

Julio Kilenyi



**JKL 33-03 Bruckner (Anton) Medal**

**Size:** 3-inch (76mm)

**Year:** 1933

**Composition:** Bronze

**Sculptor:** Julio Kilenyi

**Obverse:** Right profile portrait bust of the eminent composer in jacket and signature bow tie. Legend inset in shallow channel around upper  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the medal: THE BRUCKNER SOCIETY OF AMERICA. Below the truncation is the legend: MEDAL OF HONOR. There is a small KILENYI in the lower right field

**Reverse:** Blank field suitable for engraving.

**Signed:** Kilenyi

**Edge:** WHITEHEAD-HOAG

**Issuer:** The Bruckner Society of America, New York, NY.

**Portrait: Anton Bruckner** (1824 – 1896) was an Austrian composer known for his symphonies, masses and motets. The first are considered emblematic of the final stage of Austro-German Romanticism because of their rich harmonic language, strongly polyphonic character, and considerable length. Bruckner's compositions helped to define contemporary musical radicalism, owing to their dissonances, unprepared modulations, and roving harmonies.

Unlike other musical radicals, such as Richard Wagner or Hugo Wolf who fit the *enfant terrible* mould, Bruckner showed extreme humility before other musicians, especially Wagner. This apparent dichotomy between Bruckner the man and Bruckner the composer hampers efforts to describe his life in a way that gives a straightforward context for his music. His works, the symphonies in particular, had detractors, most notably the influential Austrian critic Eduard Hanslick, and other supporters of Johannes Brahms (and detractors of Wagner), who pointed to

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their large size and use of repetition. Bruckner also had a propensity to revise many of his works, often with the assistance of colleagues and he appeared indecisive about which versions he preferred. On the other hand, Bruckner was greatly admired by subsequent composers, including his friend Gustav Mahler, who described him as "half simpleton, half God."<sup>1</sup>

**Organization: The Bruckner Society of America** was formed January 4, 1931. The aim of the society was to develop in the music loving public a greater interest in and appreciation of the works of Bruckner and Mahler and such modern compositions as are the outgrowth of classical traditions. The Society proposed to further this aim by lectures, publications of articles and books, and by encouraging performances of these composers through existing musical organizations.<sup>2</sup>

The Society published *Chord and Discord, A Journal of Modern Musical Progress* beginning in February 1932. It was a rare combination of scholarship and fan magazine published mostly at irregular intervals through the 30s, 40s and 50s. Julio Kilenyi was an early member of the Society and in 1933 he designed The Bruckner Society of America Medal of Honor to be awarded to outstanding conductors and other individuals and organizations whose promotion and performance of the works of Bruckner was worthy of recognition by the Society. In 1935 Kilenyi designed a companion award, the Gustav Mahler Medal of Honor. See JKL 35-04. Both medals were exclusive to the Society and the Society always identified Kilenyi with the medals. Kilenyi was elected a member of the Executive Committee in 1934 and served the Society for the rest of his life in various capacities. He was its Vice President at the time of his death in 1959. By this time the Society was publishing *Chord and Discord* on a very intermittent basis and 1969 saw the publication of the 21st issue. Volume 3, No. 1. Volume 3, No 2 was not published until 1998 and was subtitled *The Final Issue*. In 1976 Donal Henahan wrote a *Music View* column in the NY Times about music societies. He used as his springboard an article by John R Douglas, a librarian and coordinator for the performing arts at California State University, San Jose. He had catalogued more than 100 societies and published his findings in the *Bulletin of Bibliography* (Spring, 1976). Most publish newsletters or magazines and act as clearing houses for the faithful. Henahan wrote that "Some associations attract both fans and scholars, of course, one of the better examples being the Bruckner Society of America, whose irregularly published review, *Chord and Discord*, became one of the most powerful forces in the public acceptance of Bruckner and Mahler. *Chord and Discord* hasn't been heard from recently, but that may be because the war in which it enlisted has been won. Bruckner and Mahler are now almost inescapable."<sup>3</sup>

Charles Eble, the last editor of *Chord and Discord* and President of the Society died in 2009. At that time the Society had been inactive for many years. After reading about the death of Eble, John Berky, Editor of [www.abruckner.com](http://www.abruckner.com) initiated a plan to re-activate the Bruckner Society. Filings with the State of Iowa and the Internal Revenue Service allowed the Society to be reactivated while maintaining its non-profit status. The Bruckner Society is now active once again with an internet presence, a triennial newsletter, musical events and concerts and an ongoing awards program utilizing Kilenyi's Bruckner Medal of Honor.

**Awards:** Since 1932, the Kilenyi Bruckner Medal of Honor has been awarded more than 60 times with 18 being awarded since 2010 under the auspices of the newly re-activated Society.<sup>4</sup> Each medal presentation is a singular event. The award to Radio Station WNYC is especially relevant to this entry because Kilenyi himself was a participant.



On June 13, 1951, it was awarded to New York City's Municipal Broadcasting System for WNYC's efforts to create a greater interest in and appreciation of Anton Bruckner's music. Over time every available Bruckner recording was on the air at regular intervals enabling listeners of WNYC to become familiar with the music of the Austrian master.<sup>5</sup>



**JKL 33-03.1 Bruckner (Anton) Circular Relief**

**Year:** 1933

**Size:** TBD (Probably  $\pm$ 1-foot in diameter)

**Composition:** Plaster

It is doubtful this plaster still exists but it is included here for completeness. Image courtesy John F. Berky, Secretary, The Bruckner Society of America.



**JKL 33-03.2 Bruckner (Anton) Medal**

**Size:** 2&15/16-inch (74.2mm)

All other details as 33-03 except:

**Year:** 2010

**Composition:** Bronze

**Edge:** Plain (The maker is Franklin Bronze, Franklin, PA)

**Issuer:** The Bruckner Society of America, Windsor, CT

**Patina:** 33-03 Soft mustard seed bronze

33-03.2 Rich antiqued bronze with polished rim and edge.

**Mounting:** None known

**Public Collections:** TBD

**Exhibitions:** TBD

**References:** The Bruckner Society of America Website: <http://www.abruckner.com/>

**Auction Records:** None known

Varieties:	Size	Metal	Edge	©	Notes
33-03	76mm	Bz	W&H	None	Original Medal
33-03.1	1-ft approx.	Plaster	Plain	None	Plaster Cast
33-03.2	74.2mm	Bz	Plain	None	2010 Restrike

**Compiler's Collection:** One specimen example of 30-03.2

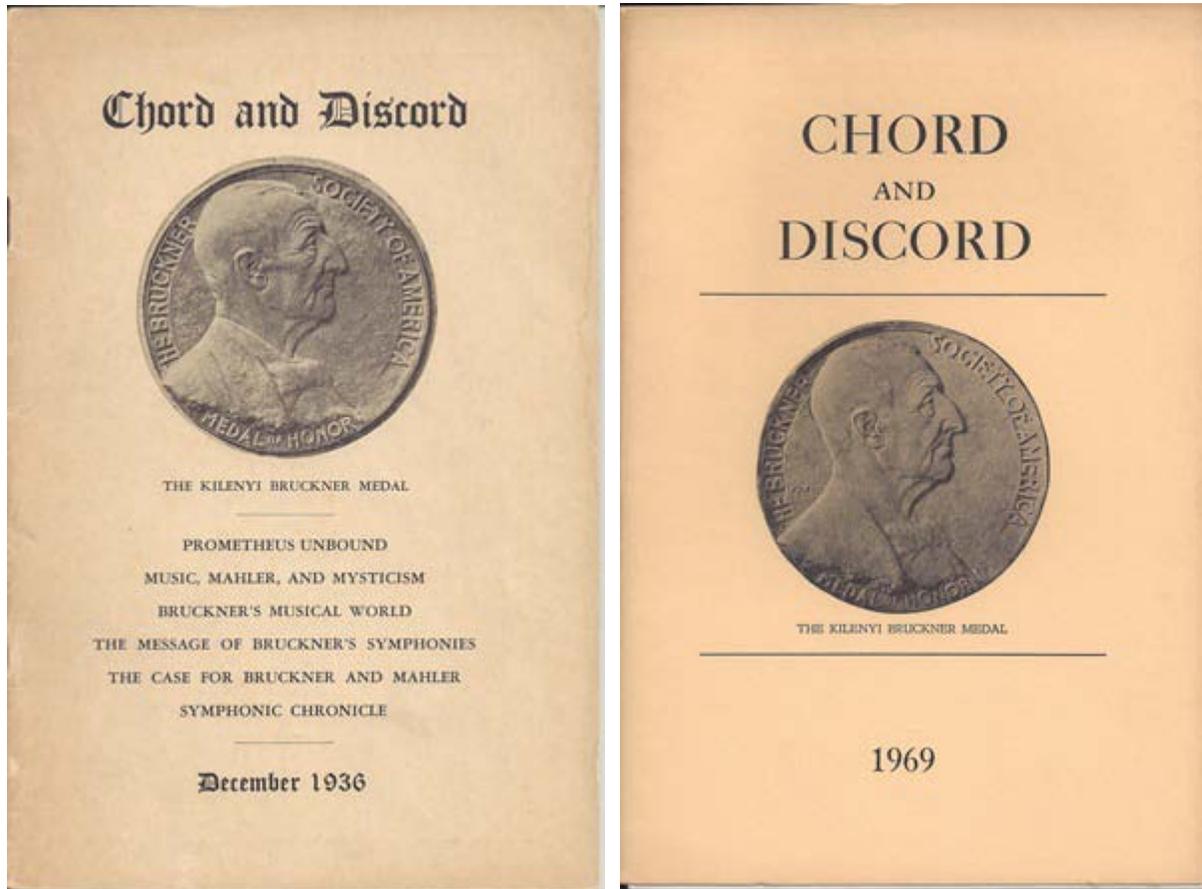
**Comments:** The first medal is shown at 85mm across. The restrike is shown at 113mm across. The image of the first medal is courtesy John F. Berky, Secretary, The Bruckner Society of America. The medal is engraved on the back: TO / STATION WEFM / 1960. This medal was presented to the Chicago radio station on March 11, 1960. The original dies were not found in the estate of Charles Eble so the WEFM medal became the master from which the current restrikes were made.

Most of Kilenyi's commissions were done to make a living. This commission Kilenyi executed to express his great love for Bruckner's music. When asked for the source of his inspiration, Kilenyi made the following interesting reply: 'Listening to Bruckner's music has always seemed to me like reading Dante's poetry. There is in the work of these two great geniuses the same grand spirit; It is this conception that I sought to portray on the Society's new, exclusive Medal of Honor. It only requires a single glance to discover the Dantesque expression of my Bruckner.'<sup>6</sup> The editor of the Journal commented on this reply in a later issue of *Chord and Discord*: Although the portraiture of old age with its dangerous tendency to emphasize physical and spiritual decay, had invariably cast the shadow of failure over the conceptions of Bruckner by foreign sculptors, Mr. Kilenyi unhesitatingly chose to use the same baffling theme as the only logical one for his medal. During two years he strove repeatedly, but in vain, to reveal the giant soul beneath the disfiguring wrinkles. Often he felt tempted to abandon once and for all, the disappointing venture. And then, suddenly, came the revelation - Bruckner and Dante! Twin souls, if there ever were such! Quickly he set to work and now it required only moments to reveal what two years of sporadic groping had failed to achieve - the spiritual deathlessness transfiguring the moribund body.<sup>7</sup>



These are the two Medals of Honor sculpted by Kilenyi for the Bruckner Society of America. They are shown here face to face, so to speak, so the reader may have an opportunity to examine these companion pieces side by side.

**Ephemera:** With the 4th issue of *Chord and Discord*, the Kilenyi Bruckner was the cover art for that and all subsequent issues. In the beginning the cover also contained a table of contents. The table went between the covers starting in 1941. Here are samples of the two cover formats.



It is most probable that the source for the cover art was the plaster of the medal. The plaster would have taken light better and its larger size was easier to photograph.

The compiler is grateful to John F. Berky for his assistance and input into this entry.

**Sales Analysis:** No sales known.

<sup>1</sup> Biographical details from Wikipedia

<sup>2</sup> *Activities Of Musicians Hereabout*; The New York Times, The New York Times Company, New York, NY Feb.1, 1931 p115

<sup>3</sup> Henahan, Donal - *Music View: Fan Clubs for Bartok, Bruckner, Even Nelson Eddy*: The New York Times, The New York Times Co., New York, NY July 18, 1976 p60

<sup>4</sup> For a complete list of the musical luminaries awarded the Medal of Honor see the Bruckner Society website <http://www.abruckner.com/thebrucknersociety/kilenyimedal/>

<sup>5</sup> *Kilenyi Bruckner Medal Awarded to Station WNYC*; Chord and Discord, Vol. 2, No.7, The Bruckner Society of America, Inc., The Athens Press, Iowa City, IA 1954 p43

<sup>6</sup> Chord and Discord, Vol.1, No.4, The Bruckner Society of America, New York, NY Oct.1933 Inside front cover.

<sup>7</sup> Chord and Discord, Vol.1, No.6, The Bruckner Society of America, New York, NY Oct. 1934 p22