

London Philharmonic Orchestra

BRUCKNER  
SYMPHONY NO. 3

STANISŁAW SKROWACZEWSKI *conductor*  
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA



## BRUCKNER

### SYMPHONY NO. 3

Bruckner's tendency to revise his major works – sometimes over and over again – is notorious. It creates a nightmare for scholars, conductors and listeners alike. Bruckner's Third Symphony, however, has the dubious distinction of being his most-revised work – one current estimate is that there are as many as eight authentic versions. Obsessive perfectionism may be one reason why Bruckner was unable to leave his scores well alone. But the Third Symphony's catastrophic premiere in December 1877 clearly shook this nervous, often under-confident man to the core. Despite strong resistance, the conductor Johann Herbeck had managed to persuade the Vienna Philharmonic to play the Symphony. But when Herbeck died suddenly, Bruckner had to step into the breach. The orchestra was uncooperative (to say the least), and the Symphony's effusive dedication to Bruckner's idol Wagner probably turned most of the conservative Viennese press against him in advance. During the performance the hall gradually emptied until, at the end, only a couple of dozen supporters were left. As Bruckner turned to acknowledge their determined applause, the orchestra got up and walked off the platform. As his friends tried to console him Bruckner is said to have shouted, 'Oh, leave me alone, they don't want anything of mine.'

Yet despite this humiliating public failure, Bruckner never

fully lost faith in his artistic vocation. An intensely devout Roman Catholic, he believed his talent was God-given, and that it was his duty to use it in his own very individual way. As he once told a friend: 'People say I should compose differently. I could, but I mustn't.' In fact Bruckner held to the architectural plan laid out in the Third Symphony in almost all his later symphonies. His symphonies are sometimes described as 'cathedrals in sound'. All medieval cathedrals are based on the same cross-wise ground plan, with important features situated in more or less the same places. But no-one would seriously claim that Durham, York Minster and Chartres were effectively the same building in three different locations. Much the same could be said about Bruckner's symphonies.

Like most of Bruckner's other symphonies, No. 3 begins with an expectant hush: in this case a cluster of misty string figurations. For a moment or two the interior of this cathedral remains shadowy, mysterious. A trumpet then sounds the main theme – the theme that made such a powerful impression on Wagner when Bruckner took him the first version of the score in 1873. A long *crescendo* builds from this, culminating in a massive unison theme for full orchestra. Bruckner clearly has the beginning of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at the back of his mind; but the effect is quite different. In the Beethoven there

is a growing sense of headlong, tragic momentum. With Bruckner, no matter how agitated the music may seem on the surface, the underlying pace is usually slow. Stay with Bruckner, however, and patience is always rewarded.

This first movement has three main themes: the 'Wagner' trumpet motif; a warmly harmonised tune for strings in Bruckner's favourite 'ONE-two-three ONE-two' rhythm; and a massive unison figure for full orchestra with the three-plus-two rhythm reversed. The so-called 'development' examines these themes at length. Then all three themes return in full, before the ominous final *crescendo* (a return of the misty opening figures over a repeated falling bass figure) leads to a massive conclusion.

The *Adagio* slow movement is also dominated by three themes: a hushed, noble tune for strings, a long melody introduced by violas (in three-time), and a quietly dignified, slow-dance-like figure for strings, apparently composed in memory of Bruckner's mother – a strong-minded, musical woman, prone (like her son) to deep depression. This slow movement eventually builds to a powerful climax, but at its height it breaks off and mystery returns. At one point, hushed shimmering strings recall the dissolving harmonies of Brünnhilde's 'Magic Sleep' motif from Wagner's *Valkyrie*,

but the touching simplicity of the ending is pure Bruckner. Both the *Scherzo* and its central trio section are pervaded by the characteristic rhythms and melodic shapes of the dance music of Bruckner's native Upper Austria – especially the Ländler, country cousin of the sophisticated Viennese waltz. As a young man Bruckner had often supplemented his meagre teacher's salary by playing this kind of music in village bands. The Finale begins with a surging *Allegro*, a bit like a ferocious cavalry charge. But after two big *crescendo* waves the tempo drops and the second theme fuses a polka-like tune (strings) with a solemn wind chorale. 'That's life', Bruckner told a friend. 'That's what I wanted to show in my Third Symphony. The polka represents the fun and joy in the world, the chorale its sadness and pain.' At the end it is joy that triumphs: a blazing brass fanfare cuts through turbulent string figures, then the trumpet theme of the Symphony's opening returns to flood this 'cathedral in sound' in daylight.

Programme notes © Stephen Johnson



# STANISŁAW SKROWACZEWSKI

*conductor*



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Stanisław Skrowaczewski has conducted all of the top orchestras during his long and distinguished career and is currently the world's oldest working major conductor.

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) and Kraków Philharmonic (1954-6), and permanent conductor of the Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra (1956-9).

Skrowaczewski spent the immediate post-war years in Paris, studying with Nadia Boulanger and co-founding the avant-garde organization Groupe Zodiaque. In 1948 he conducted the Paris premiere of Shostakovich's Fifth

Symphony with L'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, and where he is now Conductor Laureate. During the 1960s he made his debuts with the Royal Concertgebouw, London Symphony, Philadelphia, Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, and Vienna 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 Berliner Philharmoniker.

From 1984 to 1991 Skrowaczewski was Principal Conductor of the Hallé and in 2007 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

recently been performed by the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, Bruckner Orchester Linz, Yomiuri Nippon Symphony and Minnesota orchestras. His *Concerto for Orchestra* (1985) and *Passacaglia Immaginaria* (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. *Music for Winds* (2009) was commissioned by a consortium of nine orchestras from the USA, Germany, Austria and Japan.

Recordings of Skrowaczewski's music are found on Oehms Classics, Reference Recordings, Albany Records and Innova.

The recipient of numerous accolades, Skrowaczewski was recently awarded the Knight's Cross of Polonia Restituta, one of Poland's highest decorations, 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. His programming of contemporary music at the Minnesota Orchestra was acknowledged with five ASCAP

Awards and the Ditson Conductor's Award, bestowed by Columbia University, New York. He is the recipient of the 2004 McKnight Foundation Distinguished Artist Award, one of Minnesota's highest cultural recognitions. In 2013 the University of Minnesota established the Stanisław Skrowaczewski Endowment in Conducting in honour of his remarkable contributions to music and to Minnesota.

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. Currently, two documentary films about Skrowaczewski are in progress in Poland and the United States.

# 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, trail-blazing 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. Vladimir Jurowski was appointed the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor in March 2003, and became Principal Conductor in September 2007.

The Orchestra is based at 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. 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](http://lpo.org.uk)**





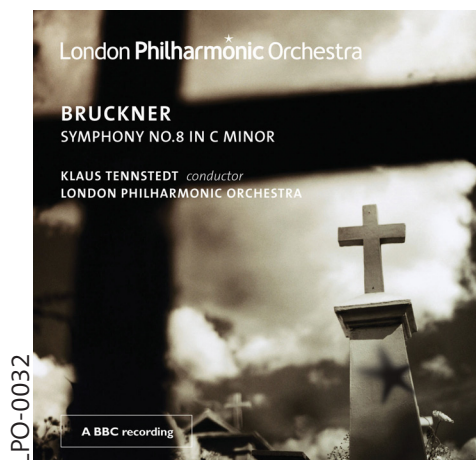
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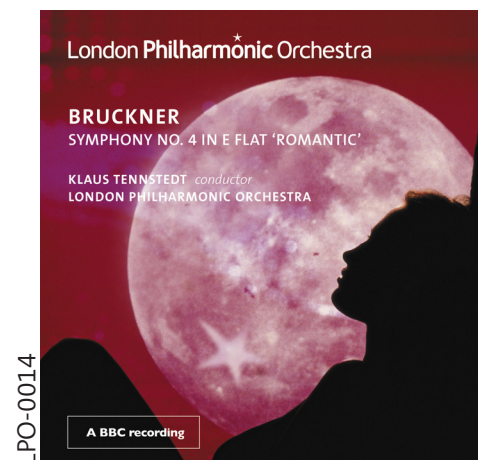
LPO-0071

**Bruckner: Symphony No. 7  
(Skrowaczewski)**



LPO-0032

**Bruckner: Symphony No. 8  
(Tennstedt)**



LPO-0014

**Bruckner: Symphony No. 4  
(Tennstedt)**



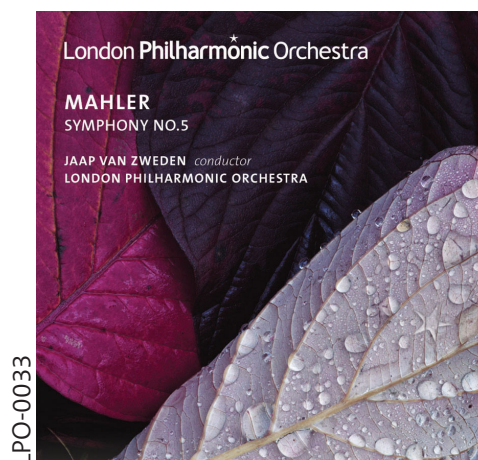
LPO-0049

**Bruckner: Symphony No. 6  
(Eschenbach)**



LPO-0054

**Mahler: Symphony No. 2  
(Juwowski)**



LPO-0033

**Mahler: Symphony No. 5  
(van Zweden)**

**ANTON BRUCKNER (1824–96)**

**56:35     Symphony No. 3 in D minor**

- |    |       |  |
|----|-------|--|
| 01 | 20:18 | Sehr langsam, misterioso                   |
| 02 | 15:20 | Adagio. Bewegt, quasi Andante              |
| 03 | 7:25  | Scherzo. Ziemlich schnell – Trio – Scherzo |
| 04 | 13:32 | Finale. Allegro                            |

**STANISŁAW SKROWACZEWSKI** *conductor*

**LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**

**Vesselin Gelliev** *leader*

*Recorded live at* **SOUTHBANK CENTRE'S ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL**, *London*