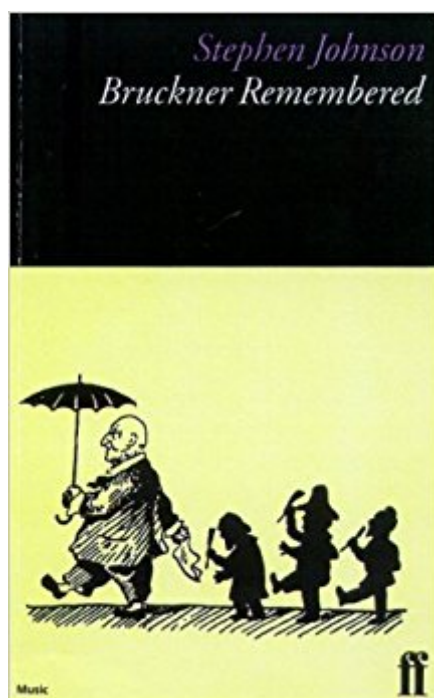


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Bruckner Remembered (Composers Remembered Series)



Synopsis

Over a century after his death, Bruckner the man remains an enigma. Popular anecdotes represent him as a visionary simpleton, his life dominated exclusively by music and religion. And yet this same bizarre figure is widely held to have produced some of the most original and sophisticated music written in the second half of the nineteenth century. The reminiscences collected in Bruckner Remembered allow insights into a much more complicated, sometimes tormented mind riddled by dark obsessions and spiritual doubts, creating a profile that is as tantalizing as it is illuminating. Part of the Faber's Composers Remembered Series

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for Bruckner Remembered "For readers interested in Bruckner or the cultural politics of late nineteenth-century Austria, Bruckner Remembered is delightful and valuable." --Paul Hawkshaw, Yale University School of Music "Intriguing, piquant, compelling, and deeply touching." --Times Literary Supplement (UK)

Stephen Johnson is a regular contributor to Gramophone and The Independent. In addition to his print journalism, Stephen Johnson has broadcast frequently on BBC Radio 3, Radio 4 and the World Service. His most extensive broadcast project was a series of fourteen programmes for Radio 3 about the symphonies of Bruckner for the composer's centenary year. He lives in London.

Certainly a pleasure to read, but what does it tell us about Bruckner that we don't already know from other sources? I suppose a detailed knowledge of the pleasures, obsessions, and peccadillos of this great composer is worth having, but I think we can sum up his character from just his English biographers (alas, I can't read German). He definitely suffered from OCD, had a penchant for teenage girls that lasted into his old age and suggests some minor form of pedophilia, was a religious fundamentalist in an age of doubt, and an intellectual cipher apart from music, which he understood in amazing depth. In terms of his symphonies this means that the musical aspects are paramount: the harmonies, the variations, the sheer virtuosity of his compositional ideas is unsurpassed, IMHO, by no other great composer except Wagner, his idol. He was often contrasted with Mahler (the Master Musicians series included both in one of their earlier volumes), but this is mostly misleading: Mahler, compared with Bruckner, wore his heart on his sleeve musically, and the emotional tenor of his great symphonies is as important as the musical means, whereas Bruckner leaves me at least with a feeling of puzzlement: I love the symphonies 7-8-9 but the feelings they arouse are, except in the most general terms (the rapturous beauty of the second subject in the 9th, for example), unclear, ambiguous, though tremendously moving. If you love Bruckner, you'll enjoy reading this book, but I don't think you'll discover much new about the man and certainly not his music.

In the domain of Brucknerian bibliography, there are two mandatory acquisitions: Robert Simpson's survey of the Symphonies (& the String Quintet) and the wonderful tome in question. What with all the eruptions that have occurred since 1896, it is possible to bridge the gap that lies between the Great Man and ourselves, the rich mendicants of the Twenty First Century? Has Bruckner been culturally ossified beyond redemption, much like his bust that resides in the Regensburg Valhalla? I do not know. But as the anecdotes unfold, one by one, in this book, we inch ever closer to Anton himself in all of his complexity. The author is to be lauded: his work is completely devoid of egotism and pedantry. It is a model of its kind. The anecdote (page 28 onwards) re Bruckner, the boys, the diving-pool and the cat-burglar is a Pearl of Great Price. If Bruckner is a wellspring of meaning in your life, this book demands to be on your shelf, and be well thumbed at that.

A gem of a book in this wonderful series --- this small volume will surprise you with anecdotes and stories of Bruckner's life --- definitely not the theoretical exercise that is popularly supposed. Interesting in particular is the clash between Bruckner and Brahms --- between the sublime and the

merely very good. Highly recommended in place of the overpriced and overinflated academic Bruckner studies which are proliferating.

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