



Anton BRUCKNER

Symphony No. 2 in C minor

Josef Anton Bruckner (4 September 1824 – 11 October 1896) was an Austrian composer, organist, and music theorist best known for his symphonies, masses, Te Deum 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, 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". Bruckner was critical of his own work and often reworked his compositions. There are several versions of many of his works. 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. Bruckner's symphonies are scored for a fairly standard orchestra of woodwinds in pairs, four horns, two or three trumpets, three trombones, tuba (from the second version of the Fourth), timpani and strings. The later symphonies increase this complement, but not by much. Notable is the use of Wagner tubas in his last three symphonies. Only the Eighth has harp, and percussion besides timpani in all versions. (The Seventh, in some versions, features a single cymbal crash alongside a triangle roll at the climax of the second movement). Bruckner's style of orchestral writing was criticized by his Viennese contemporaries, but by the middle of the twentieth century, musicologists recognized that his orchestration was modeled after the sound of his primary instrument, the pipe organ, i.e., alternating between two groups of instruments, as when changing from one manual of the organ to another.

Bruckner's **Symphony No. 2** in C minor, sometimes known as the "Symphony of Pauses", was completed in 1872. It was actually the fourth symphony composed by Bruckner, after the Symphony in F minor (1863), the Symphony No. 1 in C minor (1866), and the Symphony in D minor (1869). In the fall of 1871, after having become established in Vienna, Anton Bruckner embarked on a new symphonic project, his fourth, which in less than a year would result in a completed and copied score of nearly 2000 bars. The Symphony No. 2, which was mostly written in the summer of 1872, represents a breakthrough in Bruckner's conception of the symphony. Although Bruckner had been composing sonata-form movements with three distinct themes since he began writing symphonies in 1862, in 1872 he greatly expanded the scope of their presentation and development, and established the framework, which he would use consistently in all of his subsequent symphonic work. Moreover, the Adagio of this symphony is in ABA'B'A" Lied form followed by a coda – the framework which Bruckner would use in his subsequent symphonic work, with exception of the Sixth. The Second Symphony is the only numbered Bruckner symphony without a dedication; Franz Liszt tacitly rejected the dedication, and Richard Wagner chose the Symphony No. 3 in D minor when offered both works. The symphony was planned to be performed in the same year by the Vienna Philharmonic under Otto Dessoff. However, the rehearsal did not lead to a performance, because Dessoff and a number of players considered it impossible to perform. Nevertheless, the symphony was premiered the following year, on 26 October 1873, by the Vienna Philharmonic with Bruckner himself on the podium.

The score calls for a pair each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings. The symphony has four movements. In the first version (1872) they are: 1. Allegro: *Ziemlich schnell* (C minor), 2. Scherzo (C minor) – Trio (C major), 3. Adagio (A \flat major), and 4. Finale (C minor) In the second version (1877) they are: 1. Moderato, 2. Andante: *Feierlich, etwas bewegt*, 3. Scherzo: *Mäßig schnell* – Trio: *Gleiches tempo*, and 4. Finale: *Mehr schnell*.