

# Ground Rules for the Successful Completion of a Great Work

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In the first part of this paper I shall attempt to establish the goals that a student of a great but unfinished work by a great composer should have in order to create something that will turn out to possess a defensible resemblance to what the composer would have achieved in completing the work. These rules should be considered to be applicable in cases where it is agreed that enough material has been left by the composer to give a good idea of the style and content of the projected movement or movements, and that the material in existence is of a comparable quality to the rest of the composer's work. Discussion of those issues can be made preliminarily to the beginning of the work of completion, but insights will come during that work which can have an effect on any judgments, either to increase or decrease confidence in the surviving material. In many cases, individual decisions will need to be made, and of course it is inevitable that the result cannot be regarded as the work of the composer alone, or to be what that composer should have written in an ideal world where composers live forever.

The first of the three goals I have in mind is this, that in order to satisfy the manifest and appropriate curiosity of experts and enthusiasts, whatever the confidence one may have in it, all the surviving material should be presented as the composer left it, each passage in its latest form or version, fully entered with no conjectural deletions, at the tessitura in which it was written by the composer, in the sequence in which the passages were to be used if that can be determined, and with appropriate spacing between the surviving fragments which can be deduced as best one can from the evidence at hand. All of these conditions must be strictly met if one is to say that the result will be either an integral realization or a potential completion, not a fantasy on the themes which the composer left. Of course there is room for such a fantasy in the large arena of concert music, but that is not what I am discussing here.

By "all of the material" one does not expect that competing versions of the same passage should be presented side by side; decisions will have to be made as to which is the latest version of each part of the movement or movements, and that and that only is what should be used, in its complete form. Still it is possible that earlier versions of certain passages will contain more composed accompanimental detail than later versions, and a judgment can always be made as to whether to include that earlier detail in the later version if it can be accommodated. Conversely all of the music on each selected latest-version sketch should be included unless it is clearly and boldly deleted by the composer in ink. It should hardly be needed to say that the music should be used at the pitch at which it was written, as that pitch as a very important clue as to its proper instrumentation, and as to what the music should be that surrounds it, but it does apparently need to be said. The sequence of the passages can be easily determined if the composer numbered them in one or another way, as Bruckner did in the finale of his Ninth Symphony, or if the texture of the surviving material is more or less continuous, as in the case of Mahler's Tenth

Symphony. With Elgar's Third Symphony, by and large such sequencing indications are not present, which makes the completer's task much more difficult and the result more problematical. In the Bruckner Ninth, for technical reasons most of the gaps can be taken to be of even multiples of sixteen measures, as Bruckner was working on prepared orchestra paper where each four-page bifolio was labeled and pre-ruled with four measures on each page. Thus any gap can be considered as due to one or more of these 16-measure bifolios being missing.

A difficulty in numbering stems from the constant revision and occasional extension of early bifolios carried out while the later bifolios were being filled. Upon making extensions Bruckner would then find it necessary to re-copy and re-number the later bifolios, creating a certain amount of ambiguity which possibly can be resolved through study of the paper. On the three bifolios last in sequence, which are commonly accepted as numbers 29, 30, and 32 but probably should be three numbers higher, the upper right corners are so heavily overwritten with different numbers in different inks that the correct designation cannot be reliably recovered from them. But other considerations place these bifolios where all completers use them and must deal with the many problems they present.

With decisions being made following these procedures, the result will be a somewhat artificially-constructed grid of surviving sketches fixed in their correct order, unduplicated, in their latest form, with no deletions, at their original pitches, and with gaps of the correct length among them. But would the composer have felt restricted to this situation and these rules? Certainly not. He or she could do whatever he or she wished at any time. But that is not an option for the completer, who in order to be faithful to the presentation of the surviving fragments must look at the problem as one would a crossword puzzle, not daring to change the definitions just to be able to include a favorite word or two. The artificial character of the grid, which will inevitably include adjacent passages composed at different times, means that the result can never be what the composer would have done. But if the sketches are good enough, and if there is enough interest, the completer will go ahead.

The second goal should be to complete the work both horizontally by filling in the gaps, and vertically by making the texture more complex, in order to achieve a continuous texture of sound consistent with the composer's methods. This process of course needs to be done with discretion, but a certain degree of condign boldness is also required to obtain a sound which will make the sketched material from the composer sound authentic. Inspection of the sketches for Bruckner's Eighth Symphony shows unpromising beginnings leading to magnificent results, as can be seen in the examples published in Dermot Gault's important work *The New Bruckner*. The completer does not have the freedom that the composer had, but still the attempt needs to be made.

When the work is incomplete because of the composer's retirement or death, as in the cases of the Schubert Tenth Symphony in D major, the Bruckner Ninth, the Mahler Tenth, the Elgar Third, and the Sibelius Eighth, and even Mozart's Requiem and Bach's *Art of Fugue*, one can be

certain that the composer in finishing the work would have used quite a bit of innovation, going beyond the surviving material in ways difficult to predict. Whereas in considering Schubert's unfinished piano sonatas and his Seventh and Eighth symphonies, one sees many complete works of more or less the same genre occurring both before and after the incomplete work, which makes completing the piece somewhat more secure. With Bruckner, familiarity with the other major works he produced while he was working on the Ninth, namely Psalm 150 and *Helgoland*, reveals quite a few very new and fruitful ideas; certainly the Ninth would have developed Bruckner's gestural repertory even farther. Indeed, each movement of the Ninth shows innovative development. The first movement is the grandest Kopfsatz of them all, yet the mysterious and ominous opening subject is heard only once in the rest of the movement, in an enigmatic and difficult-to-hear canon at the beginning of the development. Surely, one would think, some more use could be made of this gripping music; perhaps that is the job of the completer of the finale. The compact yet complex Scherzo returns in length scale to the relatively short scherzo of the Seventh, yet it has harmonies, or the lack of them, that go far beyond those of the much larger scherzo of the Eighth. And there is that new fast trio in F sharp major, which amazingly uses a considerable amount of the sketch of an earlier slow trio in the same key with a viola solo. As for the adagio in E major and A flat major, what is one to make of a fifth part which begins with the second instead of the first theme? Five-part song form, which Bruckner had inherited from Beethoven and adapted for use in the quintet and six other symphonies, does not call for that, yet there it is, and the later brief but cataclysmic return of the first theme leads to a chord which contains nearly every note of the chromatic scale. If the finale is to go beyond those gestures, and in certain ways it most certainly must, any suggestion of innovation that Bruckner gives in the surviving fragments, whether apparent or buried, needs to be detected, recognized, conserved and developed with diligence.

The third goal should be to apply any other criterion, whether musical or social, which appears to bear on the nature of the completion, with imagination but also with enough caution so as not to disturb the results of adherence to the first two goals. In the case of the Bruckner Ninth, which is after all why we are here, we can say with considerable security that the ending should be brilliantly positive and triumphant. There are three lines of reasoning that lead to that conclusion. First, there is the undisputable fact that all of Bruckner's other minor-mode symphonies have abruptly major-mode endings which go very far beyond the formulary Picardy third of the baroque. These are the Study Symphony in F minor, the First, the *Nullte* in D minor, and the Second, Third, and Eighth. It can even be said to include the Fourth where the finale in all four versions centered in E flat minor, yet ends in a mode which most people recognize as the major. Even the first movement of the Eighth at first ended in C major; the quiet 1890 ending in C minor is of course an anomaly in Bruckner's writing and can hardly be used as a prototype without substantial justification.

Another line of argument comes from Bruckner's doctor Richard Heller, who related after Bruckner's death that the composer had told him that the finale was to conclude with a hymn to

the most high God, with the Alleluia of the second theme (*Satz*) at the climax. Although certain interpretations have been based on the understanding that *Satz* here means “movement”, indeed that word has many meanings in German and can refer to something as small as a short passage to be inserted, as Bruckner used it in the revision process of the Second Symphony. But it most definitely can also mean “theme”, and here it seems to refer to the gentle dotted-rhythm theme at the beginning of the second group or *Gesangsperiode*, derived and echoed from the drastic and terrifying unison about 30 bars before, and in the clear rhythm of the word “Alleluia”. Thus the shy and tentative melody as first heard is to be transformed into the majestic and triumphant culmination of the whole work.

Lastly one can suggest that it would be virtually impossible for Bruckner, as a devout Christian, to complete his Ninth Symphony dedicated to his beloved God in any other way than in unalloyed triumph. It is not that a Christian cannot write a tragic piece. But Bruckner has portrayed in the first three movements and in the sketches for the Finale a soul adrift in a world of apprehension, menace, and terror, in which fearful events originate from the most unlikely places, and in which the edifices erected on earth to provide earth-based protection crumble and disintegrate in catastrophe. According to Christian theology the only remedy is the free and unearned grace which finally comes only through faith, to those who preserve their faith through the torments of life, and the Finale is the musical portrait of that event. The soul as protagonist weathers the most hideous challenges throughout the symphony, not by virtue of its own strength, but through the loving and saving power of God, which if this plan is to be carried out in music, must be manifested at the end of the symphony. Such an interpretation has been challenged in the past, with certain completions offering dark and nuanced conclusions relying on the idea that Bruckner had lost his faith after all. But later research has recovered prayer slips from the night before he died, and a triumphant ending, difficult as it might be to achieve, seems to be the only responsible goal.

These three goals, faithful presentation of the sketches, appropriate filling-out both horizontally and vertically, and a positive and triumphant ending, must all be carried out to achieve anything like a successful completion, if indeed success can be achieved at all. But additionally, the second goal, horizontal and vertical filling-out, cannot be undertaken at the expense of the first goal, an honest presentation of the sketches. Nor can the positive ending be appended without the first two goals having already been attained.

The degree to which various completions follow these ground rules must be judged by the listener, not by me. But a comparative timed-analysis table, which I prepared and which was published in the Bruckner Journal in 2013, and which can be viewed on John Berky’s website, [abruckner.com](http://abruckner.com), can help. The table gives the details of source material for my completion, for that of the group led by Nicola Samale, and for that by Sébastien Letocart. And when I obtain the scores, I will add the interesting work of Jacques Roelands and Nors Josephson. As should be clear from my discussion above, even a completion that seems successful cannot claim to be

fully correct. Indeed there can be no fully correct completion, just completions which avoid the most obvious errors, and there will always be debate on many points. But the finale, even as a fragmented and patched-together assemblage, still has a great deal to tell us about the authentic inspiration and lofty goals of Anton Bruckner, and it is a pity not to take every opportunity offered to become familiar with it and its profound meaning.

*Description of the Carragan completion*

In 1887, immediately upon completion of the first version of his Eighth Symphony, Anton Bruckner began the first movement of the Ninth, but soon thereafter turned to revision of the Fourth and the Third, further thoughts on the Eighth starting before he had received any opinions on it, then a year spent on a new version of the First, the composition of a setting of Psalm 150 and a choral ode *Helgoland*, and the preparation of the Second and perhaps the Sixth for publication. During these other projects, he continued with the Ninth, and was able to start work on its finale as early as May 1895, where in his new ground-floor residence he had found renewed strength. First in short-score or *particello* sketches, then on labeled full-score bifolios, he developed his concepts of the finale, revising them many times as he went along. In one way or another his work reached almost to the coda, and perhaps even to the end of the movement.

It appears that many of these sketches were taken away by souvenir hunters in the week after his death on October 11, 1896, and are no longer available or no longer exist, but from the evidence in those sketches that survive to us, and using the methods presented above, it can readily be seen that Anton Bruckner designed the finale of his Ninth Symphony to be a regular composition in his usual version of sonata form: Part 1, an exposition of three themes, and Part 2, corresponding to a combination of the traditional development, recapitulation, and coda, with in particular the recapitulation of the first and third theme groups subject to substantial further development. The sketches consist of preliminary short-score sketches, and a group of full-score sketches mostly collected in the file Mus.Hs. 6087 in the Austrian National Library. Part 1 of the movement is rather well represented in full-score sketches in the A theme group, less so in the B theme group where considerable reliance must be placed on the short-score material, and fully scored in the C theme group consisting of the famous chorale. Part 2, in which the A theme is recapitulated in fugal style, has many fairly well-worked-out passages with several gaps, few of the passages being fully scored, but everywhere still with abundant details.

Inspection of the sketches for the Finale reveals a number of clear innovations beyond Bruckner's usual methods; these new ideas require no interpretation on the part of the critic or completer. Thus the initially quiet A1 theme, the bold unison A2 theme in D minor, the spare but lyrical B1 song-theme in G major, and the transitional theme which embodies a long crescendo similar to the one used in the first movement of the Seventh, called in the accompanying table Bx, constitute among them an arch structure, in which B1 is a derivative of A2, and Bx is the inversion of A1. Here are short samples of these four themes, which should make these

relationships clear. The A1 theme, over a drum roll on G [**example 1**], the unison A2 theme [**example 2**], and the B1 theme, which is very close to A2 except that the first note is no longer a long note [**example 3**]. This is the theme destined to be the triumphant Alleluia at the end but here it is frail and hesitant. As is typical in Bruckner, particularly in the later symphonies beginning with the Sixth and especially in the Eighth, after an enclave of slower and more lyrical and meditative music like the one here called B2 in the table, the B1 theme in its final statement is given a rich and enhanced re-orchestration [**example 4**]. After that appears the Bx theme which is clearly an inversion of A1 [**example 5**]. These four themes all include the double-dotted quarter note, along with in A1 and Bx a short phrase with a dotted eighth note, and establish an unbroken toccata-like texture. Such a relationship among the various components of the A and B theme groups had never been undertaken by him before.

The long crescendo of the Bx theme leads directly to a grand chorale for the fifteen brasses, including the tuben, in E major, with a triplet accompaniment for the violins which constitutes a completely different but also toccata-like texture. This C-theme was completely scored by Bruckner in all details. It is this chorale which was quoted by Gottfried von Einem in his *Bruckner Dialogue* of 1971. From this point on, there are very few measures in the whole movement which do not include one or the other of these two toccata textures. The chorale has four phrases and a short fifth phrase; here are the first two phrases [**example 6**]. The short fifth phrase leads to a sort of catastrophe of dissonance and descending scales [**example 7**], and then, for the codetta, we hear the flute intone the accompanimental figure of the Te Deum [**example 8**]. Considering how much this theme is used in the following material, it is impossible to think of it as part of a transition to the Te Deum as a makeshift finale. Clearly Bruckner wanted the allusion to be an integral part of the melodic material of the instrumental movement. To conclude the exposition, I have used eight whole notes, six for the flute and two for the oboe, drawn from an experimental sheet in Mus.Hs. 6085, cadence upon A, the dominant major. Bruckner originally intended the exposition to conclude in the relative major, F, as shown particularly in sketches preserved in the library of the Jagiellonian University at Krakau. But later sketches, in one or another medial layer, show the triplet ostinato simply proceeding on the note E to the beginning of the development in A flat. Then the still later sheet from 6085 seems to be a trial of various ways of ending the exposition and beginning the development, and the eight whole notes suggest the cadence on A. If this is the correct cadence tonality, it would be a complete innovation for Bruckner, who always concluded his minor-mode expositions in the relative major, not the dominant major.

The development begins with a considerable discussion of the C and A2 themes alternately, then of the B1 theme [example 9]. Then follows a development of the A2 theme as a three-voice fugue [example 10], which after 56 measures becomes a long passage on the dominant of C sharp minor and a breaking-off, much like those in the first movement, passing through F sharp major. The recapitulated B1 theme comes next, in the same pitches as in the exposition but harmonized in E minor [example 11]; later the theme is inverted in G major. Then there is a long gap, which I have filled with an allusion to the theme of the Adagio [example 12]. All of this material, loud and soft, is dominated by the dotted rhythms of A1 and A2. Then begins the triplet rhythm, leading to the recapitulation of the chorale which begins quietly with the Te Deum accompaniment [example 13] and then grows in volume and in detail as the triplet rhythm resumes. Then there is another catastrophe, in the same formal location is the one in the exposition, where the chorale again collapses into dissonance and descending scales [example 14]. The dissonant catastrophe is the only place in the completion where I used the technique of montage, that is, continuing into a gap with entirely different music. Yet it seems to me that that must be done here. During the descending scales of the catastrophe, I invite the contrabassoon to join the soundscape, and in due course the coda begins.

My coda is 117 measures long, in two parts of 58 and 59 measures. The first part is full of menace and apprehension, partly my composition with the first-movement theme in the bass [example 15], and partly based on a short-score sketch by Bruckner which certainly goes with the finale, but is not usable elsewhere. In the coda the two toccata rhythms are heard together for the first time. Then at the climax there is an allusion to the unison theme of the first movement leading directly to the key of D major, and the second part begins with a fanfare, followed by the four main phrases of the chorale with a triadic version of the Adagio theme [example 16] as a countermelody. After the inverted fourth phrase, leading through cadence chords from the Adagio, the Te Deum reappears with its melody and accompaniment while the theme of the first movement is heard in the bass in the major [example 17]. After eight measures the Alleluia of the second theme, the B1 melody, soars above in triumph, supported by triadic versions of the themes of the other movements, [example 18], just as the good doctor said that Bruckner had planned. It amazes me to realize that it took me thirty years to work out that simple and direct gesture. But we can expect that what was logical and obvious to Bruckner is still mysterious and wonderful to us.

Thank you!

*Examples*

1	A1	0:14
2	A2	0:28
3	B1	0:14
4	B1 climax	0:21
5	B2	0:13
6	C	0:29
7	catastrophe 1	0:24
8	K (Te Deum)	0:10
9	B1 (development)	0:20
10	A2 (fugue)	0:28
11	B1 (recapitulation)	0:19
12	A1, Adagio	0:31
13	C (recapitulation)	0:20
14	catastrophe 2	0:39
15	coda (I)	0:26
16	coda (III)	0:24
17	coda (Te Deum)	0:11
18	coda (Alleluia)	0:09

Seven of these are omitted in the Thursday text, but all will be played during my long talk on Friday.