



Anton BRUCKNER

Symphony No. 1

Josef Anton Bruckner (4 September 1824 – 11 October 1896) was an Austrian composer, organist, and music theorist. Bruckner's first music teacher was his own father, who was the schoolmaster in Ansfelden and taught music as part of the curriculum. Bruckner became very dedicated to the organ, often practicing for 12 hours a day. This hard-work would prove to be a trend, as Bruckner was promoted to upper class early and would even help his father in teaching other children. After briefly attending school in Hörsching, Bruckner returned to Ansfelden when his father became ill to help in his work. After Bruckner's father died in 1837, Bruckner was sent to train as a choirboy at a monastery in Sankt Florian. In awe of the monastery's organ, he continued with lessons on the instrument and sometimes played it during church services (which would later be called the "Bruckner Organ". Despite his musical abilities, Bruckner's mother sent him to a teaching seminar in Linz at the age of 17. Finishing the seminar with an excellent grade, Bruckner was sent as a teacher's assistant to a school in Windhaag, but the living standards and pay were low and Bruckner was constantly humiliated by the teacher, Franz Fuchs. He stayed at the school until he was 19, teaching subjects that had nothing to do with music. A high-ranking clergy member noticed Bruckner's bad situation in Windhaag and sent him to Kronstorf an der Enns for two years, which was near Sankt Florian and gave Bruckner the opportunity to be musically active. One of his works during this time was signed with "Anton Bruckner m.p.ria. Comp[onist]", perhaps being the only early hint of Bruckner's ambitions as a composer. Bruckner would return to Sankt Florian in 1845 where, for the next 10 years, he would work as a teacher and an organist. In 1855, Bruckner became a student of famous music theorist Simon Sechter after showing him his *Missa solemnis* (1854), but his lessons took place mostly by mail as Sechter was in Vienna. Bruckner would only start to take composition seriously at the age of 37, and finally composed his first large mature work at 40, his *Mass in D Minor* (1864). In 1868, Bruckner replaced Sechter as a music theory teacher at the Vienna Conservatory following the latter's death, and accepted a post at the Vienna University in 1875. Around this time, numerous conductors offered edits to make Bruckner's music more accessible to the public; he accepted the offers, but left his original scores to the Austrian National Library in Vienna in his will. Widespread fame did not come to Bruckner until the premiere of his 7th Symphony in 1884. Bruckner died in Vienna at the age of 72, and left explicit instructions to embalm his corpse.

Symphony No. 1 in C minor (WAB 101) (published in 1893) was the first symphony Bruckner thought worthy of performing, which was originally done in 1868 in Linz. However, notorious for his extreme self-doubt, Bruckner heavily revised the piece numerous, and at least 4 significant editions of the piece exist today. The most frequently performed version of the score is the 1877/1884 "Revised Linz" edition, which is the one you are hearing today.

The first movement (*Allegro*) immediately begins with a marching theme (unlike the remainder of his symphonies, which model the opening of Beethoven's 9th Symphony) that quickly climaxes, and just as rapidly dies down to a transition by the woodwinds to the second theme. The development does not reference opening march, but its return signals the recapitulation. The movement comes to a thundering close after expanding on the opening march once again.

The second movement (*Adagio*) opens in explorative tonality, making short breaths in numerous homophonic colours before settling on A-flat. While the music is mostly solemn in energy, its passion rises and falls, eventually leading to a major climax. The music winds down to finish the movement.

The third movement (*Schnell – Langsamer*) begins with a Scherzo propelled by a strong rhythmic drive and changing dynamics. The Trio provides contrast, as it moves slowly and is smaller in expressive range. The Scherzo returns to thrust the listener towards the end of the movement.

The Finale (*Bewegt, feurig*) begins with powerful strikes and blistering string passages, but changes in both pace and dynamic early on. The music comes to a grinding halt halfway through, and builds gradually, before resolving in the tonic major tonality of C.