

London Philharmonic Orchestra

BRUCKNER
SYMPHONY NO.8 IN C MINOR

KLAUS TENNSTEDT *conductor*
LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

A BBC recording

BRUCKNER

SYMPHONY NO. 7 IN C MINOR (NOWAK EDITION, 1890)

- 1 *Allegro moderato*
- 2 *Scherzo (Allegro moderato)*
- 3 *Adagio: Feierlich langsam, doch nicht schleppend*
- 4 *Finale: Feierlich, nicht schnell*

Bruckner did not usually work, as Beethoven and Brahms did, with themes and phrases that could be developed organically in symphonic argument. He preferred to address his audience in long self-contained paragraphs of contrasting character, returning from time to time to take up a theme again with some variation or greater emphasis. Once this is understood, the listener is unlikely to sense any incongruity in the abruptness with which Bruckner sometimes changes topics. The direct contrast between massive ensemble sound and silence is a cardinal feature of the typical Bruckner symphony, and contrast is after all a fundamental symphonic principle.

The Eighth Symphony was the last that Bruckner completed – the Ninth was left unfinished – and it is perhaps the grandest. It was a long time in gestation. Bruckner completed the first movement on his 60th birthday in September 1884, and the first draft of the whole work the following August. It took him another

two years to finish the Symphony in full score. In September 1887 he sent the score to one of his greatest supporters, the conductor Hermann Levi, who severely criticised it and refused to perform it as it stood. Levi and another friend, Josef Schalk, persuaded Bruckner, who took criticism much to heart, to make extensive revisions, and the revised version was completed in March 1890.

Hans Richter conducted the tremendously successful first performance on 18 December 1892 in Vienna. The audience gave the composer an ovation after every movement, and Hugo Wolf declared: 'This symphony is the creation of a giant'. The Emperor of Austria accepted the dedication of the Symphony and paid the cost of publication out of his private purse.

Subsequent performances have normally used the second version, but the International Bruckner Society has published two editions of this. Robert Haas (1935)

followed most of Bruckner's alterations but took the view that the composer's cuts in the *Adagio* and finale were made against his better judgement. Haas therefore restored the missing passages. Leopold Nowak (1955) offers the Symphony as Bruckner left it, and his edition is used in this recording.

Bruckner disclosed that the 'Siegfried' theme from Wagner's *Ring* inspired this Symphony's slow movement, and it is clear that the rhythmic structure of that theme influenced the opening theme of the first movement and its counterpart in the finale. That source material, however, is transformed into something very much Bruckner's own. The powerful first movement is tragic. It begins not in the expected key of C minor but with a mysterious pedal F and a first subject in B flat minor. A mournful oboe phrase leads to the first of two 'second' subjects, a rising violin phrase in Bruckner's favourite two-plus-three rhythm. This starts out in G major, the customary key for the second subject of

a C minor symphony, but quickly modulates away. The other 'second' subject (horns and woodwind) is also unorthodox, being in E flat minor on its first appearance. Fierce descending brass scales intervene before the major key is gained. In every movement except the *Scherzo*, four horn players double on Wagner tubas, which add a distinctive timbre to the range of brass sonorities. Exchanges between Wagner tubas and oboe open the development section, which works to a big, dark climax. The coda, which Bruckner called a death watch, makes a desolate conclusion.

Multiple repetitions of two phrases make the pounding *Scherzo*. In contrast to this fierce music the idyllic central trio section brings Schubert to mind.

The long *Adagio*, marked 'Solemn and slow but not dragging', is one of Bruckner's most profound movements. There are two main themes, the first a deeply expressive violin melody accompanied by

throbbing chords on the other strings. This reaches a climax, continues with a chorale-like rising scale added and ends with rippling harp arpeggios enhancing the string texture. The opening section is repeated, the harp arpeggios leading this time to the second subject, a theme for cellos. First and second subjects are in due course re-stated in varied form, after which the first section returns once more with a new viola accompaniment figure. Twice in this passage the horns play a near quotation of the 'Siegfried' theme, the only overt reference to Wagner in a generally un-Wagnerian movement. Following a massive climax the horns refer back to the violins' opening theme in a quiet coda.

After three such weighty movements the finale needs similar dimensions to balance the grand design. The marking here is 'Solemn, not fast'. As in the first movement there are three principal themes, the first thundered forth by the brass against a hammered rhythm from the strings. The second theme (strings) has a devotional character, while the third is a march-like tune for the strings. These three subjects are developed at considerable length, the last reprise of the third culminating in a powerful brass statement of the first movement's opening theme, now in the

Symphony's home key of C minor. This ushers in a majestic coda, which begins with the finale's opening theme in C minor and rises to a blaze of C major, wherein the main themes of all four movements are triumphantly blended.

Programme note © Eric Mason

KLAUS TENNSTEDT *conductor*



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.

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

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

73:51

Symphony No. 8 in C minor (Nowak edition, 1890)

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| 01 | 14:45 | Allegro moderato |
| 02 | 13:35 | Scherzo (Allegro moderato) |
| 03 | 24:59 | Adagio: Feierlich langsam, doch nicht schleppend |
| 04 | 20:32 | Finale: Feierlich, nicht schnell |

KLAUS TENNSTEDT *conductor*

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

David Nolan *leader*

Recorded live at the **ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL** *London*