

## Bruckner Edition Wien

### Anton Bruckner Urtext Complete Edition

The Bruckner Complete Edition most readers will be familiar with is that published by the Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, (MWV Bruckner Gesamtausgabe), with their distinctive light blue covers, and MWV have recently announced, as advertised in *The Bruckner Journal*, the commencement of a New Complete Edition, inaugurated by a performance of the First Symphony (Linz) from the New Complete Edition score in Salzburg, 9 Aug. 2014. More or less at the same time, Verlagsgruppe Hermann have announced another Complete Edition, under the general editorship of Dr Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs. *The Bruckner Journal* interviewed Dr. Cohrs about this new edition.

*Dr. Cohrs, I believe the first idea of a new complete edition, outside the context of the Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag edition, was yours. When and why did you come to the conclusion that it was necessary?*

Actually this was not my idea. In 2010 I was approached by Alexander Hermann, publisher of the highly successful Strauß Edition Wien which has, over the last 25 years, edited practically everything from J. Strauß. These editions set a new standard. Since I've been one of the MWV editors since 1995, of course my loyalty was with them at that time. But Dr. Hermann's request to become Editorial Director of a new Bruckner Complete Edition made me think about the whole matter. That offer alerted MWV to launch a re-edition on their own, and I have been asked to participate in that undertaking. However, they decided to run it with an editorial team instead of an editorial director, and after studying the editorial problems of the MWV Bruckner-Gesamtausgabe I came to the conclusion that Dr. Hermann not only had a much better offer, but in particular an editorial know-how and an interest in new ideas that I simply could not resist accepting, and I stopped working for MWV.

There is now a chance to establish an entirely newly conceived edition, avoiding all of the fundamental problems which occurred within the MWV project, caused a) by endless corrections of volumes since 1929, publishing merely revised editions of revised versions of editions, b) by the fact that most of the critical reports have not been published together with the scores, but separately, leading to even new editions later, and c) the fact that the fundamental editorial principles and practice laid out by Haas, and more or less continued by Nowak, are simply not up to date anymore. I could go into much detail about those shortcomings, but this would make an entire paper and go far beyond the limits of this interview.

It took us, in all, three years to discuss all the issues involved with the overall structure of the new edition, manifold questions of layout, of possible co-operation, and finding a team of editors as well as some helpful colleagues (musicians, conductors and scholars) who would like to form an advisory board. Finally, in December 2013 we all had an initial meeting in Vienna, and now we are in the process of preparing the first volumes to be out this and next year. We prefer to do things the right way from the very beginning rather than correcting our approach later. So it is better that we take more time now to save time later.

*What will be the special qualities of the Bruckner Edition Wien which distinguish it from other editions of Bruckner's scores?*

First of all, the overall structure has been carefully planned under practical aspects, and we will offer six series in 16 work groups. Take, as a bad example, the MWV Bruckner Complete Edition volume XXI *Small Sacred Works*: It contains 44 works for all kind of ensembles - works for choir *a cappella*, or with choir and various instruments or small orchestra, sacred solo songs with organ or piano accompaniment, or male choir with trombones. But it is impossible to perform at all from that score. The pieces included there are only available individually from licensed Doblinger editions, but the user of the score finds no information at all about those in the study score! On the other hand what we will do is publish three series: Sacred works for mixed choir, secular works for mixed choir, and works for male choir. Each will include three work groups, as, for instance, *Secular works for mixed choir a cappella*. And apart from the Subscription Volumes there will be practical editions from each of them.

Secondly, each volume will include an editorial report with various sections, features and tables, intended in particular for the musical practice and as a support for the conductor at work. All sources will be taken into account, since «the truth» is not only to be found in the autograph, as Nowak had promoted for his own editions. Hence, we have called our project *Anton Bruckner Urtext Gesamt-Ausgabe*, and each volume will be a scholarly-practical new edition, thoroughly re-examined from the outset. *Bruckner Edition Wien* is only the label, allowing for later text publications as well. In fact, we plan the entire project as a kind of interface between musical practice and musicology. I am, for instance, in the process of writing a book on performance practice in Bruckner, which will appear within this series.

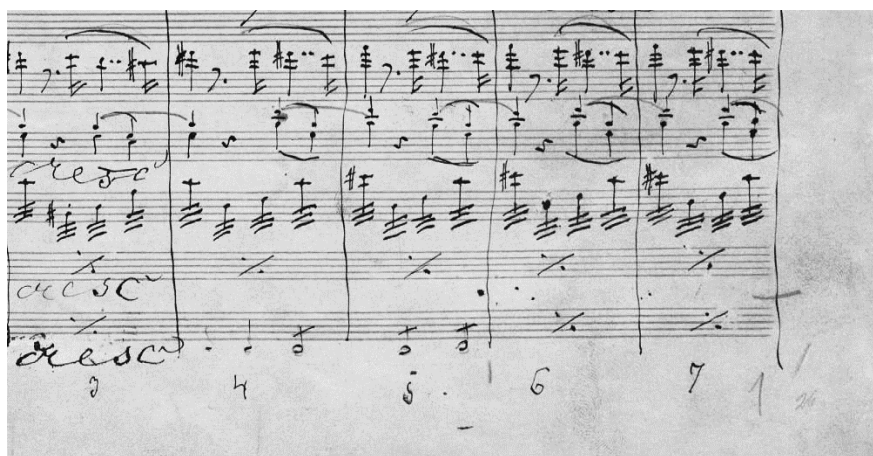
Finally, we have established an entirely new layout method. The volumes will appear in multicolour. For instance, editorial additions will not appear in small type, or in brackets, or dotted lines, they will be all given in royal blue. Things taken from different sources (autograph score, first print edition, orchestral parts etc.) will also appear in different colours. We are also thinking about offering interactive, multicoloured multimedia-versions, for instance for desktop PCs. Where the sources allow for different readings (within one version), we will offer ossia-bars to give conductors a choice of alternatives.

*Obviously you will not be doing this all on your own. Who else will be involved in editing the scores?*

First of all, we are extremely happy that Nikolaus Harnoncourt agreed to become the patron of our new edition, because his ideas of performance and editorial practice match to a large extent our own ideas. I have also found some co-editors, who are also all esteemed personal friends. The sacred choral works (Work Group I.3. and Series II) will be overseen by Rob van der Hilst, who is a composer, organist and music scholar from Utrecht in the Netherlands. He knows sacred music very well and has written some remarkable books on the Bach family. Joseph Kanz, editor and music director from Wiesbaden, Germany, is responsible for secular choral music and works for wind orchestra (Series III and IV). He has a long practice as arranger and editor of music and is also an experienced conductor of wind orchestras. The Lieder and piano works (Work Groups V.2. and VI.1.) will be edited by Dr. Morten Solvik, a music scholar from Vienna who has worked on Schubert songs and Mahler. I am particularly happy that the organ works (Work Group VI.2.) will be edited by Matthias Giesen, music director and organist at the monastery of St. Florian. Personally I will concentrate on the orchestral works and instrumental chamber music.

*Are there likely to be any dramatic, major differences in some of your editions compared to those we are used to hearing? Or will it mainly be a case of refinement, adjustment, informed performance practice etc.?*

That depends entirely on the piece. Some editions will perhaps not differ drastically from older scores, but others may, and the devil is always in the detail. I am at present working on the Seventh, and in fact I have found some bars which have so far never been performed as they stand in the autograph score.



Symphony No. 7, 1st movement, bars 112-16

We will present some works, or versions of symphonies, which (at least until this day) have not been included in the MWV BrGA. Take for instance the Second Symphony: from our new editions it will be possible for the first time to perform it as Bruckner himself conducted it in 1873 and 1876. We will also bring alternative movements within the same volume of a version - for instance, No. I/1 will be based on the text as Bruckner himself premiered it in 1868, but also include the earlier version of the Adagio and the old Scherzo in a supplement, as well as the later revisions. So the conductor can decide for alternatives without hiring extra materials. And, by the way, with the exception of the parts for the symphonies (which will be on hire), all performance materials will be available for sale, including the sacred music!

*For the lay enthusiasts, popular commentators and even orchestral librarians, the confusion surrounding editions of Bruckner's works is something of a nightmare. The composer himself is responsible for some of the confusion, but don't you think this increase in the number of extant editions (in parallel with a whole new complete edition from MWV) is merely going to exacerbate the problem rather than clarify it? After all, most*

*people just want to hear, for example, Bruckner 4, and would rather not find themselves confronted by an ever-expanding plethora of versions, quasi-versions, revisions and editions. How will your edition cater for such a simple, but understandable, requirement?*

Actually this is merely a Brucknerians' way of seeing it. Other composers have also offered some of their works in different versions - Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Prokofiev, not to mention Bach, Händel, Mozart or Schubert. And of many composers we also have numerous editions of the same works. Just to the contrary, I find it quite amazing that, concentrating on the Bruckner symphonies, we have so far only performance materials for the old Haas et al., the Nowak et al., and the first print scores in reprint-editions (such as Kalmus). It could be much worse! The average listener may also not be capable of noticing editorial differences in Beethoven Symphonies between Del Mar, Markevich, Mahler or Wagner. Essential for the listener is the information from CD-booklets, programme notes, concert organisers or broadcast companies. But we do our Urtext-Gesamt-Ausgabe for the performers. Besides: the old <critical> editions cause so much trouble that it is actually a duty to edit this music entirely anew.

Just take the Seventh - an extremely difficult case: There is the first print, which was taken from the autograph score, even if edited by Josef Schalk and Ferdinand Löwe, but under the strict supervision of the composer. But there are many errors in the autograph and many in the first print score too. Sometimes the first print gives clear corrections or improvements, but also sometimes errors from the autograph remain, and there are even new errors in the first print. Haas claimed to have cleaned up the autograph from alien hands, Nowak to have re-established Bruckner's later intentions. But both editions in fact mix up elements from the autograph and the first print and even take some ideas from secondary sources, but without justifying their edits at all. Then came Rüdiger Bornhöft, who prepared the Critical Report in 2003, once more corrected and revised the score - and the final result is unfortunately once more just a mess...

*Q. Have orchestras, conductors and performers already expressed an interest in this project?*

Nikolaus Harnoncourt is naturally interested in our new edition, but he is not the youngest anymore, and who knows if he ever will do a Bruckner symphony again. I also know some conductors who told me personally they are interested. But at the end we have to convince with the quality of our edition. And considering the success of the Neue Johann Strauß Gesamtausgabe, I am sure ours will become a standard edition within the next 25 years, if we do a good job.

*Q. I see the price will be between 250 and 320 Euros per volume. What does the purchaser get? Is this just a study score? Given the very difficult economic circumstances in which the classical music business finds itself, and Bruckner hardly the most popular composer, why are the publishers persuaded that this will be a viable project? Will you be receiving any external sponsorship or subsidy?*

Oh, that is only the price for the luxury subscription volumes, bound in linen. Of course we will sell study scores and parts and vocal scores for affordable prices. But indeed we get no subsidy. We have a different way of thinking: We do not establish an <editorial board> from a musicological faculty or institute specializing in a composer, with some names of weight on the front cover only with the intent to raise some money. We prefer to have an advisory board of scholars and musicians who really give advice to the editors and serve as an interface with scholarship - well known Bruckner scholar Prof. Dr. Manfred Wagner, Dr. Johannes Wildner (conductor, scholar and earlier violinist in the Vienna Philharmonic), Dr. Beatrix Darmstädter and Gerhard Zechmeister (Vienna, specialists for historical woodwind and brass instruments), Markus Landerer (Domkapellmeister of St. Stephen in Vienna, a specialist for church music), and Dr. Franz Scheder (Nuremberg), who established the profound Anton Bruckner chronology. So no subsidies. It is all at the risk of the entrepreneur. This is why we have to work very hard to make it a success.

*What and when is the first volume to be published? What sort of time scale do you envisage the complete edition being published over? When can we expect to hear the first performance of one of the new editions?*

The first volume is Symphony No. VII, which we hope to bring out next fall, soon followed by the Missa Solemnis in B flat minor, prepared by Rob van der Hilst. The entire project will comprise ca. 46 Volumes, and we envisage two new releases every year. So we hope to finish within ca. 25 years. First performances can be expected as soon as the volumes are out. But of course we will first have to convince the conductors with the quality of our work

The prospectus of the Bruckner Edition Wien can be read on-line at [www.harrassowitz.de/music\\_services/documents/AntonBrucknerUrtextCompleteEdition.pdf](http://www.harrassowitz.de/music_services/documents/AntonBrucknerUrtextCompleteEdition.pdf)  
A search-engine entry "Harrassowitz Bruckner" will also find it.