



London **Philharmonic** Orchestra

BRUCKNER
SYMPHONY NO. 7

STANISŁAW SKROWACZEWSKI *conductor*
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

ANTON BRUCKNER (1824–96)

SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN E MAJOR

- 1 *Allegro moderato*
- 2 *Adagio: Sehr feierlich und sehr langsam*
[Very solemn and slow]
- 3 *Scherzo: Sehr schnell* [Very fast] –
Trio: Etwas langsamer [Somewhat slower]
- 4 *Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht schnell*
[Lively, but not fast]

The world premiere of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony in 1884 was the big turning point in the composer's career. The previous 16 years had been a hard lesson in patience. In 1868, the 44-year-old Bruckner had left his Upper Austrian homeland for Vienna, full of hope. Instead he experienced rejection and mockery from the Viennese musical establishment. The first performance of the Third Symphony in 1877, by a visibly reluctant Vienna Philharmonic, was a catastrophe. The hall gradually emptied, and Bruckner was then subjected to a hideous mauling in the press. After that, few were disposed to take him seriously.

Then, in 1881, the long-delayed premiere of the Fourth under Hans Richter began to turn the tide. Buoyed up by this, Bruckner began work on one of his most grandly affirmative works, the choral-orchestral *Te Deum*, which he dedicated

proudly 'to God, for having brought me through so much anguish in Vienna'. A few months later, on 23 September, Bruckner began sketching the Seventh Symphony. Apparently the Symphony's wonderful opening melody came to Bruckner in a dream: a friend from Bruckner's younger days played the theme on a viola, with the words 'This will bring you success.' If this is true it was prophetic: the premiere of the Seventh Symphony – significantly, not in conservative Vienna, but in the more culturally progressive German city of Leipzig – was one of the greatest successes of Bruckner's life. One critic wrote, 'How is it possible that he could remain so long unknown to us?'

It isn't hard to believe that the long, serenely arching first theme (cellos and violas, with horn at first) could have come straight from the unconscious – a gift of nature. As the theme is repeated on full orchestra the vision intensifies, then fades. A more melancholy second theme (oboe and clarinet) aspires to recover lost glory. Eventually it sounds as though it might succeed, in a long crescendo over a repeated bass note, topped with brass fanfares. But this is suddenly cut off, and a more animated third theme follows: an earthy dance tune (strings in unison, with woodwind and brass support). After this, Bruckner allows us memories of his

original vision; but it is only at the end of the movement that the promise of the opening is fulfilled: the Symphony's opening motif rises steadily through the orchestra, crescendo, over a long-held major triad. Bruckner may have had the elemental one-chord crescendo that opens Wagner's *Das Rheingold* at the back of his mind, but the effect here is quite different – after all this is a culmination, not a beginning.

It is said that Bruckner composed the *Adagio* in the knowledge that his idol Wagner hadn't long to live. There is an unmistakable note of mourning in the noble first theme, in which Bruckner uses – for the first time – a quartet of so-called 'Wagner tubas' (more like deep horns than tubas). Just before the lovely second theme (strings, in 3/4), hushed horn and tubas allude to Wagner's masterpiece *Tristan und Isolde*, but unless this is pointed out, you'd hardly notice it: the effect is pure Bruckner. In some performances – including this one (Skrowaczewski's own edition) – the *Adagio*'s climax is crowned by a cymbal clash, with triangle and timpani. This wasn't Bruckner's idea, but a suggestion from two friends. It's a thrilling moment: a revelation of pure light, after which the tubas, joined by horns, sing a magnificent elegy, then the movement concludes in peace.

Like many of Bruckner's earlier scherzos, the *Scherzo* of the Seventh Symphony reveals its rustic roots at almost every turn. (Bruckner often played in country dance-bands in his youth.) There are strong echoes of the Austrian *Ländler*, country cousin of the sophisticated Viennese waltz. But there is an obsessive, elemental drive here. The central Trio is much gentler, more songful, after which the *Scherzo* is repeated. Then comes the finale – unusually for Bruckner it's the lightest (and in most performances, the shortest) of the four movements. Again there are three themes: a dancing, dotted theme (violins); a solemn chorale on violins and violas above a 'walking' pizzicato bass; and a jagged version of the first theme for full orchestra in unison. Excitement builds towards the end, until at last Bruckner reveals that the finale's dancing first theme is simply the Symphony's serene opening motif in disguise: we have travelled full circle.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

STANISŁAW SKROWACZEWSKI *conductor*

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Stanisław Skrowaczewski commands a rare position in the international musical scene, being both a renowned conducting figure and

a highly regarded composer. During his long and distinguished career, he has conducted all the top orchestras, and – in his 90th year – he retains a busy schedule with guest engagements taking him across North America, Europe and Japan. Skrowaczewski is currently Conductor Laureate of the Minnesota Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, and Honorary Conductor Laureate of the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra.

Born in 1923 in Lwów, Poland, Skrowaczewski began piano and violin studies at the age of four, composed his first symphonic work at seven, gave his first public piano recital at 11, and two years later played and conducted Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. A hand injury during the war terminated his

keyboard career, after which he concentrated on composing and conducting. In 1946 he became conductor of the Wrocław (Breslau) Philharmonic, and he later served as Music Director of the Katowice Philharmonic (1949–54), the Kraków Philharmonic (1954–6) and the Warsaw National Orchestra (1956–9).

Skrowaczewski spent the immediate post-war years in Paris, studying with Nadia Boulanger and co-founding the avant-garde group *Le Zodiaque*. In 1948 he conducted the Paris premiere of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony with the *Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France*. After winning the 1956 International Competition for Conductors in Rome, he was invited by George Szell to make his American debut, conducting the Cleveland Orchestra in 1958. This led to engagements with the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony and Cincinnati Symphony orchestras and, in 1960, to his appointment as Music Director of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra (now the Minnesota Orchestra), a position that he held for 19 years. During the 1960s he made his debuts with the Royal Concertgebouw, London Symphony, Philadelphia, Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic and Berlin Philharmonic orchestras, as well

as with the Vienna State Opera and Metropolitan Opera (New York). In particular, he became a regular guest conductor of the Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras and the Berlin Philharmonic.

From 1984–91 Skrowaczewski was Principal Conductor of the Hallé, with whom he gave concerts across England, led tours throughout Europe and the USA, and recorded extensively. In 2007 Skrowaczewski was appointed Principal Conductor of the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra for three highly successful seasons, during which time many of his performances were recorded live for Columbia Records.

Still an active composer, Skrowaczewski's works have been performed by the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony and Minnesota orchestras. His *Concerto for Orchestra* (1985) and *Passacaglia Immaginario* (1995) were both nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Earlier award-winning compositions include *Overture 1947*, which won the Karol Szymanowski Competition in Warsaw, and *Ricercari notturni* (1977), which received the first Kennedy Center Friedheim Award.

The recipient of numerous accolades, Skrowaczewski is a Commander with Star of the Order of Polonia Restituta and has six Honorary Doctorates, awarded most recently by the universities of Minnesota and Wrocław, the New England Conservatory of Music and the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music, Katowice. Skrowaczewski's interpretations of Bruckner have earned him the Bruckner Society of America's Kilenyi Medal of Honor and the Gold Medal of the Mahler-Bruckner Society, and his programming of contemporary music at the Minnesota Orchestra was acknowledged with five ASCAP Awards.

Of particular note within his extensive discography are Skrowaczewski's complete recordings of Bruckner's and Beethoven's symphonies with the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra for Arte Nova Classics, which received enormous critical acclaim. The Bruckner set won the 2002 Cannes Classical Award in the 'Orchestral 18th/19th Century' category and was also included in *BBC Music Magazine's* 'Top Ten Discs of the Decade'.

Published in 2011, a comprehensive account of Skrowaczewski's life and work can be found in *Seeking the Infinite: The Musical Life of Stanisław Skrowaczewski*, by Frederick Harris, Jr.

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is known as one of the world's great orchestras with a reputation secured by its performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, its trail-blazing international tours and its pioneering education work. Distinguished conductors who have held positions with the Orchestra since its foundation in 1932 by Sir Thomas Beecham include Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt, Franz Welser-Möst and Kurt Masur. Vladimir Jurowski was appointed the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor in March 2003 and became Principal Conductor in September 2007.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra has been Resident Symphony Orchestra at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall since 1992 and there

it presents its main series of concerts between September and May each year. In summer, the Orchestra moves to Sussex where it has been Resident at Glyndebourne Festival Opera for 50 years. The Orchestra also performs at venues around the UK and has made numerous tours to America, Europe and Japan, and visited India, Hong Kong, China, South Korea, Australia, Oman, South Africa and Abu Dhabi.

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. These recordings are taken mainly from live concerts given by conductors including LPO Principal Conductors from Beecham and Boult, through Haitink, Solti and Tennstedt, to Masur and Jurowski. **lpo.org.uk**



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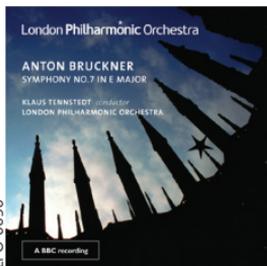
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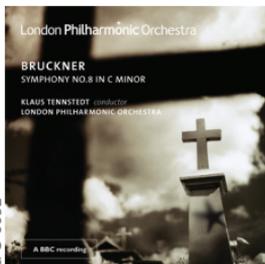
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'This pair of CDs demonstrate how, in the right hands, the first two symphonies can thrill and delight.'
The Arts Desk

ANTON BRUCKNER (1824–96)

68:56 **Symphony No. 7 in E major**

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|----|-------|---|
| 01 | 21:52 | Allegro moderato |
| 02 | 24:23 | Adagio: Sehr feierlich und sehr langsam |
| 03 | 9:50 | Scherzo: Sehr schnell – Trio: Etwas langsamer |
| 04 | 12:51 | Finale: Bewegt, doch nicht schnell |

STANISŁAW SKROWACZEWSKI *conductor*

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Georgy Valtchev *guest leader*

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