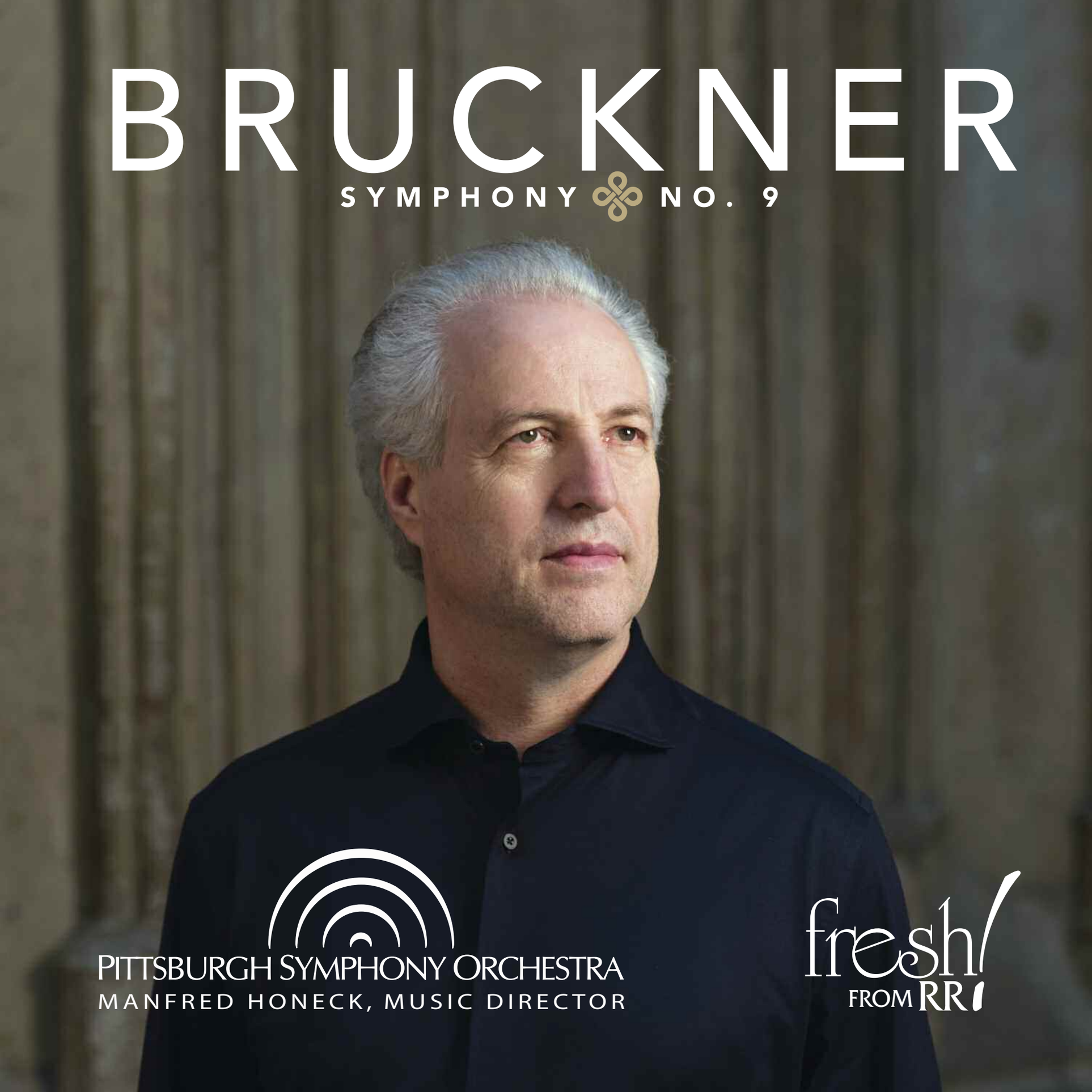
BRUCKNER

SYMPHONY NO. 9



PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

MANFRED HONECK, MUSIC DIRECTOR

fresh! FROM RR!

THOUGHTS ON BRUCKNER'S NINTH SYMPHONY: LOOKING BEYOND

"What have we artists to do with oil and economy, survival and honor?
The answer is Everything.
Our truth, if it is heartfelt, and the beauty we produce out of it, may perhaps be the only real guidelines left, the only clear beacons, the only source for renewal of vitality in the various cultures of our world.
Where economists squabble, we can be clear.
Where politicians play diplomatic games, we can move hearts and minds.
Where the greedy grab, we can give.
Our pens, voices, paintbrushes, pas de deux; our words; our C-sharps and B-flats can shoot up higher than any oil well, can break down self-interest, can reinforce us against moral deterioration.
Perhaps, after all, it is only the artist who can reconcile the mystic with the rational, and who can continue to reveal the presence of God in the minds of men."
—Leonard Bernstein,
speech at Curtis Insitute of Music 50th Anniversary, February 1975

Long after I was fortunate enough to play Bruckner's Ninth Symphony under the baton of Leonard Bernstein, this quote by Bernstein himself fell into my hands. I immediately and instinctively connected it with the music as Bernstein's words serve as a clarion reminder of the role an artist can play in society and our relationship to the divine, the very same thoughts at the heart of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony. It is in the Ninth that Bruckner invites us into the presence of God to experience the beauty of his world, while also facing the darker and more violent abysses. But how could it be that Bruckner, a completely apolitical person with only music, faith and teaching in mind, could leave us such an enormous musical manifesto valid for all ages?

Let us begin by taking a brief look at Bruckner's life. He was born in 1825 and, like his father, studied to become a teacher. Teaching in the village also included playing the organ and working in the fields, and young Anton was fascinated by the organ, often practicing many hours each day. Following his father's death, he took up the position of organist at St. Florian's Monastery (1848-1855) and later Linz as cathedral organist (1855-1868). Church music was, no doubt, at the center of his work and thus deeply influenced his own personal tonal language.

Bruckner's skills as an organist were enthusiastically received. From Notre Dame in Paris to the Royal Albert Hall in London, his artful improvisations were celebrated. It is said that Bruckner humbly replied to the many admirers of his organ playing, "I am not a musician, but a composer. What my fingers play will pass, but what they write will stand." Soon, Bruckner was called to Vienna as court organist and also began to teach at the conservatory. (Of note, amongst his most famous pupils was none other than Gustav Mahler.) It is from this point forward that Bruckner turned almost exclusively to the symphonic form. Vienna, where he lived from 1868 until his death in 1896, became his home and creative center, but also a place of suffering. Bruckner would later share that his Te Deum, which he dedicated to God, "belonged to God for the sufferings that had been endured in Vienna."

At first, Bruckner was weighed down by financial worries, though this was later alleviated by benefactors. He also suffered strong criticism, caught through no fault of his own between the Wagnerians and the traditionalists who were irreconcilable with each other in their positions. In his students, as well as Hugo Wolf, Johann von Herbeck and others, he found great admirers; while the supporters of Johannes Brahms, the influential music critic Eduard Hanslick and, at times, the Vienna Philharmonic, were his powerful opponents. Throughout, Bruckner remained devoted to writing his epic symphonies. Though they were at first little understood and publicly rejected, it was with his Seventh Symphony, whose premiere remarkably took place in Leipzig (not Vienna), that Bruckner enjoyed his first truly resounding success.

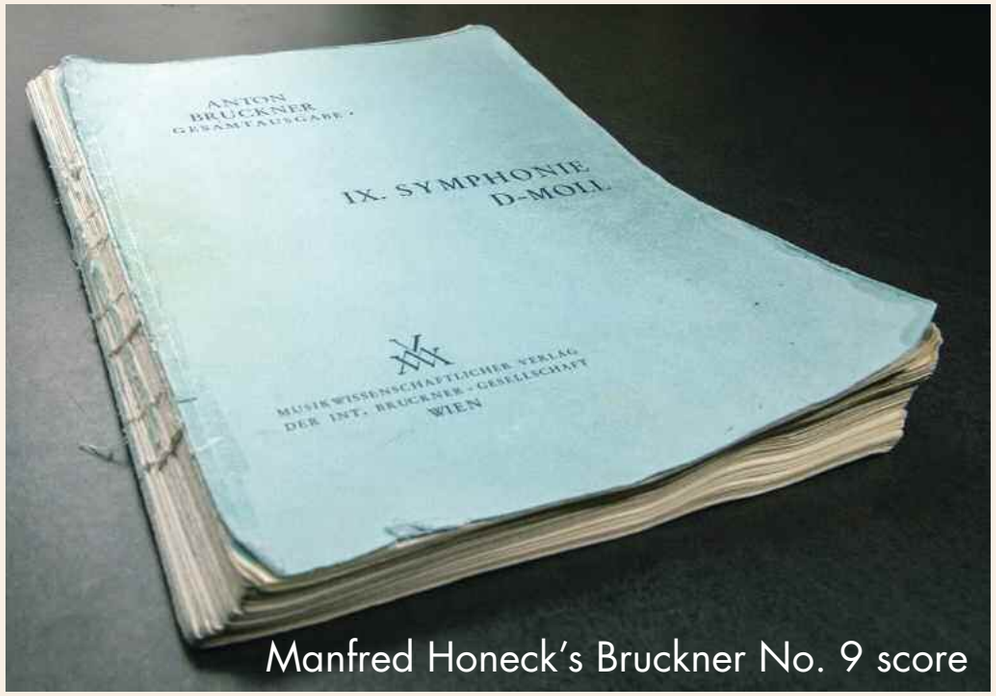
Who was this man? In order to gain a full understanding of the mighty Ninth Symphony, we must first immerse ourselves in Bruckner's world. Born in the countryside, Bruckner never shed his origins and remained a man of the land. His apartment was barely furnished and he was said to have dressed in awkward, wrinkled black suits, oversized shirt collars and heavy square shoes (likely for playing the organ). He did little to adapt to the customs of the time and paid no heed to what others thought of him. Often, he was difficult to understand and thus the subject of mockery. As Bruckner's letters exemplify, he was extremely grateful, perhaps sometimes to the point of exaggeration, and, at times, deferential to a fault. He was once said to have given twenty marks to a timpanist who had added a timpani roll not originally notated by Bruckner, as a thank you for the "grandiose" idea. And yet, Bruckner also spent many hours in Viennese inns with numerous friends, including Ferdinand Löwe, and Franz and Josef Schalk. His interests were wide and varied, and he even took part in a medical meeting to satisfy his curiosity about the organic functions of the human body.

Bruckner was a deeply religious person, a man of prayer, who put his relationship with God first and foremost. His faith, born and cultivated in his rural

homeland, influenced him from childhood, and accompanied and supported him through the last moments of his life. As a young boy, Bruckner was said to have been blessed by a dying seventy-seven-year-old village clergyman. As a child, he built altars along with holy graves and even regularly recorded the number of repetitions of Our Father, Hail Mary and the rosary that he prayed. Most of all, Bruckner loved conversations with spiritual masters and often went on vacations to parsonages. Here, he was not afraid, as he sometimes was in his Upper Austrian homeland, to express his faith in a variety of moments. During the breaks of his organ playing, he was known to rise to a fervent prayer and even interrupt lessons when it was necessary to pray the Angelus (a Catholic devotion commemorating the Incarnation). On All Souls' Day, he would kneel at his sister's grave and was likewise absorbed in prayer at the tombstones of Beethoven, Schubert and Wagner, paying no heed if this shocked those around him. Bruckner also attended jury trials of murderers, even seeking admission to an execution. Once, it is known that he waited all night, praying throughout for the soul of an accused murderer.

These habits and behaviors did not remain hidden, and thus, Bruckner was simultaneously despised yet admired for the same reasons. The artist Fritz von Uhde, for example, painted Bruckner in great reverence as one of the twelve disciples in his famous painting, *The Last Supper*. Arnold Schoenberg likewise regarded Bruckner with great admiration and, referring to the death of Gustav Mahler, remarked, "It seems that the Ninth is a limit. He who wants to go beyond it must pass away. [...] Those who have written a Ninth stood too close to the hereafter." And it is indeed a fact that Beethoven, Bruckner and Mahler, as well as Dvořák and Schubert (in the old count), all share this fate. It is a small, yet rather significant circle with one thing in common: each lived in the footsteps of Beethoven and, following his example,drew deeply upon human and artistic experiences to write a final symphonic utterance.

The Music



Manfred Honeck's Bruckner No. 9 score

The first sketches of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony date back to 1887, shortly after Bruckner had completed his Eighth Symphony, though his work on the Ninth dragged on and was often interrupted. It was during this same time that Bruckner would return to several of his previous symphonies for revisions (the Second and Third in 1889, and later the First and Fourth Symphonies). He also set about revising his Eighth Symphony after the conductor Hermann Levi rejected the first score. Throughout, Bruckner suffered ongoing health issues. As a result, the first movement of the Ninth was not completed until the end of 1893, with the second and third movements following in 1894. Bruckner would then devote the remaining time, until his death, on the fourth movement. Of this well-documented movement, 172 measures are fully orchestrated, while the remaining measures up to the coda (which is entirely missing) are incomplete. Bruckner therefore asked that his Te Deum, finished in 1884, be performed instead of the unfinished fourth movement.

Various illnesses struck Bruckner at the end of his life and, among other things, he was diagnosed with diabetes and cardiac insufficiency. Pleurisy and

finally pneumonia weakened him to such an extent that on 11 October 1896, he died in his apartment in the caretaker's wing of the Belvedere Castle. The official diagnosis of his death was congestive heart failure. The funeral took place in the nearby Karlskirche and Johannes Brahms is said to have stood at the portal without entering. The final burial was on 15 October 1896 in the Basilica of St. Florian's Abbey. Bruckner's sarcophagus, which is placed underneath the organ, bears the following pedestal markings, "Non confundar in aeternum" (In eternity I will not be ashamed), which incidentally is also the final line of his Te Deum.

Bruckner's music has, at times, been characterized as schematic (overly dependent on a prescribed order) and this is certainly true to an extent. There is no doubt that outer order was of great importance to Bruckner and subsequently influenced his plans. His well-known counting neurosis (he counted cobblestones and walked past houses counting the windows) reflects this keen focus and perhaps is also one of the many reasons why he deeply loved the Catholic liturgy with its predictable sequence. The same is true for the organ, which requires a high degree of order to manipulate the many stops and keys. Bruckner's genius, though, lies in his exceptional ability to imbue rich and abundant musical content, interweaving exuberant emotion within the sophisticated framework. Whereas his symphonies were predominantly regarded as absolute music, they are in actuality works that seamlessly fuse the head with the heart. Groups of sounds are created and put together, each in perfect relation to the other, but first filled with opulent feeling. I am reminded that just as a house must be architecturally sound, it is the interior that makes it truly unique.

From Bruckner's own remarks, we know that a variety of circumstances inspired his compositions and therefore the imagery evoked. And though these pictures may seem rather banal to our contemporary sensations, they correspond to his own complex nature: at times, the scholarly professor, and at other times, the naïve country farmer. Hans von Bülow is said to have remarked, "Half a fool, half a genius." (Interestingly, this quotation was mistakenly attributed to Gustav Mahler for a long time.) To name just a few, Bruckner mentions the bird "Zizibe" in the second theme of his Fourth Symphony (first movement), paints the picture of the "German Michel" in the Eighth Symphony (second movement) and evokes hordes of Cossacks in the Eighth Symphony (final movement). I am convinced, however, that the images depicted in the Ninth Symphony are taken from something entirely different, namely Bruckner's world of faith. Whereas he dedicated his Seventh and Eighth Symphonies to two profane, secular rulers (the Seventh to King Ludwig II of Bavaria and the Eighth to the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph), it is Bruckner's Ninth that now belongs to dear God. Who is then surprised when Bruckner, drawing on his faith, uses images of the underworld and heaven's realm, of this world and the afterworld, in his Ninth?

First Movement

It is likely that Bruckner may have already suspected his own death when he remarked, "I don't even want to touch the Ninth, I don't dare, because Beethoven also ended his life with the Ninth." But Bruckner did not write this work directly in the face of death; rather, he still had some plans for the future, envisioning a new dramatic work, almost akin to an opera, like *Lohengrin*.

As was previously mentioned, it took nearly nine years from the beginning of the first sketches of the Ninth to the actual year of his death mid-completion. Even so, the content of this symphony is somehow very much about dying and saying goodbye.

First and foremost, Bruckner dedicated the symphony to God. It is therefore no coincidence that the key is d minor, standing for the ancient function of the first note "D" for Deus (God) or "Re" for King. (In the 17th century, this was gradually replaced by "C".) Similar to the opening of the Eighth Symphony, the Ninth also opens with a short upbeat heard twice and the movement takes up the "Annunciation of Death" idea from the revised ending of the first movement of the Eighth Symphony. The whole beginning can be seen as a death march without accompaniment, though later the march rhythm becomes the accompaniment (now in both the timpani and bassi) at the start of the development (bar 253 or 11:14). Here, I ask the timpani to play quite clearly, as unlike the bassi, it is noted with an appoggiatura (a grace note performed before the note), very much in the style of a death drum. I similarly want to mention bar 7 (0:21) where the trumpets together with timpani play an eighth note pickup to the following quarter. I see this as an augmentation of the horns from the previous bar, but likewise a direct reference to death. The motive is now empty, motionless and, in contrast to the horns, remains inexorably on a single tone, somehow final and irreversible. Not atypical for Bruckner, one can even literally speak the words "Der Tod" ("The Death") here, as can similarly be done with the bird "Zizibe" in the Fourth Symphony. After the following eight-bar thematic horn block, a descending tone sequence follows (bar 27 or 1:20), understood here as a gesture, almost like a genuflection.

Now in measure 51 (2:06), we hear in chromatic succession a whispering "Miserere" in the first violins. Though the Miserere from the "Gloria" of the d minor Mass is quoted more extensively in the third movement, here the Miserere is played as a tremolo, creating a nervous, unsettled effect. A mighty fff chord appears in bar 63 (2:26), a full, "D" unison evoking the word and grand omnipotence of God. Of particular interest is the upbeat to the D Major which I view as a double augmentation of the opening upbeat motive, here now ushering in a radiant D Major. Perhaps this alludes to redemption and represents a true and ultimate triumph over death (bar 75 or 2:56)? Of note, as well, is the death rhythm that follows in the woodwinds and horns, now somehow less rigid and almost liberated in the context of the D major (3:05).

The second theme (3:43) is characterized by wonderful, deeply felt melodies offering numerous opportunities for nuance. Lyrical and majestic moments beautifully alternate, and throughout, Bruckner notates both broad and tenuto (held to full value or slightly more), the lengthened strokes enhancing the expression. Of special interest, as well, is the marking "Innig" (intimate and tender), when there is something particularly sensitive to share. I find the cantilena of the violins beginning in bar 147 (6:24) particularly beautiful and we see here, as well, a small, quiet reference to the famous Tristan chord.

Other points of interest include the use of stopped horns (bar 161 or 7:21), something rather rare for Bruckner, and the striking beginning of the development (bar 227 or 10:06). Here, several of the opening motives return: the eighth note death motive upbeat in the clarinets and bassoons now almost superimposed with the flute and oboe sixteenth note upbeats. Underneath, a mysterious string line notated as "lang gezogen" (long drawn) and tenuto, further underscores the

dark, hopeless mood. I ask for this particular passage to be played "non vibrato" (without vibrato) to bring out the stark, empty character even more.

The stopped horns again sound at the beginning of a somewhat grotesque episode (bar 355 or 15:03), though now with sharp sforzato-piano markings, contributing to the overall distorted mood. It is almost as if we have entered a spirit world. (We know, as well, that this directly foreshadows the character and sound of the second movement.) Bruckner continues to lead with intensity toward bar 391 (16:16) and here I ask for an additional crescendo, now building toward the climax while simultaneously heightening the force of the discharge. A long, quiet section follows, soothing and dissolving the prior shock, and while this transition often feels mechanical, I ask for clear phrasing from the violins and violas, (over which Bruckner notes "zart gestrichen" [with a tender bow stroke]) while also immersing in a special vibrato sound (16:38).

A final moment to mention is the touching beginning of the coda (bar 505 or 21:51), now a lamenting plea before the subsequent funeral music begins. Here, the word "Miserere" is written into the music and I phrase according to the natural inflection of the word. I would like to note, as well, the appearance of the sixteenth notes in the trumpets (bar 541 or 23:42), similarly used in the last revised section of the "Annunciation of Death" (Bruckner's Eighth Symphony, first movement). These sixteenth notes will interestingly play an important role in the third movement, as well. The movement comes to a close with a harmonically undefined "D" sound, an empty fifth, neither major nor minor, somehow genderless and ambiguous. I am reminded here of the last chord of the "Kyrie" of Mozart's *Requiem* where the question about life after death is similarly left open. Of note, as well, is that Mozart (like Bruckner) also died in the midst of writing his work.

Second Movement

There is no other Bruckner symphony with such an unusual, eccentric dance movement as the second movement of the Ninth Symphony. Symphonic dance movements typically serve to contrast that which surrounds them (here, this also includes the missing fourth movement), and while it was customary for Bruckner to draw from the Austrian tradition and incorporate a Ländler, or fast character dance (for example, the hunting movement of his Fourth Symphony), this second movement deviates from all previous dance movements and is unprecedented in several ways. If we consider it, as well, in the context of faith, it is clear now that Bruckner has entered the supernatural.

With the first sounds of the oboe and clarinets, the opening is immediately eerie, ghostly and frightening, made even more vivid by the clashing harmonies. Divided, three-part, sharp pizzicato (plucked strings) in the second violins add to the mood. It is almost as if a mysterious spirit demon world has been unleashed and all come out to join in the noisy dance. I ask for the repeating quarter notes in bar 42 (0:36) (note that these do not have dots) to be played quite vigorously and in the character of an infernal dance cutting straight to the bone. Just four bars later, though, Bruckner adds staccato dots to these same quarter notes, thus introducing the effect of devilish laughter (0:40). I want to also mention the tremolo in the timpani (bar 50 or 0:43), indicating a rapid reiteration of the note, and true trembling in the original sense of the word. I raise here the timpani dynamic to bring this out in the texture and simultaneously amplify the effect.

The oboe melody in bar 119 (1:47), played in the style of an Austrian country musician, provides a welcome moment of exhilaration and relief. But it is not long again before the feeling of lamentation re-emerges, this time in the

clarinet (bar 137 or 2:05). I picture the spirits being vaporized in bar 147 (2:14) and here, it should be observed that Bruckner writes "gradually moving" rather than a typical accelerando. Suddenly, though, like a thunderclap, the opening hellish atmosphere reappears, now with brutal force and violence (bar 161 or 2:26). What a truly great symphonic effect!

The Trio that follows plunges directly into a Shakespearean spirit world. While a trio mostly serves to contrast the first dance (as was mentioned above, spooky and threatening), this Trio is shadowy and mischievous, now in the unusual key of F sharp major. Everything scurries and flies. Melancholy singing in the strings (bar 53 or 4:14), a childlike lamentation in the oboe (bar 69 or 4:25) and wistful crying in the woodwinds (bar 137 or 5:05) all can be heard, along with a short, mischievous clarinet interjection (bar 76 or 4:29) coupled with lively flute passages (5:00). Here, I aim to balance the layers of voices so as to allow these characterful moments to come through. I am reminded, as well, of the sound world of *Till Eulenspiegel*, which, incidentally, Strauss composed in 1895.

Third Movement

The third movement has long been regarded with great mystery, perhaps as a musical legacy in the face of death. Though we know this was certainly not Bruckner's intention, it remains nonetheless his last fully orchestrated movement, wide in scope with a profound look to the beyond. As a result, this movement, undoubtedly, carries great significance.

For me, this movement is based on the traditional Latin mass Agnus Dei, something we know Bruckner knew quite intimately. He was familiar with many of the Viennese classical composers' own mass settings, including Haydn, Mozart,

Beethoven and Schubert, who set the first section traditionally to rather melancholy music (depicting the suffering of Christ dying on the cross), before turning more joyful (reflective of the peaceful message of the Dona Nobis Pacem).

We know, as was previously mentioned, that Bruckner prayed the Rosary, Our Father and Angelus daily, and also pleaded for mercy and remission of guilt. With this in mind, I believe that it is possible to link the Agnus Dei text to suggestions of corresponding musical passages. I center my interest on the connection of words to musical interpretation, rather than the direct match of words to music.

Let us keep the text in mind:

> Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
> Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
> Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem.
>
> Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
> Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
> Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Already from the outset, the main theme of the violins incorporates the suffering of Christ. Here, we see a great interval jump of a ninth, plus a descending chromatic step, followed by a falling octave down—I call this the "Peccata (mundi)" theme. Densely composed chromaticism adds to the intensity. It is interesting to note that while the key area of the opening is not entirely apparent, a hopeful E Major chord clearly appears in measure 8 (0:55), thus foreshadowing the end of the movement, also in E major. The following eight

bar line leads to the dramatic chord of disaster (bar 17 or 2:13), evoking a sense of utter collapse, while simultaneously looking far ahead into the twentieth century. Here, the trumpets declare a short, sparkling thirty-second note figure which I ask to be kept rather rigid to underscore a certain irrevocability. A lyrical theme (underlaid with the "Agnus Dei") is next introduced in the horns and Wagner tubas (bar 29 or 3:32), while the Wagner tubas also intone the "Peccata mundi" (bar 37 or 4:11).

A large block of the "Miserere Nobis" next appears in bar 45 (5:01) and this continues throughout the ensuing somewhat moving section (bar 57 or 6:35) and beyond (see the celli in bar 65 or 7:21 and the horns in bar 69 or 7:53). A dark chord in the Wagner tubas (reminiscent of the chord of disaster) follows, while above this, the solo flute (8:23) plays a pure C major arpeggiation (what a contrast!) only to be spoiled by the last "f sharp" note in the passage. Perhaps it is a ray of sunshine expressing a wish for hope, before falling back into sin with the final "f sharp," now resigned. Whatever the case, it is clear that the ultimate peace ("Dona Nobis Pacem") has not yet been achieved.

The second great section, the return of the "Peccata" theme, now begins (bar 77 or 8:48), though the theme is reversed in the flute (bar 85 or 9:59) before returning in its original form in the first violins, now in pianissimo. It is a subtle anticipation, a quiet foreboding of what is to come: the great "Peccata" block in bar 93 (11:10). The flute, by the way, is remarkably often used as a messenger. Here, the suffering and sins of the world ("Peccata mundi") are vividly portrayed. I see this as a Passion March making use of the "Peccata" theme in inversion and ask the violas, celli and bassi (all representing the march) to play particularly strongly. The trumpets literally intone "Peccata mundi"

(11:10), carefully marked by Bruckner with two different types of articulation, both marcato and accents. Though these small but important differences are sometimes neglected, I ask them to be observed with great distinction. Here, the accent is set on the second low note adding sharpness to heighten the torment. Perhaps it is no wonder that, following a short transition, the "Peccata" theme (now in the celli and bassi (12:31), and in dialogue with the second violins), leads back to the chord of disaster (bar 121 or 14:14), which we know already from bar 17 (2:13).

The following shortened "Miserere section" (bar 129 or 15:05, corresponding to the earlier passage in bar 57 or 6:35), is notated as "very slow." One must not be tempted here to think of the pulse in eighth notes, but rather quarter notes. A particularly striking moment is the end of this phrase which, after a crescendo, concludes with a descending fourth. Here, Bruckner has notated broad, tenuto markings (bar 138 or 15:56) which therefore stand out from the preceding legato. I see this as an outcry underlaid with the Agnus Dei, continued next in a strong, forte character by the solo oboe, before a soft echo is heard in the horn. Interestingly, this motive with the descending fourth interval is traditionally used to express a lamentoso character, for example, Verdi's *Requiem* (3rd measure of the celli) or Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony (at the end of the fourth movement as a swan song).The "Peccata-Miserere" block (which we already know from bars 2 and 3) now reappears and the trombones intone a shocking, desperate "Peccata" (bar 145 or 16:46). What follows is, for me, one of the most beautiful musical moments. After a short, necessary pause, Bruckner writes four times in the flutes a pleading, even whimpering "Miserere" (bar 151 or 17:19) before the start of a wonderful descending phrase in forte (bar 155 or 17:42). Perhaps this is the answer to the four-fold

flute request, while also hinting that the door of heaven is opening. I therefore do not let this forte (marked by Bruckner as "broad") simply sound loudly, but aim to develop and to open the sound in expectation of the forthcoming peace ("Dona nobis pacem").

Beginning in bar 163 (18:46), Bruckner now introduces innumerable repeating eighth notes, first in the second and third oboes, and later the first oboe, plus second and third clarinets. I am reminded here of the beginning of a Holy Mass, when in the traditional confession of guilt, a believing Catholic strikes his hand several times on his chest at the words "Mea Culpa." I likewise see these eighth notes not only as this audible beating, but simultaneously intensifying to embody utmost unbearable remorse. Consequently, I've asked for a hammering articulation and increased emphasis with each and every note (19:39). (In the Catholic sequence, "Mea maxima culpa" is called for the third time.) Underneath, Bruckner now repeats the "Peccata mundi" theme while, for the first time in a long time, the opening motive ("The Death" from the first movement,) sounds clearly, played here once again by the trumpets.

With the "Miserere" theme, Bruckner presents once more the request for mercy (bar 173 or 19:47), followed now by one of the most incredible sequences of growing intensity. The third trombone and tuba are heard with a sigh ("Miserere" from the depths in bar 187 [21:03] while the "qui tollis" comes in bar 191 [21:24] and above all, the dramatic, threatening "Peccata Mundi" [bar 199 or 22:05] now in the trumpets and trombones). Everything continues to build dramatically toward the most powerful chord of the whole symphony (bar 206 or 22:47), which contains all seven pitches of the harmonic minor scale. The sin of the world ("Peccata Mundi") now cries out to heaven (!) and it is a cry that goes straight to the heart. For me, this is a

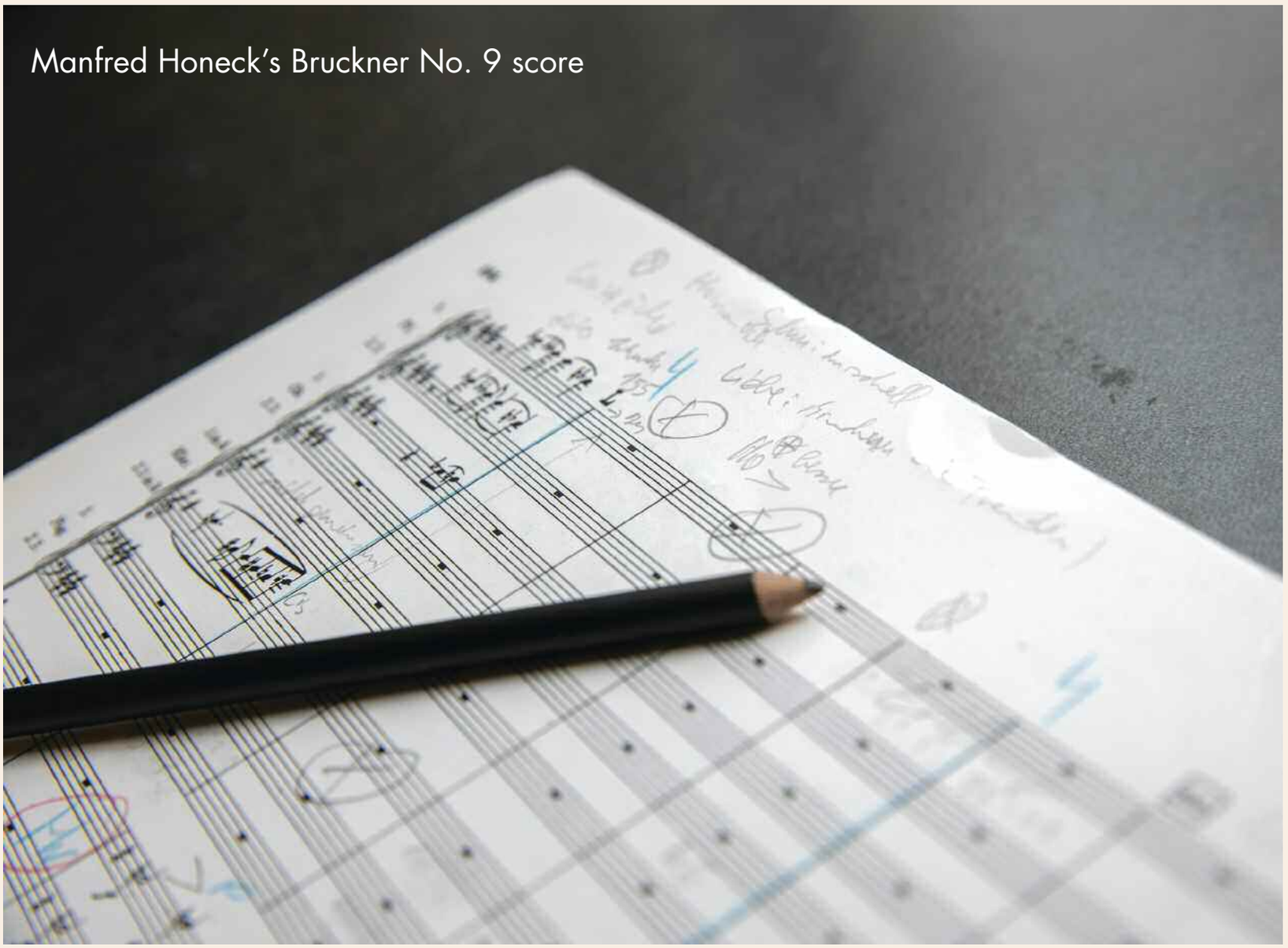
particularly remarkable moment, as no composer before had ever ventured so far harmonically. I therefore ask to endure this apocalyptic moment with extreme intensity and length (underscored by the fermata or pause of unspecified length). It is an emotional earthquake, simultaneously tremendous and weighty which shocks all the way to the depths.

Now follows in bar 207 (23:02) the already known "Peccata" section, this time not leading to catastrophe, but rather the long-awaited "Dona nobis pacem" (bar 219 or 24:27). First, "Dona nobis-nobis pacem" can be heard in the oboe and clarinet, then from bar 223 onward, many times as a prayerful plea. Here, "Dona" is repeated in the clarinet (24:50) and horns (25:16), while the Wagner tubas add a particularly expressive, sighing character (25:02). When the fundamental key of E Major is at last reached (bar 231 or 25:45), I ask for the eighth notes in the violins to be broad and calm (Bruckner notes "drawn" here, meaning tenuto). The effect is a wonderful "Pacem" (peace) in the sound and it is a true, heavenly peace made only more profound with the lowering of the violins into a deeper register (bar 235 or 26:28). One can clearly hear "Dona nobis" in the violins and flute, while the Wagner tubas play the whispering "Pacem." I am reminded here (26:57) of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony, as the horns recall the ascending triad while looking to the heavens. Most remarkably, this great and sprawling movement comes to an end with three pizzicato (plucked) chords. With this, I can't help but envision the motion that Bruckner always made at the conclusion of a mass or prayer, that of the sign of the cross: "Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

As Bruckner biographer Max Auer, who knew Bruckner personally, writes about the Ninth Symphony, "The Ninth Symphony surpasses all its predecessors in sublimity and consecration. If Arthur Schopenhauer describes the arts as an image of an idea, but music as an idea in itself, then Bruckner's swan song, his

Ninth Symphony, appears to us as the idea of the beyond, of the deity itself. Already from the very beginning of the richly structured first movement, one feels surrounded by the twilight light of a Gothic cathedral—a mood that releases us from the heaviness and fatigue of matter and leads us to the afterlife." And what a truly masterful journey it is.

—MANFRED HONECK



Manfred Honeck's Bruckner No. 9 score

Over the last quarter century, **MANFRED HONECK** has firmly established himself as one of the world's leading conductors, renowned for his distinctive interpretations and arrangements of a wide-range of repertoire. For more than a decade, he has served as Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, continuing a great legacy of music-making that is celebrated at home, abroad and on recordings, including the 2018 GRAMMY® Award for Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 and Barber's Adagio for Strings. Together, Manfred Honeck and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra have served as cultural ambassadors for the city as one of the most frequently toured American orchestras. In addition to performing at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, the orchestra regularly performs in major European music capitals and at leading festivals such as the Beethovenfest Bonn, BBC Proms, Musikfest Berlin, Lucerne Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival, Grafenegg Festival and the Salzburg Festival, and continues a close relationship with the Musikverein in Vienna.

Born in Austria, Manfred Honeck received his musical training at the Academy of Music in Vienna. Many years of experience as a member of the Vienna Philharmonic and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra have given his conducting a distinctive stamp. He began his career as assistant to Claudio Abbado and was subsequently engaged by the Zurich Opera House, where he was bestowed the prestigious European Conductor's Award. Following early posts as one of three main conductors of the MDR Symphony Orchestra in Leipzig and as Principal Guest Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, he was appointed Music Director of the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Stockholm. For several years, he also served as Principal Guest

Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. From 2007 to 2011, Manfred Honeck was Music Director of the Staatsoper Stuttgart. Operatic guest appearances include Semperoper Dresden, Royal Opera of Copenhagen and the Salzburg Festival

As a guest conductor Manfred Honeck has worked with the world's leading orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Staatskapelle Dresden, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Accademia di Santa Cecilia Rome and the Vienna Philharmonic, and is a regular guest with all of the major American orchestras, including New York, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and San Francisco.

Manfred Honeck has received honorary doctorates from several North American universities and was awarded the honorary title of Professor by the Austrian Federal President. An international jury of critics selected him as the International Classical Music Awards "Artist of the Year" 2018.

The two-time 2018 GRAMMY® Award-winning **PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**, conducted by Manfred Honeck, is critically acclaimed as one of the world's greatest orchestras. Known for its artistic excellence for more than 120 years, it is credited with a rich history of the world's finest conductors and musicians, and a deep commitment to the Pittsburgh region. Past music directors have included Fritz Reiner (1938-1948), William Steinberg (1952-1976), André Previn (1976-1984), Lorin Maazel (1984-1996) and Mariss Jansons (1997-2004). This tradition of outstanding international music directors was furthered in the fall of 2008 when Austrian conductor Manfred Honeck became Music Director of the orchestra.

The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra has been at the forefront of championing new American works, including recent commissions by Mason Bates, Jonathan Leshnoff, James MacMillan and Julia Wolfe. The orchestra premiered Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 1 "Jeremiah" in 1944 and John Adams' *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* in 1986. The Pittsburgh Symphony has a long and illustrious history in the areas of recordings and live radio broadcasts. Its "Pittsburgh Live!" series with Reference Recordings has resulted in Grammy nominations in 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019. Its recording of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 and Barber's *Adagio for Strings* won the 2018 Grammy Awards for Best Orchestral Performance and Best Engineered Classical Album.

Since as early as 1936, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra has been broadcast on the radio, including with local partner WQED-FM and through national network radio broadcasts on Public Radio International.

www.PittsburghSymphony.org

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Bruckner:Symphony No. 9 in D minor,
(1896; unfinished) edition Nowak
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
Recorded Live: February 23-25, 2018
Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts, Pittsburgh, PA

Soundmirror, Boston:
Recording Producer: Dirk Sobotka
Balance Engineer: Mark Donahue
Recording Engineer: Mark Donahue
Editing: Dirk Sobotka
Mixing and Mastering: Mark Donahue

Music Notes: Manfred Honeck
Notes Editing and Coordination: Mary Persin
Technical Notes: Mark Donahue, Dirk Sobotka

Art Director: Bill Roarty
Front Cover Design: Brian Hughes
Front Cover Photo: ©Photograph by Martha Rial
Painting of Bruckner: Ferry Bératon, 1889
Photo of Manfred Honeck: ©Photograph by Martha Rial
Photo of Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra: Todd Rosenberg
Photo of Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra: Ed DeArmitt
Photos of Manfred Honeck's Bruckner No. 9 score: Ed DeArmitt

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra recordings are made possible
by a generous grant from BNY Mellon.

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Wardrobe courtesy of Larrimor's, Pittsburgh.

sound|mirror

Technical Recording Notes

We at Soundmirror believe that in a good and successful recording, the sound has to serve the music. While an important goal is to truthfully represent the acoustical event in the hall, another is to capture the composer's intention reflected in the score and its realization by the performer. To achieve these goals, extensive collaboration and communication between the artists and the recording team are of utmost importance.

Based on our long experience of recording the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in Heinz Hall, we chose five omnidirectional DPA 4006 microphones as our main microphone array. Supplementing those with "spot mics" to clarify the detail of the orchestration, we worked towards realizing the above goals. Extensive listening sessions with Maestro Honeck and orchestra musicians were crucial in refining the final balance.

This recording was made and post-produced in DSD256 on a Pyramix workstation to give you, the listener, the highest sound quality possible.

We hope you will enjoy listening to this recording as much as we enjoyed making it.

www.SoundMirror.com

BRUCKNER

SYMPHONY NO. 9

I Feierlich – *Sehr ruhig* *25:04*

II Scherzo: *Bewegt, lebhaft* – Trio: *Schnell* *10:20*

III Adagio: *Sehr langsam, feierlich* *27:46*

PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MANFRED HONECK, MUSIC DIRECTOR

fresh! FROM RR!