

John

An old school friend of mine Lawrence Lewes who would later write a book about the Italian conductor Guido Cantelli introduced me to Bruckner about 50 years ago when I was 15. I have had no musical education but inherited from my dad a great love of opera, particularly Verdi. The first symphony Lawrence played to me was the eighth and I was overwhelmed.

In fact this work had its premier in 1887 the same as one of my favourite Verdi operas Otello and be it the "Wagner" influence on both composers i can see certain similarities in some of the music for instance, the beautiful second subject from the adagio and Otello's entrance with the cellos in the last act of Otello. I have never read if anything what Bruckner or Verdi thought about each other's music. We know what Wagner thought of the Verdi Requiem or what he did not want to say in public, but did Bruckner feel the same and did Verdi ever hear a Bruckner symphony?

I have favourite "bits" from the Bruckner symphonies, I know I should not, but being uneducated, what the heck! For me the best coda is the finale of the fifth, where Bruckner for once really lets himself go. I absolutely adore the opening movement of the sixth. If the modern blockbuster film score does not find its roots in this first movement I do not know what does. Dr Zhivago, Lawrence of Arabia, The Big Country ,although there is plenty of Rachmaninov Second symphony in this as well. Star Wars etc etc. BUT it is the ending of this movement which for me is the essence of Bruckner.

The Choral theme is just about numero uno for me. I reiterate I know NOTHING about musical composition but the way the chorale modulates over and over and over again to me is absolutely beyond comparison. There used to be a segment on You Tube with Solti and the Chicago in their prime. The brass of the Chicago is unsurpassable.

But then there is a bit of Bruckner that may not even be by Bruckner in the final movement of the 9th which by the way is my favourite symphony/ The first movement in my opinion is by itself a supreme masterpiece. It's the minimalistic segment before the coda. I am not sure if William Carragan or the band of four composed this or found it on a scrap of Bruckner's manuscript. BUT I tell you something Hans Zimmer must of liked it because the evocative final music of the The Da Vinci Code is based on this theme and like Zimmer I find it superlative.

Kind Regards From Barry Bernstein (London)