

»Whoever you are, your relentless barking has roused an idle pen and a sleeping lion, as it were.«

Performing Bruckner's Ninth with a Fourth Movement?

A FICTIVE BRUCKNER-ENCOUNTER IN THE AIRPLANE

by Dr. Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, (2007/rev. 2012)

We know many unfinished compositions. Some of them were given up by their composers for various reasons. Some of them were not finished yet when their composers suddenly died. Some compositions are lost, due to historical circumstances – manuscripts may have been destroyed, or they might even still exist somewhere, unrecognized, in musical collections, or in the hands of private collectors who don't wish them to be presented to the public. Every fragment of music has its own history, its own problems, and we have to ask in every case anew how we shall handle it. If written music shall become known to a larger audience, it needs to be prepared first. A musical manuscript, and in particular a fragment, must be transcribed, somehow arranged, edited, and performed, since many music lovers do not read music. They can only rely on their aural impression. But who actually decides whether a fragment of a dead composer should be presented in performance or not? And how could such a decision be justified?

First instance is the composer himself, or his heirs. Sometimes a composer may even have given his own directions about how to deal with such a piece after he passed away. This can be »burn it«, or »give it to a library«, as well as »ask XYZ to make it performable«, or »whoever may feel to be capable of making something out of it, may go for it with my blessings«. In particular if a composer gave up a piece, because he was not satisfied with it, one should perhaps best respect his decision. A different matter it is when only historical circumstances prevented him from completing it. A sudden death of a composer is only a special case of such circumstances.

The mentioned decision is made today a by descendants, heirs, or former assistants of composers; b by devoted scholars, conductors or musicians who discover fragments, wish to present them to the audience, and prepare them for performance; c by record or broadcasting companies, concert organizers and publishers of music who have the interest to gain publicity and earn money with such pieces; d music lovers who wish to hear music hitherto believed lost. But in any case, we are obliged to very carefully examine the circumstances of which the fragment resulted.

Nevertheless, it seems to be rather fortuitous whether a fragment of music has a chance to survive or not. What ever the circumstances were, history of music offers many examples of pieces which have been re-animated, or abandoned, and sometimes even by ignoring the composer's own wishes. For instance, Edvard Grieg did not wish his C minor Symphony being performed, however, after the manuscript once was copied, edited, performed and recorded in 1981, so many music lovers welcomed this music that nobody gave any further penny for the wishes of the poor composer himself. And yes: I think it is a good piece, worth to be performed.

Some fragments seem to be rarely touched for a completion, because people might be alltoo predisposed to leave it as it survived Bach's *Kunst der Fuge*; Schubert's *Unfinished*; some completion attempts are more or less successful, despite the input of second-hand arrangers Mozart/Süßmayr's Requiem; Mahler/Cooke's Tenth; Elgar/Payne's Third; Bartok/Serly's Viola Concerto; Puccini/Alfano's *Turandot*; Zemlinsky/Beaumont's *König Kandaules*; Berg/Cerha's *Lulu*; others however continue to find little interest, despite their qualities Schubert/Newboul's Tenth; Borodin/Glazunov's Third, Ives/Austin's *Universe Symphony*.

Some attempts, however, arise controversy. The Finale of Bruckner's Ninth is such a case as well. Hence, the question remains: How shall we deal with Bruckner's Ninth today? The following episode may provide some possible answers and insights.

Please note that the following section is merely fictitious, including the persons with the exception of the author himself. Some situations and episodes were borrowed from talks to various different people, which were not mentioned with their names, in order to not to offend anybody. Only the presented facts are all true.

A FICTIVE BRUCKNER-ENCOUNTER IN THE AIRPLANE

Entering first class section, on a long distance flight: BGC finds his aisle seat and himself, to his own surprise, next to that old, very Famous Maestro at the window. BGC doesn't want to disturb: FM looks very busy, on his nose the specs he usually hides from the public, a blue'n'red crayon in his left hand, an open score on his knees, staring intensely into it, being almost out of the real world. He even misses the security instruction ballet of the stewardess. BGC looks at her with interest and smiles, because she looks great. She is irritated of that, since nobody else pays attention to her. In particular not FM, whom she of course had recognized. Then she smiles to BGC. The plane takes off. FM remains in his own world, until –

STEWARDESS

May I offer you a glass of champagne, Sir? *An advantage of flying first class is that the champagne is served there in proper flutes, not plastic mugs. FM, however, does not react. Does he not like champagne? BGC opens his own snap-action-table.*

BGC

Yes, please. And perhaps one for my neighbour?

FM

Ahem. Slowly starts to take notice of BGC and the stewardess and the situation. Why not? Makes some unsuccessful efforts to remove the score from his knees.

BGC

May I offer you my own table for your glass, Sir?

FM

Very kind of you, thank you. Cheers!

BGC

Cheers, Maestro!

FM

Apparently flattered, speaking out the obvious: You know me.

BGC

Certainly I do! *Smiling.* But you don't know who I am.

FM

Right. And who are you?

BGC

With a smile like the Cheshire Cat: I am the guy who edited that score of Bruckner's Ninth which you have on your knees.

FM

What a strange coincidence! *The face of FM seems to turn slightly pale.*

BGC

So you're going to perform Bruckner's Ninth? May I assume combined with something like Mozart's D minor Piano Concerto, and of course without a fourth movement?

FM

Yuppie-lyke: Mhm, yah. And it is really that Mozart! How did you know?

BGC

Bruckner is rarely a seller, and the longer the symphony, the worse. Concert organizers always think they need an easygoing seller, possibly with a famous soloist. This piano concerto is an obvious choice. But how do you think about performing the fourth movement?

FM

I must say I did not make up my mind yet. I left the decision open. But it would be a long programme then. 110 minutes of music. Anyway – persuade me, if you can!

BGC

Well, regarding the length of such a programme: Didn't you recently conduct Mahler's Third? And isn't every opera performance longer? Not to mention *Parsifal*, or St. Matthew's Passion.

FM

Right. But I've never done the Ninth before. And doing the Finale would mean even 25 minutes more to be learned.

BGC

If you would have scheduled the Eighth instead, you would also have to learn a symphony of 85 minutes length, including a fourth movement of 25 ...

FM

You're a good salesman ...

BGC

Thank you!

FM

It is only, ah, you know, I have so little time to learn new music! I conduct about a hundred concerts a year, and alone this year including 11 scores totally new to me. My family hardly sees me at home, and I have only some hours in the planes or hotels to learn my music. *He now looks slightly like a rabbit chased by the Big Bad Wolf.*

BGC

You poor Maestro! *And in uncomfortably direct words:* But, honestly: Nobody forces you to conduct a hundred concerts a year ...

FM

If you could tell this my agent, please ...?

BGC

Let's face it: Your agent is a crook! You're the cow, he sells the milk, and when the cow can't give milk anymore he will sell it to a butcher, who will slice it into pieces and sell them as steaks on the market. If you only consider how badly that guy once treated his own wife ...

FM

What did he once do to his own wife?

BGC

As you may know, she is a pianist. Some years ago, he arranged a recording project with her as a soloist, a known English orchestra and a noted conductor, and said that the orchestra would have raised all the money for the sessions. For this reason she agreed, despite the fact that she didn't like the conductor, nor the orchestra. The sessions were awful, as she expected. Finally she found out that in fact the money for the sessions did not come from the orchestra, as he had pretended. Instead, her husband had taken it all from his wife's own bank account, and the orchestra and the conductor were his choice because he knew very well his wife didn't like them at all. Why should such a guy treat his artists any better?

FM

But still I couldn't do without him.

BGC

If you endlessly repeat a limited standard repertory, and find no time to learn your music – apart from having almost no private life – isn't that a personal price too high? That is certainly your own business. But you may well understand that I personally would rather prefer to conduct ten projects a year, not to repeat a piece I already did whenever possible, and to have four weeks each to learn my music, go into the library, study the historical context, and prepare my own orchestral parts.

FM

That would be a great luxury. But in doing so, you would never make a career.

BGC

Perhaps, but I would be the happiest man on earth. I could well survive and would even have the pleasure of conducting a programme for the first and possibly last time whenever I enter stage. But anyway. Why do you feel so uncomfortable with the idea of performing the Ninth in four movements?

FM

We are all so familiar with the three-movement Ninth, you know? And personally I think nothing could convincingly follow, after that fantastic farewell of life.

BGC

Actually Bruckner himself worked at the Finale during the last two years of his life, and even suggested one should take his Te Deum as the best alternative would he not live long enough to complete the instrumental movement.

FM

Oh, come on! Such a piece in C major ending a D minor symphony?

BGC

And the Adagio ending in E major, in a D minor symphony?

FM

Okay. But the Te Deum is ten years older, in another style, for a smaller orchestra, and, in particular – isn't this all hearsaying? There is no written evidence that Bruckner really wanted to have the Te Deum at the end, for instance, something like »to be followed with the Te Deum« at the end of the Adagio score.

BGC

You seem to be right. But, first of all, already at Bruckner's lifetime various articles appeared in Vienna newspapers, referring to his wish in public. About this alternative he already talked to friends during the composition of the first three movements. Don't forget that even Ferdinand Löwe, a pupil of Bruckner and his testament witness, played the Te Deum in the first performance of the Ninth, expressly »in piety for the wish of the Master«. Other visiting friends reported later, that Bruckner planned for some time a transition from finished parts of the instrumental Finale into the Te Deum, which he played to them on the piano.

FM

But is there any evidence for this?

BGC

Indeed at least one sketch for such a transition survived: At the end of the exposition, Bruckner sketched within the score, on bifolio 12, a transposition of the repeat of the chorale from E into C major, marked with ›Anfang‹ (this means ›beginning‹), and then, 12 bars later, he wrote ›Te Deum‹. So obviously at some time he planned the entire exposition of the Finale to be a link to the Te Deum. Why should he sketch such a transition if he did not count on the Te Deum as an alternative ending?

FM is silent for a while. The stewardess arrives again with the champagne bottle and smiles at BGC, who feels he would come into some heat if he would continue to drink. He refuses her offer with his own, best smile.

FM

But still: For me those two pieces don't match. Why should we bring them together?

BGC

In order to respect Bruckner's own wish perhaps? And, by the way, I think it would be not inappropriate to make a concert break and give the Te Deum thereafter. But of course this would make your Mozart concerto at the beginning impossible...

FM

But I really love the soft, slow ending of the Adagio. *He starts to revel.* It seems to be almost Mahlerian. From a far distance we hear themes from the Eighth and the Seventh ...

BGC

... but what you would call the Wagner-Tuba's ›Adagio theme of the Eighth‹ is in fact a derivate from an earlier idea for the main theme of the Adagio of the Ninth, of which a sketch survived. And the ›theme from the Seventh‹ contains merely a rhythmical pattern omni-present in Bruckner's music, with a total different goal

here: It descends obviously from the ›non confundar‹-like, D major Trumpet fanfare in the Adagio theme of the Ninth, and the open fourths and fifths of this final Horn ascent would well prepare for the beginning of the Te Deum ...

FM

...still revelling, not paying attention to BGC's words... ...but the music slows down, fades away, and finally the soul seems to be uplifted into heaven ...

BGC

Bruckner's score indicates no change of tempo. Unfortunately, to this day the performing tradition follows here the indications of the first print arrangement, with all the tempo changes added by Ferdinand Löwe, as it was the custom for 30 years, until Alfred Orel published Bruckner's original score in 1934. If you would study the Löwe score, which is available in antique shops, you would be surprised how much of ourday's practice is to be found there. Well: If you make the music gradually slower and slower up to the very end, it seems of course that nothing could follow anymore. Imagine Bruckner would have died amidst composing the Finale of the Eighth. The three completed movements would also have survived as a torso, ending with a great, solemn farewell at the end of the Adagio. Likewise, EACH ending of a slow movement by Bruckner could, *eo ipso*, be taken as a ›farewell‹. But actually Bruckner composed a fourth movement for the Ninth ...

FM

As far as I know, Bruckner left only a pile of scant, disconnected sketches, with huge gaps. In my eyes, the attempt of a completion would be a daring enterprise then.

BGC

Bruckner left much more music for the Finale as, for instance, Mozart for his Requiem.

FM

But Mozart passed over directions to Süßmayr how the work shall be completed. His pupils were familiar with his work.

BGC

Smiling. And Bruckner passed over his wish regarding the Te Deum ... *More serious:* But in fact we have no evidence that Mozart himself entrusted Süßmayr with the completion of the Requiem. The first document reporting on this dates only from 1825. It comes from Constanze Mozart's sister Sophie, but merely confirms the legends Constanze had given birth to. On the other hand, Constanze's first choice in completing the Requiem was Joseph Eybler, who confirmed in a document signed 21st of December 1791 he would complete it until the middle of Lent. Constanze gave the work to Süßmayr only after Eybler decided he could not continue. So what did Süßmayr find? Mozart more or less completed the instrumentation only of the Introitus. He composed Kyrie, Sequentia, and the Offertorium, and he left the end of the Lacrymosa open in order to arrive later at an Amen-fugue of which he sketched the exposition, and which Süßmayr was unable to elaborate. The emerging autograph score contains only the Basso and vocal parts throughout, but only occasionally jottings for the orchestra accompaniment. Süßmayr may have had some sketches by Mozart at hand – most likely in four part vocal writing, like the Amen-sketch. This would explain the strange discrepancy between some musically convincing passages allegedly of his own invention, and some other painfully helpless music. Scholars assume, due to some analysis of Süßmayr's own input, that Mozart may have sketched some further eight bars in the Lacrymosa, the first five bars of the Sanctus, the exposition of the Osanna fugue, the first half of the Benedictus, and the beginning of the Agnus Dei. But in any case Süßmayr had to fill all the gaps, complement the ending, and complete the instrumentation – a huge task.

FM

Slightly impatient: But we wanted to talk about Bruckner ...

BGC

Give me one further thought on Mozart. Imagine he would not have written his Requiem on commission. In that case Constanze would not have been pressed to complete the work, for which 50% of the honorario had been prepaid already. If Süßmayr would not have completed the piece, we would know only Introitus and Kyrie, as being already performed at Mozart's funeral. The incomplete manuscript would have perhaps remained

with the Mozart family, perhaps got lost, or come into the hand of a private collector. Now imagine only in our days scholars would discover the manuscript, which breaks off at the end of the Offertorium, and they would ›dare‹ to edit it, or even complete it for performance – after a 200 years' tradition of performing Introitus and Kyrie alone ... I bet we would have the same debate as about the Finale of Bruckner's Ninth.

FM

You said Bruckner left more material for the Finale as Mozart for his Requiem?

BGC

Yes, much more. And even more important: Mozart could not finish his own conception of the piece, but in case of Bruckner the movement was almost entirely composed before he died.

FM

But I have heard, as I said, it is only a pile of disconnected fragments.

BGC

Today the material appears so, but originally there was the emerging autograph score, including ca. 40 bifolios, in all more than 600 bars of music, as well as sketches, drafts, and many discarded bifolios from earlier work phases. Bruckner had obviously finished the entire exposition in full score, and the remainder up to the end of the coda with all string parts plus many jottings for woodwind and brass instruments. Unfortunately many pages disappeared after Bruckner's death, stolen by souvenir hunters, or taken away by his friends and pupils. The surviving materials are to be found today in various libraries and private collections.

FM

How much material disappeared?

BGC

About a half of the emerging autograph score plus numerous sketch bifolios. The lost material may have been destroyed during all those years, but it is also possible that it still survives somewhere, for instance, in private possession, or, unknown, somewhere in a library, for instance in Eastern Europe, as part of all that artwork which came into Russian hands after the Second World War.

FM

Stubborn: If so much is lost, I would call the surviving material a disconnected pile of sketches!

BGC

It appears to be so, but extensive philological research made it possible to largely reconstruct the continuity even from the surviving material. This task already started in 1934, when Alfred Orel published his transcription of most of the Finale manuscripts for the Bruckner-Gesamtausgabe. In 1984, the material was re-assessed by the Italian composers Nicola Samale and Giuseppe Mazzuca, resulting in their first attempt to reconstruct and complete the entire movement. Further scholarly research has been undertaken by myself. Finally, the entire material was re-examined by the Australian scholar and composer John A. Phillips. The Bruckner-Gesamtausgabe published his findings in several volumes. A revelation was in particular his facsimile edition of all surviving Finale manuscripts and his partial reconstruction of the autograph score, re-establishing the order of the surviving score bifolios as valid at the time of Bruckner's death, and reconstructing some of the gaps from surviving drafts or discarded, earlier versions of score bifolios.

FM

This sounds as if those collected materials have different qualities – early and late working phases in a mixture now called a ›partial reconstruction‹. How could that be justified? *Now insisting.* And isn't that still to be called a disconnected pile of sketches?

BGC

No. The connection is first of all established by the fact that Bruckner numbered the score bifolios consecutively by himself. Today lost are the final versions of the score bifolios 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 15, 20, 25, 28, and 31, furthermore the bifolios of the coda from 33 onwards. However, in most of these cases we can indeed reconstruct the continuity of the lost music. In some cases there are discarded, earlier versions of the lost bifolios of various work phases. In some cases there are sketches for the continuity. The material provides several further clues about the lost pages – for instance, the metrical numbers with which Bruckner approved the structures of

his bar periods, sometimes a continued numbering of bars of formal sections, for instance in the chorale recapitulation continued on bifolio 32 with a consecutive numbering of bars approving that the lost 31 must have had 16 bars, and last but not least the fact that Bruckner used score bifolios which had been prepared with four bars on each page, so in most of the cases the gaps are 16 bars long. If you want to regain the material of the gaps, it is essential to first follow up all the various phases and stages of the composition, and to compare sketched sections with their later elaboration on score paper. You also need to be familiar with Bruckner's own, systematical working methods. Some passages of the score, for instance, remained untouched from their first sketch up to the last-valid score bifolio; other passages have been reworked several times. But in particular the discarded bifolios show that very often such bifolios were written anew with a very few changes only, or sometimes they were only copied into a clean, new writing because the old bifolio bared too many changes. The partial reconstruction required the development of almost forensic techniques, but the results were amazing: It was possible to reconstruct the continuity of the movement to a large extent, and most of the gaps could be provisionally closed by such techniques.

FM

I've been told that there is no final double-barline in the surviving material, and the coda seem to be missing at all. In Mahler's Tenth, there is at least continuity of all movements.

BGC

You are right regarding the double-barline; however, there is enough information in the material to come to a plausible hypothesis for the coda as well, since some important sketches for its continuity survive, at least up to the final cadenza with the typical tonic pedalpoint, upon which Bruckner would have built up his lost song of praise.

FM

How do you know there should be a song of praise at the end?

BGC

First of all, it would be obvious already from the fact the Bruckner wanted to dedicate the Ninth to God, and from his decision regarding the Te Deum as an emergency exit. But there is also a report of Dr. Heller, who was Bruckner's doctor in his last months, that in fact Bruckner played the ending of the movement to him on the piano, underlined with Bruckner's words it should be a final Alleluiah to the Dear Lord. By the way: Mahler's Tenth is not the best comparison with Bruckner's Ninth: Bruckner, after all, completed three movements and – at least originally – the exposition of the finale in full score, plus the remainder of the score in strings plus wind indications. Mahler left only the first movement in incomplete full score, the second and third in incomplete draft score, the fourth and fifth only in *particello*. Furthermore, the various performing versions of Mahler's Tenth all differ in structure and length, due to the individual reading of the manuscript by its arrangers. I personally consider none of the existing versions being totally satisfying. The Cooke et al. version is perhaps the most successful, but I think only because it was the first one ever performed and edited, and perhaps because it is the only one for which a commentary was provided, so that the reader of the score can follow up Cooke's decisions. But I think also that Cooke often failed, in particular in achieving Mahler's typical >psychological instrumentation<, not to mention his numerous misreadings of the text itself. – Ah, there comes the food!

FM

Thank god! All your talk made me really hungry now. Please give me a little rest.

The conversation stops for a while. The food is served. The male steward has a gorgeous smile, too. The two men eat their dinner. Only after a cup of the lousy coffee, as it is even served in the first class, the conversation continues.

FM

So I understand it was possible to largely reconstruct the original continuity, with the exposition more or less in full score, the reminder with Strings and some Wind and Brass ideas, am I right?

BGC

Yes, and even if still including some gaps which could not be closed from original materials at all, it was possible to secure at about 90% of the musical continuity.

FM

This sounds really like a lot. But reconstructing a continuity is one thing, and to make it a composition filled with musical life is a different matter.

BGC

Right. It took years of work, done by an international team, led by Nicola Samale.

FM

Never heard of him.

BGC

In Italy he is quite known. He was a pupil of Franco Ferrara, an assistant of Hermann Scherchen and Sir John Barbirolli, and won a couple of conducting competitions in the Sixties. He never made a big career, but has a reputation as an experienced opera conductor in Italy. As a composer he is known for a couple of film soundtracks, most of them together with his colleague Giuseppe Mazzuca. He also wrote chamber, orchestral and vocal music, and up to 2007 he has written five large operas, of which he also conducted the first performances.

FM

But if such a performance version of the Finale exists, why does nobody conduct it?

BGC

Actually this is not true. When Samale and Mazzuca released their first version in 1985, it was taken up by Eliahu Inbal, recorded for Teldec with the RSO Frankfurt, and Peter Ruzicka organized in Berlin a presentation by the RSO Berlin conducted by Peter Gülke. However, reacting to some criticism, Samale continued to improve his version, later working with myself and John Phillips, in a protracted process of collaboration, resulting in a first revised edition from 1991, and newly revised editions of 2005, 2008 and 2011. In the last 20 years, the Finale was performed 43 times, in 11 countries, by 25 orchestras, 22 conductors, including several radio productions and some CD recordings, including conductors such as Daniel Harding or Philippe Herreweghe, and most recently – and very successfully – even Sir Simon Rattle, conducting the Berlin Phil!

FM

But still most of the performances of the Ninth do not include the Finale.

BGC

I guess you're not the only conductor with much limited time. I can also imagine that old-fashioned maestri simply lived too long with the idea the Ninth would make a complete whole in three movements that they would not like to change their own attitude anymore. But it is simply this – an attitude! The question remains if we do justice to Bruckner's own wishes if we perform the Ninth as a torso. One could argue he may certainly have known, and indeed loved, Schubert's *Unfinished*, which represents a similar case. But he also loved Mozart's Requiem in Süßmayr's completion. From his own personal writing we don't know his real opinion on such matters. But we do know that he did explicitly NOT wish a performance of the torso without the Te Deum. So I personally think if a conductor feels unhappy with the idea of performing a fragment, he should follow the composer's own wishes, or, on the other hand, better not perform such a fragment at all! But why should a conductor who accepted to perform Mozart's Requiem in Süßmayr's performing version not be ready to conduct a performing version of Bruckner's Ninth, or Mahler's Tenth, or Elgar/Payne's wonderful Third?

FM

But one thing you should perhaps not forget: We conduct music for our audience, and I think if the audience wishes performances of the three-movement torso, why should we give up this tradition?

BGC

Because you can be sure that also many people may be really interested in listening to what Bruckner tried to achieve in the fourth movement. We continue to receive enthusiastic letters from Bruckner-lovers all around the world who desperately wish that more big-name-conductors would dare to perform the Ninth with its Finale, even if of course such a performing version must be understood as provisoric. But it opens the chance for

listeners to at least give a comprehensive idea what Bruckner had in mind with. A Bruckner fan wrote the following, interesting comment in an online review: »If you don't approve of performing versions of composer's unfinished sketches, no one is holding your hand to the fire forcing you to listen. In the meantime, those of us with intellectual curiosity, although we know such things as this and other performing versions can never really exist as the composer would have completed them, would still rather hear the sketches in some way rather than having them remain mute in archive drawers.«

FM

And the critics?

BGC

Do you really care?

FM

No. I do what I want to do. But the next question would be then: Does the music of such a reconstructed and completed Finale hold the quality of the other three movements?

BGC

This is a question you need to answer to yourself, after studying the music.

FM

I would expect the greatest Finale of all here, even greater than that of the Fifth, but I've been told the music is very bold.

BGC

Better don't mix up your own ideas and expectations of how you think this Finale should sound with the question of the musical quality! It is important to first put our own expectations aside in order to welcome and acknowledge Bruckner's own, final vision. Indeed the music is very bold, and Bruckner intended a unique structure and a harsh character with some strange features. But the musical argument is very strong. The entire symphony works permanently on its own deconstruction, working out the material. The Finale continues this process in a way, which makes it so difficult to cope with it. It seems to be a ›Finale pour le fin de temps‹, an infernal toccata, with the character of a purgatory, a little bit similar to the Finale of Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*. It continues to be tragic and dramatic, includes elements of a ›last battle‹ as well as that of a last ›confession‹, ›last judgement‹ and of course, as in every Bruckner Symphony, the Finale represents a kind of counter-statement and further development of the material from the first movement. Some of its elements are very strange, as if Bruckner would like to take the chance to express himself reckless and ruthless, which makes it even more difficult to cope with the Finale. On the other hand, we find this tendency in all other movements, too. Already the first movement is not what we expect: The third theme group, which Bruckner calls the ›Schlussperiode‹, is not so edgy and powerful as in other first movements, but a vast, melodic sweep, pushed forward by an ostinate rhythm, and the end of the movement with its open fifth taken from, perhaps, the Mozart Requiem, or even more, Liszt's *Dante Symphony*, emphasises not the massive unisono theme from the beginning, but the second and sixth of the seven themes from the main, or first, theme group. The Scherzo is a demoniac dance and almost apocalyptic, with much more weight than the Scherzos of Bruckner's other symphonies in minor. The Trio is this etheric, exalted nightmare, instead of the usual pastoral scene. And the Adagio is the only one which opens with a harsh, loud *exclamatio* at the beginning, has five themes alone in its first theme group, and in particular a violent climax of the opening theme in minor in the recapitulation. All these features are unique and different from all other Bruckner symphonies in a minor key.

FM

Then one should even expect the Finale would be different as well. What are the different features of the Finale?

BGC

The first, clear difference is that the second theme group of the Finale starts with a derivate from the main theme of the first group, with unaccompanied Violins, and continuing in a very reduced instrumentation, as if the main theme would be continued like a ›negative image‹ of it, and as if the second group would not be any longer be distinguished from the first, thematically. There is, for the moment, not anymore the old antagonism

of a ›male‹ first and a ›female‹ second subject; it is all, mysteriously, unified. Only the Trio of the song-period constitutes and isle of singing. The second strange feature is the third group, as in the first movement merely a chant-like section with rhythmical ostinato, but here the other way round: This is a huge, majestic chorale theme, representing a ›positive image‹ of the third group in the first movement. The impression of this Brass chorale, accompanied by tremolo lower Strings and a triplet figuration of the Violins, as in the coda of the first movement, is overwhelmingly monumental. The third, strange feature is that there is actually no recapitulation of the main theme anymore, as still in the first movement. The first sketch phases of the Finale show that Bruckner originally intended such a regular recapitulation. In late autumn 1895 he then followed the idea of creating a fugue as a central development section, starting with a theme based on the main theme. The primary phases of this fugue show that it was originally invented only in order to prepare the return of the main theme, which was then gradually diminished, going directly in the recapitulation of the song period. But in the last phase of the composition of this section, he decided to drop the full recapitulation at all. From this idea survived only the climax of the fugue, with three massive outbursts of the main theme, but in truncated shape in three bars, and not in unisono, followed now by a vast after-development forming a new crescendo, as in the first movement, but leading even into a further, entirely new theme at its peak! So the listener feels that this entire section is development, with a fugue which only pretends to replace the ordinary recapitulation of the main theme. Only the arrival of the song-period seems to set the recapitulation for the listener, as in the first movement. Such features make it not easier to comprehend the structure, but, as I said, this is all in line with the preceding three movements.

FM

That sounds interesting, but I've read several reviews and comments on the performing version, underlining the result sounds poor.

BGC

I can only again recommend that you study the music and come to your own terms. The parameters of the Ninth are totally different from the Fifth, and it would not be within the limits of the Ninth to realise an even more majestic, glorious, positive Finale. After all, Bruckner wished the music expressedly to be so bold and harsh. Take for example the song-period, of which commentators wrote it seems to be all too rudimentary and unelaborated. But if you look into the manuscripts you will find that it had this character already in the very first sketch, and through all the various phases of the instrumentation Bruckner did not add more instruments. There are rests for all silent instruments, even there, where the music is in three string parts only. Just the opposite, if we compare earlier with later working phases of the instrumentation, we note that Bruckner made sections, which were richer at an earlier time, more and more bold and harsh later, by deleting counterpoints or instrumental effects. This is a symphony of death, and we have simply to accept Bruckner's most radical concept of a late-Nineteenth-Century ›Minimal Music‹, in which he made the gradual dissolution of the musical material a part of the inner programme of the work itself. A bit like the late Sibelius perhaps. At the same time, he tried a maximum of sonata construction: The section which seems to be the development works with the Te Deum motive, the chromatic descent (which is the core of the main theme of the first movement), the dotted rhythm and the triplet rhythm of the chorale, and only briefly with the introduction motif and the song period of the Finale. The recapitulation constitutes in fact further development sections: The main theme recap is a fugue, followed with a long epilogue crescendo, preparing even for an entirely new theme (which is indeed the inversed core of the main theme of the first movement, now in a diatonic manner); the song period includes also an epilogue, again with a new, gregorian-like theme, and the chorale recapitulation is constructed from various inversions and repeats also the fugue epilogue horn theme. This is why we have assumed that the coda also might have been intended to use elements of further development: Very clever, but very complex. **FM** Could this not be too shocking for the audience, which lived with the more positive ending for centuries?

BGC

Yes indeed. Perhaps too complex for an average concert listener. Perhaps even too complex for most of the conductors? But you would not ask if this Finale would be a work by Mahler. Bruckner believed into his own music up to his last moments. Why should we not be ready to do the same? *Suddenly the lights are dimmed, since the plane goes into night condition. FM yawns.* I hope this was all not too boring for you?

FM

Oh no, it was really interesting. But I think I have to sleep now some time over it.

Both get ready for the dark period and don't talk any longer. BGC falls into sleep and weird dreams. FM keeps the bedlight on, studies the score for a while, and sleeps then, too. Both wake up from the sudden sunlight through the opened bull's eyes. The steward serves the breakfast, with a twinkle for BGC and a warm smile for FM. Due to the coffee experience, both decide for tea. It ain't no better. Only after breakfast, shortly before landing, the conversation on Bruckner continues.

BGC

So how do you think now about performing the Ninth?

FM

Honestly? I can't tell you. First I have to digest all your information before I can decide anything. You should also not forget that the orchestras have almost no experience with the Finale.

BGC

Oh, come on! This is true for every new piece of music. Could you perhaps just not see the performing version of the Finale like any other new piece of music?

FM

Okay. But I need to get familiar with the music first before I decide to do it or not.

BGC

I can only recommend better forget your prejudices and assumptions and expectations, study the Ninth plus Finale as a whole, and come to your own terms. Why don't you just give it a try? Perform it, and if you're not convinced, drop the entire Ninth ... Or go for the Te Deum at the end, as Bruckner wanted. In any case, I am ready to give you all possible help. *Gives FM his card.* On the other hand, if you would not go for the Finale, I am always ready to conduct it myself ...

FM

Actually, how would you present the Ninth if you would have to do it?

BGC

Well, I would launch an extra workshop programme in advance, presenting the uncompleted fragment plus some introductory talk, then a long intermission, then all four movements, and if possible, then another intermission, and the Te Deum. *The jet prepares for landing. FM goes to the toilet. A farewell-chocolate-bar is presented to the passengers. On the paper wrap, BGC finds a handwritten telephone number and the hasty words »Please call me! Kim.« Was that the steward or the stewardess? BGC quickly interchanges the chocolate bars. FM returns and puts the chocolate bar with the phone number into his pocket without taking notice.*

FM

Well then: It was nice to meet you, and thanks for the interesting talk. We will stay in touch.

The jet hits the ground.