



Anton BRUCKNER

Symphony No. 4 in E flat major

Josef Anton Bruckner (4 September 1824 – 11 October 1896) was an Austrian composer best known for his symphonies, masses, and motets. The first are considered emblematic of the final stage of Austro-German Romanticism because of their rich harmonic language, strongly polyphonic character, and considerable length. Bruckner's compositions helped to define contemporary musical radicalism, owing to their dissonances, unprepared modulations, and roving harmonies. Unlike other musical radicals such as Richard Wagner and Hugo Wolf who fit the *enfant terrible* mould, Bruckner showed extreme humility before other musicians, Wagner in particular. This apparent dichotomy between Bruckner the man and Bruckner the composer hampers efforts to describe his life in a way that gives a straightforward context for his music. Hans von Bülow described him as "half genius, half simpleton". His works, the symphonies in particular, had detractors, most notably the influential Austrian critic Eduard Hanslick, and other supporters of Johannes Brahms who pointed to their large size and use of repetition, as well as to Bruckner's propensity for revising many of his works, often with the assistance of colleagues, and his apparent indecision about which versions he preferred. On the other hand, Bruckner was greatly admired by subsequent composers including his friend Gustav Mahler.

Symphony No. 4 in E-flat major is one of the Bruckner's most popular works. It was written in 1874 and revised several times through 1888. It was dedicated to Prince Konstantin of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst. It was premiered in 1881 by Hans Richter in Vienna to great acclaim. The symphony's nickname of *Romantic* was used by the composer himself. This was at the height of the Romantic movement in the arts as depicted, inter alia, in the operas *Lohengrin* and *Siegfried* of Richard Wagner.

Bruckner's original version, published in an edition by Leopold Nowak in 1975, was composed between 2 January and 22 November 1874. This version was never performed or published during the composer's lifetime, though the Scherzo was played in Linz on 12 December 1909. The first complete performance was given in Linz more than a century after its composition on 20 September 1975 by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Kurt Wöss. The first commercial recording of the 1874 version was made in September 1982 by the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Eliahu Inbal. When he had completed the original version of the symphony, Bruckner turned to the composition of his Fifth Symphony. When he had completed that piece he resumed work on the Fourth, though it is possible that he made some revisions to the latter in 1876 or 1877. Between 18 January and 30 September 1878 he thoroughly revised the first two movements and replaced the original finale with a new movement entitled *Volksfest* ("Popular Festival"). This *Volksfest* finale was published as an appendix to Robert Haas's edition of 1936 and in a separate edition by Leopold Nowak in 1981. In December 1878 Bruckner replaced the original Scherzo with a completely new movement, which is sometimes called the "Hunt" Scherzo (*Jagd-Scherzo*). In a letter to the music critic Wilhelm Tappert (October 1878), Bruckner describes the new movement thus: "[the Scherzo] represents the hunt, whereas the Trio is a dance melody which is played to the hunters during their repast". The original title of the Trio reads: *Tanzweise während der Mahlzeit auf der Jagd* ("Dance melody during the hunters' meal").