




London Philharmonic Orchestra

BRUCKNER SYMPHONY NO.7 IN E MAJOR

KLAUS TENNSTEDT *conductor*
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA



A BBC recording

BRUCKNER

SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN E MAJOR (HAAS EDITION)

- 1 *Allegro moderato*
- 2 *Adagio*
- 3 *Scherzo: Sehr schnell*
- 4 *Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht schnell*

The Seventh Symphony brought Bruckner his first great international success. Early in 1884, a few months after he had completed it, his friends Josef Schalk and Ferdinand Löwe played a four-hand piano arrangement of the Symphony to Arthur Nikisch, then the fast-rising First Conductor of the Leipzig Opera. Usually sedate in manner, Nikisch became 'all fire and flame', Schalk reported, and vowed to work for Bruckner's recognition. He arranged for the premiere of the Symphony to be given in Leipzig, and overrode opposition that caused two postponements. He even invited the music critics to his home so that he could go through the score with them beforehand. The performance took place on 30 December 1884 and was an unqualified success.

Performances in Munich and Dresden established Bruckner's name in Germany. Holland and America, too, acclaimed the Symphony. Bruckner tried to prevent a performance in Vienna lest the influential Eduard Hanslick and other hostile critics ruin his new German

reputation. The Symphony was nevertheless given there in 1886 and fiercely attacked by the pro-Brahms press. The Viennese audience, however, loved it.

Bruckner had begun composing the Seventh in September 1881. In the following summer he visited Bayreuth for the first performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* and met its composer, whom he revered, for the last time. Back home in Austria he completed the *Scherzo* and first movement, and on 22 January 1883, three weeks before Wagner's death, started work on what is arguably his greatest symphonic *Adagio*. 'One day I came home and felt very sad', he wrote to Felix Mottl. 'The thought had crossed my mind that before long the Master would die, and then the C sharp minor theme of the *Adagio* came to me.' The news of Wagner's death reached him as he was finishing this musical tribute, and he then revised the coda, sublimating his grief in the sombre passage for horns and tubas that he afterwards called his 'funeral music for the Master'.

The Symphony was completed in September 1883.

Two modern editions of this Symphony have been published under official auspices. Robert Haas (1944) deleted some tempo and dynamic markings that were not in Bruckner's handwriting. Leopold Nowak (1954) restored them, arguing that there were sufficient grounds for thinking that the composer sanctioned them.

With the exception of the *Adagio* there are no clues to what passed through Bruckner's mind as he wrote this music. Obviously his Catholic faith and love of nature influenced his work, but it would be unwise to look for a specific programme; the notes need no prop. Most of the features expected in a Bruckner symphony are embodied here. The time-scale is expansive, the orchestral layout is spacious, the treatment of sonata form idiosyncratic but logical. One novelty is the introduction for the first time in a Bruckner symphony

of four Wagner tubas, which appear in the second and fourth movements.

Soft string *tremolos* provide a shimmering background for the first theme, which the composer said came to him in a dream. It is unusually long, extending over 21 bars and containing potentially useful elements, in particular the opening arpeggio phrase for solo horn and cellos, which proves to be a motto for the whole Symphony. The serene second subject is first heard on oboe and clarinet over gently throbbing brass, and after a big build-up there comes a third subject, a robust rhythmic tune that begins quietly. The development and recapitulation are on a typically large scale. Finally the string *tremolos* reappear to usher in a coda that ends in a blaze of brass.

In its form, the *Adagio* memorial to Wagner is modelled on the slow movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, with three statements of the main theme enclosing two

of a lighter episode. The great C sharp minor melody for Wagner tubas and strings incorporates in the string part a reference to 'Let me not be confounded' in Bruckner's *Te Deum* (LPO–0027). The alternating episode (in F sharp the first time and A flat the second) is a flowing consolatory tune. The elegiac principal melody becomes progressively more elaborate, and on its third appearance running semiquavers on the first violins raise it to an awe-inspiring climax. Whether or not the composer approved the addition of a cymbal clash and triangle at this point has been much debated.

The vigorous A minor *Scherzo* is a clever piecing together of small thematic patterns, the first being a rapid string ostinato and the second a trumpet call suggested by the crowing of a cock. A soft timpani rhythm launches the central trio section, whose gentle theme is a slowed and inverted version of the *Scherzo*'s ostinato.

With the finale the Symphony is back in its home key of E major, but only for a few bars before the music sideslips into A flat. This is not an orthodox sonata-form movement, though its course may be followed readily in outline. The opening violin theme is a shorter form of

the Symphony's motto. This is succeeded by a chorale-like theme for strings and a third subject, which derives from the first and is marked by enormous unisons. After development of this material the chorale theme withdraws, leaving the motto-based ideas to drive to an exultant E major climax, where at last the motto regains its original first-movement form.

Programme note © Eric Mason

KLAUS TENNSTEDT *conductor*



Born in East Germany, Klaus Tennstedt studied at the Leipzig Conservatory and conducted throughout his native land, but it was not until he moved to the West in 1971 that he started to achieve world recognition. He made his American debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1974 and his debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1977.

He had an instant rapport with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, which resulted in return

invitations and his appointment as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor and Music Director in 1983. This developed into a unique and remarkable relationship until illness brought it to a premature end some ten years later.

Tennstedt was renowned for his performances of the German repertoire, particularly Mahler and Bruckner whose symphonies he conducted regularly with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall and on disc to huge public acclaim. His energy, musicianship and emotional involvement, combined with a rare humility, endeared him to audiences and musicians alike.

Klaus Tennstedt died in 1998.

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the world's finest orchestras, balancing a long and distinguished history with its present-day position as one of the most dynamic and forward-looking ensembles in the UK. This reputation has been secured by the Orchestra's performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, trailblazing international tours and wide-ranging educational work.

Founded by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1932, the Orchestra has since been headed by many of the world's greatest conductors, including Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur.

In September 2021 Edward Gardner became the Orchestra's Principal Conductor, succeeding Vladimir Jurowski, who became Conductor Emeritus in recognition of his transformative impact on the

Orchestra as Principal Conductor from 2007–21.

The Orchestra is based at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall in London, where it has been Resident Orchestra since 1992, giving around 30 concerts a season. Each summer it takes up its annual residency at Glyndebourne Festival Opera where it has been Resident Symphony Orchestra for over 50 years. The Orchestra performs at venues around the UK and has made numerous international tours, performing to sell-out audiences in America, Europe, Asia and Australasia.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings on 10 October 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label.

lpo.org.uk



ANTON BRUCKNER 1824–96

63:07

Symphony No.7 in E major (Haas edition)

01	19:44	Allegro moderato
02	21:21	Adagio
03	09:38	Scherzo: Sehr schnell
04	12:00	Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht schnell

KLAUS TENNSTEDT *conductor*

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

David Nolan *leader*

Recorded live at the Southbank Centre's **ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL** *London*