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## Eugen Jochum participates in a question-and-answer discussion of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony:

**Q:** To what extent is Bruckner an important composer for you?

**Jochum:** To what extent is Beethoven an important composer? Or Bach or Mozart? Bruckner simply has a lot to say and a language unique to him. Many people relate it to Wagner. If one looks at it properly, however, it only approaches Wagner externally. It is, of course, the language of a contemporary of Wagner, but if you take a close look, it has nothing at all to do with Wagner inwardly. Bruckner's musical precursors are on the one hand Schubert (not forgetting Beethoven in many respects), and on the other hand the great old church composers Palestrina and Orlando, and possibly Monteverdi.

Anyone who doesn't know Bruckner's church music cannot understand him fully. His motets, for example, are small forms, three to five minutes, but they are so perfect of their kind that I actually say they are more perfect than the great symphonies.

Take the Sixth Symphony. It starts marvelously, but at bar 130, etc., there is this motif that goes on interminably. The Sixth is the only symphony in which I allow myself to make a cut. The organ improviser in Bruckner prevails. You can do that on the organ, since the form isn't so strict, but in a symphony you cannot. From that point of view, Brahms was right when he said, "Bruckner's no composer." But there are things in Bruckner that are marvelous even from the Brahmsian point of view.

In a certain sense, Brahms is the more complete composer. In another sense, namely that of depth of content, Bruckner is far superior, and I always say, "Thank heavens we have both of them."

**Q:** Why do you prefer the Nowak editions of Bruckner?

**Jochum:** Because they are quite definitely the original versions. I often sat in the Nationalbibliothek in Vienna and talked to Nowak, and to Haas before him, and scrutinized the scores, and it is quite obvious that the originals are the

only correct thing, particularly with regard to scoring. Bruckner comes from the organ, and the nature of his dynamics — think of the great fugue in the final movement of the Fifth — is terraced.

The two Bruckner pupils, Schalk and Loewe, who really meant well and wanted to help Bruckner with the best of intentions, attracted him to Wagner, but in doing so gave a totally false impression of Bruckner. The one symphony where he gets closest to Wagner in terms of scoring is the Seventh. The Eighth is totally different. The Fifth, Sixth, all the early symphonies including the so-called "Romantic" Fourth, are totally different. Of course, if you wish to seek them, there are suggestions of *Walküre* in the Eighth, but I always forget they're there.

**Q:** Have you any special relationship to the Eighth Symphony?

**Jochum:** Yes, I think so. Heavens, basically I think I have a very good relationship to all of them, but the Eighth is in a certain respect really the greatest.

*(text continued inside)*

**Q:** *A kind of completion?*

**Jochum:** A kind of completion. I always call it *The Apocalyptic*.

On that subject, Bruckner talked a lot of nonsense himself, you know. He said of the last movement that it was the "Meeting of the Three Emperors." Before the First World War, there was a maneuver in Vienna in which the German Emperor and the Russian Tsar both came to old Franz Joseph. It was then that Bruckner announced that the start of the Eighth's finale was the "Meeting of the Emperors."

I have thought a long time how Bruckner came to make such a statement. Finally I read somewhere that a performance of the Eighth in the Musikverein in Vienna—he can't have heard many—came in the same program as *Till Eulenspiegel* with its detailed scenario. (Just think what an intellectual span those two works provided, and what bad programming besides, but that's how it was in those days!) Bruckner was sitting in the hall. As a Wagnerian, he naturally had to be on the side of Richard Strauss and Wagner. I am convinced that neither while composing nor afterward did he think of nonsense like this as such. He had to say something, and he simply wasn't capable of expressing in words what is in the music. Nor are we all, basically—nor am I. But it certainly is interesting.

**Q:** *In the middle of the first movement, there is an enormous climax—bars 225 to 250. If one sees the first movement as tragic, what kind of crisis is this?*

**Jochum:** Do you mean the *feierlich breit*? That is naturally a fantastic climax. The word "crisis" strikes me as strange. I tend not to talk about music in literary terms, but one can certainly call it a crisis.

You should also study the respective climaxes within each of the symphonies. The climax of the Seventh is in the Adagio. The climax of the Fifth is without a doubt the last movement—the first, second and third are for me only preparation. In the Fourth, it's also the finale, namely the cymbal crash, if you do it. In the Third, the climax is in the finale, and in the Eighth it's obvious. In the Ninth, it's naturally the Adagio and the first movement. You won't find only one climax.

**Q:** *And what about the quiet ending to the first movement of the Eighth?*

**Jochum:** This is only in the second, or namely the last version. Bruckner sent the symphony to Levi, who did a great deal for him, to have an expert opinion. Levi sent it back and said he didn't understand it—it was unusable, one couldn't perform it. Whereupon Bruckner suffered a really dreadful nervous breakdown, and it nearly finished him off. It really is a very strange thing with this man, a so-called peasant, so closely associated with Nature. He is much more complex than one imagines.

**Q:** *It's also the first time in a Bruckner symphony that the scherzo comes directly after the first movement. Why in the Eighth in particular?*

**Jochum:** I find this very interesting. Bruckner was actually more closely linked with Mahler than people realize. Mahler was even a pupil of his for a while—I don't think very long, but nonetheless. At the performance of Bruckner's Third in Vienna, where there was this catastrophe so that at the end Bruckner stood there alone, weeping, the orchestra ran away, and the public left the hall laughing at this madman, Mahler was in the audience. He went up to Bruckner and consoled him, and said, "You can take it from me. I also know a bit about music, and I will have this published for you." It was the very first work, the first symphony of his, to be published.

**Q:** *Of your performance of the Eighth in London in 1975, the Manchester Guardian critic wrote: "... within the great span, Jochum led us unerringly to the inner movement (the Adagio) of all, where tragedy is resolved." Do you see it like this?*

**Jochum:** Yes, it is, of course, the most significant part of the symphony.

**Q:** *Is there really a kind of resolution in this sense, a resolution of a tragedy?*

**Jochum:** A resolution of a tragedy. I would regard the first movement as absolutely tragic. One could say this, but it's a bit strange to me. As I said, I don't think in literary terms, but somehow it's right.

One thing one can say with certainty. There is a transcendence in this movement. In the whole of the Eighth, by the way—apart from the Scherzo which relates more to Nature or the countryside—a transcendence which can only be compared with the Adagio of the Ninth, which formally is again something quite different.

**Q:** *Isn't the power of the last movement considerably diminished by the mighty working-out of the previous three movements?*

**Jochum:** It depends whether a person is capable of listening for long periods. One could say the same about Act 3 of *Die Meistersinger*. For me the movement could be longer, but then people naturally have their limitations. For many, Beethoven's Ninth is too long—the *Eroica*, as well.

**Q:** *A great deal used to be written in derogation of the last movement...*

**Jochum:** But it is a pure sonata movement, with exposition, development, and recapitulation! In the finale of the Sixth, you have this continual repetition of a basically meaningless theme. That is a weakness. In the finale of the Eighth I wouldn't cut one bar. Oh, yes! I would cut exactly what Bruckner himself cut. Compare the first version, that is, the Haas edition, with the Nowak. It's basically only a matter of a few bars, and here Haas's work was a bit irresponsible. But compare the cuts and then see how Bruckner worked; and here Levi's advice really did help him, because these cuts are good.

**Q:** *Herr Professor Jochum, one last question. How do you feel during the performance of such a great work?*

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**Jochum:** I can say something about that. Perhaps a recollection I have is suitable in this context: my first great concert—I was 23 years old—with the Munich Philharmonic. It was the Bruckner Seventh preceded by the Leonore, and the C major Piano Concerto by Beethoven! I was so naive then. I was happy to get at a great orchestra, and I thought I had to do everything that was at all possible. One doesn't do that any more! But I remember exactly, at the great C major climax in the slow movement (which, by the way, in terms of bars, if you count up, lies at the middle of the symphony), I suddenly had the feeling I was flying! Yes, when it goes well I am, of course, incredibly happy. — ©1978 by Graham Paul Eskill