

## Finding Anton Bruckner

I first heard Bruckner while a music student in New York in 1968. I attended both Juilliard and the Manhattan School of Music at the same time so I could study oboe with Harold Gomberg at Juilliard and take the academic courses at Manhattan. In one of my music history classes at the Manhattan School I had a remarkable teacher, whose name unfortunately escapes me, who was passionate about music and had a real 'live wire' character. Believe it or not, smoking was still permitted in classrooms. He came in one extremely freezing cold day in January to find a couple of students smoking in the back. He walked over and flung open the two ceiling high windows saying "you have the right to smoke and I have the right to open windows". The two students stopped immediately looking somewhat sheepish about the whole incident.

Everything he had us listen to I adored except for Bruckner. I just couldn't get it. But the fact that the recommendation came from this particular teacher made me reconsider off and on for years afterwards and I would make tentative ventures into Bruckner's music. As a professional symphony player I played first oboe in the 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony and, although the act of playing helped and I liked the scherzo, the work as a whole still left me indifferent. But I was happy to be able to at least get into the scherzos of Bruckner symphonies. For the next twenty years or so I would listen to and perform Bruckner Symphonies from time to time but still no "lights going on" experience happened.

I moved to Paris in 1988. A dear friend of mine, Pamela Wesson, sang in a sixteen voice choir at the American Cathedral and said they needed another tenor. So I joined the choir and reveled in singing a wide repertoire of music. Eventually I saw that we were going to sing 'Locus iste' by Bruckner and I waited for the moment to arrive with great curiosity. From the moment we finished sight-reading it I had a hot flash and realized – that was it! From that moment on I understood something I hadn't been able to find before. There are no words for that kind of experience but afterwards I bought all the symphonies, Masses and choral music and I listened with a new set of ears. It took me twenty years and a serpentine journey but I finally resolved this enigma.

So, I suppose this journey began with a work composed by Bruckner in 1869 to my music history class in 1969 and finally to my Bruckner enlightenment in 1988.

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