

9. Do you feel that there is room for multiple completions to exist - now that we're up to over 5?

I leave it to others to judge this. Critical reaction, research, audience response, all this will be decisive. Basically, from a democratic point of view, there is ample room for every past, present and future completion. Only it is much to be wished that at least one could establish itself for a longer period of time in the face of the three-movement original version, so that the beauty of the final movement of Bruckner's Ninth could finally conquer the world of music. That is something that this great music has long deserved!

10. Any additional plans to perform your completion further?

The final movement of Bruckner's Ninth is and will remain a fascinating theme, which – given a certain openness – will continually allow new ways and new solutions. Artistically and musically, there is more than the one and only solution. I have now given my current, personal view of the fourth movement. The CD will be released shortly on the Profil Edition Günter Hänssler label. The topic "Finale of the Ninth" is far from exhausted, however.

Maestro Schaller has recorded a complete cycle of Bruckner Symphonies on the Profil label, including several alternative versions. His recent recording of the F Minor Symphony received the 2016 Recording of the Year by the Bruckner Society of America. He is also the most recent recipient of the Kilenyi Medal of Honor, the Society's highest honor. His recording of the Ninth Symphony with Finale Completion will be released this Fall

CONCERT REVIEWS

St. Florian BrucknerTage Festival: August 14 – 20, 2016

The First Three Days...

IF, AS A LOVER of Bruckner's music, you are minded to visit Austria, and to visit Linz, Ansfelden and St. Florian, then I would recommend that you choose to go in mid-August and enjoy this wondrous festival, full of magic, warm-hearted bonhomie and stunning music-making. In each year of its existence the festival has gone from strength to strength, and each year brings ways of experiencing Bruckner that are often surprising and always rewarding. It really is a first class event and I would recommend it to all Brucknerians to enlarge and enhance their knowledge of and love for the man and his music, the country he came from and his favourite place in that country.



ST. FLORIANER BRUCKNERTAGE

And what an opening concert! The festival set off in magnificent style on the Sunday evening, the concert taking place in the St Florian Marble Hall, with an array of brass players who first got together at London's Guildhall School of Music and the Royal Academy. Nowadays they have their careers in major orchestras and freelancing, but come together as the European Brass Collective for the summer at St Florian. They kicked off with a fantastic fanfare based on the main theme of Bruckner's 6th symphony - a trumpet sounding the opening 'semaphore' rhythm, introducing a whole panoply of variations on the theme by the rest of the brass, composed by Timothy Jackson, principal horn of the Liverpool Philharmonic. There followed a very noble arrangement of the motet, *Virga Jesse*, and then a jazzy version of *Locus iste* with drum and brushes, and cymbal. Well, you can hear *Locus iste* done 'properly' many times a year in many

places, so no harm in this good-humoured somewhat oblique take on it. Thereafter a feast of English music - Peter Warlock's *Capriol Suite*, Elgar's *Nimrod*, *Earl of Oxford* march by William Byrd, and a strongly dramatic piece, opening with growling *pianissimo* low tuba notes, building up to dissonant *fortissimo* chords repeated and repeated, by James MacMillan, *Exsultet. Antiphon* by Gabrieli sounded from the back and front of the hall, and a stunning, overwhelming close with Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral from *Lohengrin*, Jerry Goldsmith's *Star Trek*, and couple of encores. It was loud, maybe better suited to outdoor performance, but just the thing to launch a week of Bruckner-focussed festivities.

The following morning, Matthias Giesen directed the Altomonte Orchestra in the context of a High Mass in three works with which the young Anton Bruckner would have been familiar, a *Salve Regina* by Haydn, *Ave maris stella*, by Caldara, and an *Ave Maria* by Aumann. In the evening Rémy Ballot, who would be conducting the full orchestral performance of the Sixth Symphony at the end of the week, and Matthias Giesen, director of the monastery choir of St Florian, conductor of the Altomonte Orchestra, artistic director of the St Florian Brucknertage, performed a concert of works for violin and piano, an extremely ambitious programme with two very weighty sonatas, Beethoven G major Op. 96, and Franck A major, and even the Mozart sonata that introduced the evening was the somewhat sombre E minor, KV 304. Between the Beethoven and the Franck, for added intensity, they played *Thème et variations* by Messiaen. Matthias Giesen showed himself to be a very fine pianist indeed, especially in the Beethoven. Rémy Ballot was an effective soloist, but seemed a little stiff and uncomfortable, the violin melodies rarely soared and sang with as much ease as one would dream of.

The Tuesday evening presented an overwhelming night of Organ music - beginning at 8pm, featuring six organ recitals, and finishing at 1.30am. All six organists were first class, but Liudmilla Matsyura from Spain was outstanding, giving the second recital displaying wonderful musicality, managing to combine all the gymnastics involved in playing several keyboards, pedals and stops of the massive Bruckner organ into a free flowing and beautifully rhythmic rendition of works by Langlais, Butusova, Peeters, Tarrega and Juliá. Benjamin Guélat. At 10.30pm there was a recital by Benjamin Guélat from Zürich, in which he performed a very moving new work by Michael Floredo, *Kreuzwegstationen* [Stations of the Cross] for soprano, organ and percussion. The soprano soloist, Fenja Lukas, has a voice of crystal clear purity and strongly expressive tone, and her long sustained notes sounded out above the might of the organ, filling the vast space of the basilica. Her more urgent vocalisations were spine-tingling. At 11.30pm Sergej Tcherepanov gave a recital that included an extraordinarily effective transcription of the final pages of Mahler's 3rd symphony, transcribed for organ, brass and percussion - the brass players of the European Brass Collective active again, and he closed with a performance of extreme virtuosity, Reger's *Fantasy and Fugue on B-A-C-H*, transcribed by Marcel Dupré. All performers were filmed, their skills and contortions displayed for all to see on a large screen at the front of the basilica. It made for a very exciting series of recitals, and kept even an elderly gent like me awake till the early hours.

Ken Ward

The Next Three Days: A Cycle of Sixths...

SINCE ITS BEGINNINGS in 1997, the annual BrucknerTage Festival has become the premiere event honoring the life and music of Anton Bruckner. In both performance and scholarship, the events that unfold within the consecrated walls of St. Florian have increasingly attracted extraordinary individuals whose passion is unparalleled. Participants and audience alike come together for a week of camaraderie, not only in the monastery but also at the local inns. Most evenings go beyond the musical festivities, sharing conversation over a late night snack or drink. Like the previous BrucknerTages I've attended, the 2016 Festival did not fail as a memorable event for all who were present.

This year, the focus of the Festival was about the Bruckner Sixth. The performances on the final three days represented a cycle of Sixths, of sort. Each evening featured the symphony performed in different variation. The organizers deserve acclaim for having the vision to bring this program to fruition.

On Wednesday, the Marmorsaal (Marble Hall) was occupied by the Altomonte Ensemble with Thomas Christian to perform the Sixth Symphony in a chamber music transcription arranged by its Director, Matthias Giesen. Unlike Mahler, chamber version transcriptions of Bruckner works are unique. A version of the Seventh Symphony was created by Arnold Schoenberg's students Eisner, Stein, and Rankl in 1921, for a private performance with the Verein für musikalische Privatufführungen. Mr. Christian recorded this version

with his own Thomas Christian Ensemble in 2004 (MDG label), as well as in performance with the Altomonte Ensemble at the 2009 BrucknerTage.

Other than keyboard transcriptions, this chamber music version of the Sixth is a first. Following that of the Seventh, the orchestration includes clarinet, horn, piano, harmonium (unfortunately unavailable this evening), and string quintet. Obviously, the absence of brass projects an entirely different sound world. In his accompanying article, Mr. Geisen describes the effect as more bluntly structured, “naked”, referring to “deorchestration” described by Glenn Gould.

And it works marvelously. Certainly, the transcription would never be considered a substitute for the full symphony. But many sections work exceptionally well with a lighter more transparent sound. The beauty of the Adagio was particularly well-suited. Although I found myself distracted by the sound of a piano in a Bruckner symphony, the playing of the Altomonte was meticulous and the sound finely detailed. No doubt other symphonies would be attractive in chamber arrangements and will one day see transcriptions as passionately performed and attentively transcribed as we heard this evening.

After scholarly presentations pertaining to the Sixth Symphony by Dr. Benjamin Korstvedt and Dr. Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs on Thursday afternoon, the Sala Terrena brought a two-piano concert to a full room that evening. Featuring founder and one of the two music directors of the BrucknerTage, Klaus Laczika, and Elias Gillesberger, student of the “Anton-Bruckner-Privatuniversität” in Linz, the concert included the “Points on Jazz” Suite of Dave Brubeck before concluding with the Karl Grunsky two-piano transcription of the Sixth Symphony.

To be sure, the scope of these two works is a challenge, testing the stamina and endurance of the performers. Technically demanding and epic in scope, the Sixth for two pianos has not seen a recorded release (a piano four-hands version, arranged by Josef Schalk, is available featuring Dino Sequi and Gerhard Hofer).

The performance by Laczika and Gillesberger was dedicated and impassioned. The two share an obvious affection for the work. Although there were occasional moments when the challenges overtook the performers, at its conclusion they were both greeted with well-deserved ovations from the enthusiastic attendees.

The conclusion of the Festival features the symphony concert in the Stiftbasilika. A breath-taking venue, our seats in the organ loft feature the best acoustic in the Basilica. Different seating on the floor can often lead to muddled overlap of sounds. In the loft, listeners are treated to the right combination of clarity and expansion of the music. One can imagine how Bruckner himself sat in this very area and experienced the same effects that formed the musical shapes of his monumental works. After several performances over the years in various seating positions in the Basilica, this is my preferred location to experience the concert.

After an opening performance of Wagner’s Act I Prelude to “Lohengrin”, Rémy Ballot and the Upper Austrian Youth Symphony Orchestra brought the Sixth Symphony in the Austrian premiere of the new edition of Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs. Maestro Ballot has had a yearly association with the BrucknerTage since 2011, performing the Fourth Symphony with the Junge Philharmonie Salzburg. Returning in 2013 as “conductor in residence” with the resident Altomonte Orchestra to perform the Third, he has alternated annually with the Upper Austrian Youth Symphony Orchestra for concerts of the Eighth and Ninth. The last three years have been recorded and released on the Gramola label.

Having had the opportunity to hear rehearsals during the days leading up to the final concert, one can say with utmost confidence that the ensemble performs at a level that exceeds the years of its players. Likewise, the vision Maestro Ballot has for Bruckner is on a grand scale, very much in the mindset of his most famous teacher, Sergiu Celibidache. The concert of the Eighth Symphony in 2014 with the same ensemble was well-received by all in attendance, demonstrating a clear affinity and cohesiveness in vision of the performance between the conductor and orchestra.

At about 68 minutes (18:32 – 21:11 – 10:05 – 18:08), this performance of the Sixth was more expansive than most, if not all, recorded versions, including those of his teacher. Likewise to Celibidache, the approach isn’t to everyone’s affinity, but there is always much to be admired in its conception. The scale was most conspicuous in the first and last movements, often beautifully played and phrased but sometimes losing its overall shape. The Adagio was best suited to the approach, expanding the themes of what could be considered Bruckner’s most gorgeous slow movement. However, at times the players could not maintain the grandness of the scale and were belied by the limits of their youth after hours of preparation and the final performance. Fortunately, the dress rehearsal was captured with their freshness and I would anticipate the released recording on Gramola to be quite good.

As if three days of performances of the Sixth were not enough, the final day before our return to the USA allowed for time for trip to the Salzburg Festival. There, Mariss Jansons led the Vienna Philharmonic in

a performance of the Sixth at the Festspielhaus. Despite a power outage that delayed the start of the concert, the performance featured the aplomb one hopes to hear from this ensemble. Maestro Jansons led a straightforward interpretation that was solid without depth of greater insight

Next year, BrucknerTage 2017 will feature the Fifth Symphony, your editor's personal favorite. Based on this year and before, I eagerly anticipate attending once again. I would encourage all who share a passion for Bruckner to make the trip to Upper Austria to enjoy all that this well-organized event affords.

Michael Cucka

The Final Night...

Of the closing night of the festival, Dr Benjamin Korstvedt wrote:

"Wow, the final night of the Bruckner-Tage was really something special. First, solemn brass arrangements in the crypt (Ave Maria and Bruckner 6 Adagio). Then we moved en masse to the basilica, where we heard Bruckner, Lauredsen and an immense Franz Schmidt fugue for organ and brass band in the organ loft. Then into the open for beer and rousing brass pops. Only in Austria is this sort of thing possible. Really wonderful!"

Lucerne Festival 2016: Primadonnas, Bruckner and a missed chance

AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, in this year's Lucerne Summer Festival, in its depth of focus and many-sidedness, was to be experienced a presentation of the greatest diversity of artistic manifestations that would be hard to surpass and encompass in an overview. According to information supplied by the Festival Committee, between 12 August and 11 September an audience of almost 80,000 attended around one hundred events that were 90% sold out. From symphony concerts ranging from high to the highest level, to 'Family Concerts', to panel sessions, a performance of Luigi Nono's *Prometeo* in the Lucerne Theatre and much more, there was an event for nearly every taste. Also an ecumenical themed act of worship was put on with the title *Eve and Maria - Primadonnas of the Bible*, whereby we were brought to the overarching theme of the Festival. *Primadonna* was this year's *Leitmotiv*. From that visitors to the festival would probably at first think of Cecilia Bartoli or Anne Sophie Mutter, but also certainly the composer Olga Neuwirth and the conductor and singer Barbara Hannigan had a right to that honorary title.

Following the death of Claudio Abbado and Pierre Boulez the Festival stands at a new beginning. As the new chief director, Riccardo Chailly had made a brilliant start with a deeply impressive performance of Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand*, the only Mahler symphony that the late maestro, his predecessor, had never conducted in Lucerne. Wolfgang Rihm and Matthias Pincher now follow Boulez as promoters of modernity.

Needless to say, Bruckner, as well as other composers, had little to offer towards this year's festival theme, and therefore naturally required no primadonnas. That the great Austrian symphonist was represented by four symphonies and a string quartet movement is testimony to his wide acceptance. Bruckner's popularity and number of performances might probably today exceed Beethoven or Brahms, but of course without thereby implying any value judgement.

The Bruckner series was opened with an otherwise hardly performed Rondo in C minor that was first discovered in a sketch book in 1949. At the time of his studies with Otto Kitzler in 1862 Bruckner wrote his only string quartet. Because maybe he was dissatisfied with its finale in the following week he composed an extended version roughly a third longer. It was a pity that this piece was placed at the start of the concert instead of remaining, as scheduled, between the great quartets of Beethoven and Franck, and so acquired the character of an introductory work. But nevertheless you could be thrilled at the virtuosic and committed playing of the four young ladies of the Quatuor Zaïde. Also their mastery of the perilous Scherzo of the Franck Quartet was extremely impressive.

That **Bernard Haitink** conducted Bruckner's Eighth Symphony as a full evening's work was a correct decision, for this symphony stands not only as a singular monolith in the romantic symphony, but it also demands of the listener an unusual degree of focussed attention. To praise Haitink's conducting seems almost presumptuous. With him the heterogeneous elements of the work come together into such a convincing unity, that even listeners critical towards Bruckner can have nothing to complain about Bruckner the *composer*. One would so regret the absence of few conductors more than this now 87 year old man from the Netherlands, who celebrates his fiftieth anniversary on the Lucerne stage. And if in addition on that stage