlying strength of university orchestras from 1976.

This performance was important in two ways.

One reason is that this is currently the oldest recording of the Eighth Symphony left behind by Mr. Asahina.

Another point is that this is the first recorded performance using the "Haas edition." However, the discography's statement that this was the "Nagoya premiere" of the piece seems to be incorrect.

I won't delve into the specific "edition" issues unique to Bruckner, but I should point out that the Leopold Nowak edition was the standard at the time, and that the Haas edition, published before Nowak, restored some of the original draft that Bruckner had cut,

based on the editor's own judgment. In short, the performance at that time used a score with more notes and measures than the one commonly used.

It's worth noting that the use of the Haas edition came about because a student from Nagoya University suggested it to Asahina, and from that point until his last performance, Asahina remained committed to using the Haas edition. While the trend in concert halls was shifting towards the newly published Nowak edition, he became known as one of the few "Haas edition devotees," alongside Günter Wand. If this concert was the catalyst for that, then it can be said that it was a source of pride for Asahina fans in Nagoya.

Now, let's get to the main point.

Looking at the discography, there are no officially recorded recordings of the 8th Symphony by Asahina older than this one. Therefore, until this point, there was no way of knowing which sheet music he had been using to play this piece.

Nekopapa had no choice but to believe the conventional "established theory."

Then, a new audio recording, recently acquired by Mr. D, came into play.

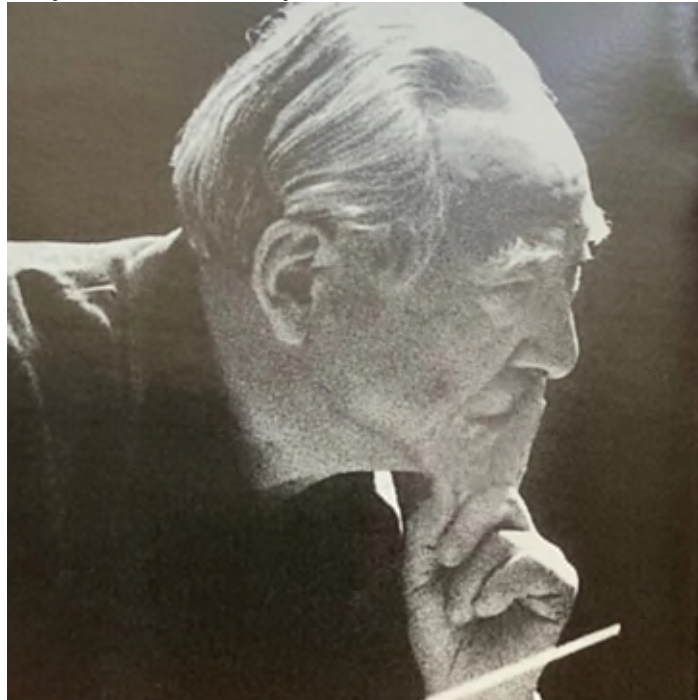
This is an open-reel tape that Asahina himself sent to the Nagoya University Symphony Orchestra, telling them to "use it as a reference" when he accepted the conducting role.

The tape itself apparently didn't have any data printed on it, but it contained a live recording of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8, conducted by the Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra.

This recording is completely unreleased and has never been listed in their discography, likely a copy tape held by the Osaka Philharmonic's office or by Asahina himself. Assuming the performance data is the most recent available at the time, it is highly probable that it was recorded on July 22, 1974 at the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, or on July 29 at the Osaka Festival Hall.

According to the performance records in the aforementioned mook, Takashi Asahina first performed Bruckner's Symphony No. 8 on September 16, 1971, at the Osaka Philharmonic's 94th regular

concert, followed by two more performances in 1974, making Nagoya University the fourth performance.



The equipment used to play the valuable tapes belonged to Sige, who is also a classmate of D's.

Mr. D transported the deck to his home and digitally converted the sound without making any changes to it.

Thus, Nekopapa was also able to listen to that precious audio data.

How was the performance?

In a word, it was nothing short of "astonishing."

First, let's look at the performance time of each movement.

Starting with the first movement,

14:35 16:11 24:20 22:20

Meanwhile, the 1976 Nagoya University chess set was

15:06 16:54 26:14 23:01

Furthermore, the first session recording for the Jiang Jiang album (which was not released at the time), which took place on April 5 of the same year, was their first commercial recording.

15:56 16:38 26:30 24:01

That's how it is.



While tempo cannot be judged solely by performance time, it sounds like a "furiously fast performance."

It's not just fast, but the performance is so intense and powerful that it seems like they're not even listening to the music.

The 1976 Nagoya University performance seems to have already perfected Asahina's later, more leisurely style, but this is the complete opposite. Did Asahina and the Osaka Philharmonic really play with such ferocity and drive before their Nagoya University performance...?

What about the crucial differences in the sheet music?

During my first listening, I was so surprised by the passionate performance and the sheer speed of it that I couldn't even focus on the score. But even so, I was utterly astonished by the ending of the fourth movement's coda, which featured a tremolo on the timpani that wasn't in the score!

In other parts, there were sections that made me think, "Wait, isn't this the Haas version?"

Towards the end of the theme presentation in the finale, the flute, strings, and violin solo play a longer passage (reportedly 16 measures long) that is not present in the Nowak edition. This is the most obvious change, but it is clearly the same as in the Haas edition.

There is one more clear difference between the "Haas version" and the "Novak version."

In the latter half of the third movement, there is a striking passage where the string instruments play a poignant, pleading phrase for 10 measures.

I had missed it during my first listening, so I listened to that part again carefully. To my surprise, I discovered that those 10 measures had been cut.

Hmm. Could this possibly be a hybrid of the Haas and Novak versions? Is that even possible?

After rummaging through my bookshelves and browsing through various books related to Asahina, I was able to find a passage that seemed relevant. It was in " **Takashi Asahina: The World of Symphony** " (1991, Waseda Publishing), a book based on a conversation with Takeshi Kaneko.

The relevant section is quoted below.

演奏をやると、必ず聴きに来てくれましたね。いろいろとアドヴァイスしてくれました。あの頃の、日本に来ていたプリングスハイム、シロテイ、メツテルといった西洋の大家というのは、我々、西洋音楽をやっている日本人に、伝統を伝えておきたいという気持ち——使命感みたいなものがあったんじゃないでしょうか。ありがたかったですね。あれも、原典版に目覚める、大きな切っ掛けになりました。

〔Ⅲ—3は、ノヴァーク版の3種類の〈3番〉の中ではいちばん早く、1958年に刊行されている。従って、この話は、もちろん戦後、しかもフルトヴェングラーとの出逢いより後のことになる。ハースの失脚で旧全集版は〈3番〉だけが未出版だったが、ハースの意向を継いだエーザーの監修により、第2稿の初版として50年に、ようやく出版された。それ以前は、ノヴァーク版Ⅲ—3と同じ第3稿による改訂版が唯一のスコアだった。朝比奈は、後にエーザー版に転向する〕

——〈8番〉は、いつ頃からハース版でやられるようになったのですか。

朝比奈 あれは、ずっと前に名古屋大学のオーケストラに頼まれた時ですね。向こうからハース版でやってくれと言ってきたのですが、学生諸君が「僕達は、一生に一度しか、この曲を演奏できないと思うので、楽譜に書かれている音を全部やりたいのです」と言うんですよ。

つまり、第3楽章で10小節カット（209〜218小節）するやり方があるでしょう。

フルトヴェングラーがハース版でやっているのに、ここだけカットしてますね。あれはライブな

ところも、ちよこちよこと上手く抜き取って繋ぎ合わせてあるから、帳尻は合っているんだけど、『いいとこ取り』みたいなことをしているんですね。

随分、いい加減な人いますよ。クレンペラーだったかな、凄くカットしてあってレコードのジャケットを見たら「自分は、大幅にカットしたけれど、決して人には、お薦めできない」って書いてある。面倒くさくなったんだな、あれは（笑）。

——マーラー版の「ロマンティック」も凄いカットがあるのですが、クレンペラーも作曲家でしたからね。

あの時代の作曲家というのは、ただ単純に同じことを繰り返すのを嫌いますから、そうした形式観が反映しているのかも知れませんね。

それから、先程の「7番」の第1楽章のコードと似たようなケースなのですが、ノヴァーク版のフィナーレのテンポ指示で、どうしても疑問なところがあるのです。いかにもブルックナーが森を歩いているような第3主題がそれです。

ハース版だと呈示部の135小節以下、その再現部の617小節⑦a（練習番号P）も、テンポ指示は何も書いてありません。ところが、ノヴァーク版は呈示部は同じように無指示なのに、再現部の583小節⑦b（Pp）だけ「とても、より遅目に」となっている。つまり、呈示部と再現部で、同一部分のテンポが大幅に違うのです（310頁の表）。

朝比奈「8番」のノヴァーク版は最近見てないのでスコアを、ちよつと。

Here, Asahina explicitly states that he performed the entire "Haas version" for the first time at the request of students from Nagoya University.

However, when it comes to what he was doing before that, he's not very clear.

Furtwängler, while using the Haas edition, cut 10 measures from the third movement. He said that most conductors cut this section. But if that's the case, then saying "because Furtwängler did it" isn't a valid excuse... and so on.

This could also be interpreted as Asahina himself cutting out parts from his performance, although he has no excuse for it.

Is this what happened? Asahina had been using the "Haas edition" of the score even before his performance at Nagoya University. However, he interpreted the third movement as a "conventional practice" and cut 10 measures from it. So what about the timpani in the coda?

This might need to be compared to Furtwängler. Nekopapa, I'm not really a fan of that one though...

Did I even own a CD or anything like that in the first place?

In any case, this is undoubtedly an invaluable record for understanding how Asahina's interpretation of Bruckner "came into being" and how it "evolved." It's all thanks to Mr. D's efforts, and I can only express my gratitude.

The only regret is that the performance data is unknown. For now, it's reasonable to assume it's a 1974 performance, but when you hear the extremely rough playing style, you can't help but wonder if it might be a performance from September 16, 1971, their first attempt at playing this song.

What is the truth?

Unfortunately, since these are private recordings, I cannot share the actual audio here. However, I hope that some record company will make the effort to release them officially in the near future.