

The Reception of Anton Bruckner's Music in China¹

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In the early days after China opened to the outside world in the 1980s, numerous works by well-known European composers were frequently performed on Chinese stages and were well received by audiences. Anton Bruckner's symphonic works, however, were not performed as frequently as some others during that era, due to length, complex musical structure, and difficulties. This paper discusses the reception of Anton Bruckner's Music in China.

Keywords: Bruckner's Music in China

In the early days after China opened to the outside world in the 1980s, numerous works by well-known European composers were frequently performed on Chinese stages and were well received by audiences. Anton Bruckner's symphonic works, however, were not performed as frequently as some others during that era, due to length, complex musical structure, and difficulties. Starting in 1996, Bruckner's works began to be performed in China much more frequently.

Premiere Performance

In 1986, the Chinese Culture Ministry in Beijing decided to arrange a national concert performance to popularize symphonic music. The Bruckner premiere was held in June, 1986, in the well-known Beijing Concert Hall. Anton Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 in E-flat major was performed by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra² and conducted by Runyu Hou.³ The concert program also included Beethoven's Fidelio Overture.⁴

According to Runyu Hou's recollections, the premiere performance was very successful. The audience was mostly comprised of Chinese professional musicians from various musical organizations in the nation and officers of foreign embassies in Beijing. After the concert, one foreign guest commented that he could not believe

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² The Shanghai Symphony Orchestra was established very early in Asia. The orchestra introduced a large number of Western music since its establishment.

³ Runyu Hou (侯润宇) was born in 1945 in Kunming, China. He graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1969, and was appointed as the Guest Conductor of the Shanghai Ballet Orchestra in 1977 and 1980. He received an art diploma from Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln in Germany in 1984 (school information is based on his Chinese biography). He was appointed as a Conductor and Vice President of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra in 1985. He has been a Professor of Music and the Dean of the Art College of the Shanghai East China Normal University located in Shanghai since 2002.

⁴ The information is from the author's phone interviews with Runyu Hou conducted on March 21 and 23, 2011.

that a Chinese symphony orchestra performed Bruckner's work so precisely and completely. A few days after the premiere performance, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra repeated the same concert program in the Beijing Haidian Theater.⁵

Other Important Performances

Ten years after the premiere performance, Bruckner's music began to be performed frequently in Chinese concert halls. On July 26, 1996, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Bruckner's death, the Beijing Symphony Orchestra performed the composer's Symphony No. 3, conducted by Hans Herbert Jöris, in the Beijing Concert Hall. In the same year, the Bruckner Orchestra, conducted by Martin Sieghart, performed Bruckner's Overture in G minor in Shanghai on October 24 and in Beijing on October 27. Since that time, performances of Bruckner's music in China have been offered not only by Chinese orchestras and conductors, but also by visiting foreign orchestras and conductors.

In the summer⁶ of 2002, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra performed Bruckner's Symphony No. 3 in the Shanghai Concert Hall, again conducted by Runyu Hou.⁷ On April 4, 2007, in the Shanghai Concert Hall, Japanese conductor Iimori Yasujiro⁸ conducted the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra's performance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 7, along with works of Mozart and other composers⁹. On June 9, 2007, Iimori Yasujiro conducted Bruckner's Symphony No. 3, with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra in the Shanghai Concert Hall.¹⁰

On December 8, 2007, in Guangzhou, a city in Southern China, the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Claus Peter Flor (Wang, 2007), performed Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 in the Guangzhou Xinghai Concert Hall. This was the first performance of Bruckner's music by the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, which was established in 1957.

On September 21, 2008, Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 was presented by the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Edo de Waart,¹¹ in the Concert Hall of Hong Kong Cultural Center.

In 2009, two of the best national orchestras in China performed Bruckner's music. Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 was performed by the China Aiyue Orchestra, conducted by Okko Kamu, on March 13, in the Zhongshan Park Music Auditorium in Beijing. This was the first time the China Aiyue Orchestra performed Bruckner's music, 10 years after the organization was established.¹² On March 15, the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing presented Bruckner's Symphony No. 9, performed by the China Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Marco Parisotto from Canada. That day, several newspapers, including the *Beijing Youth Daily*, the *Beijing Times*, and the *Beijing Daily News* ran reviews of the concert.

⁵ From phone interviews with Runyu Hou by the author on March 21 and 23, 2011.

⁶ Based on the author's interview with the conductor, exact date could not be established.

⁷ Recollection of Runyu Hou as recorded in the author's interview with the conductor in 2011.

⁸ <http://www.yahoo.com>, Wikipedia, 飯守泰次郎 指揮者 オフィシャルサイト.

⁹ <http://www.baidu.com>.

¹⁰ <http://www.srts.net/tickets365/06-07music-lovers.html>.

¹¹ http://www.hkpo.com/tch/concerts_ticket/concerts/pastseason_detail.jsp?id=7.

¹² <http://hkc.emus.cn/bbs/redirect.php?tid=17222&goto=lastpost&highlight>.

"I never thought that Bruckner's premiere performance¹³ would sell out!" said one concertgoer, the well-known Chinese violinist Yunzhi Liu¹⁴ remarked. "The box office sales are a sign not only of people's improved income level, but also of the popularity [of Bruckner's music]."

On June 27, 2009, the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the German conductor Claus Peter Flor, performed Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 in the Guangzhou Xinhai Concert Hall. The concert was reviewed by the *South Daily* and *New Express News* in Guangzhou. One of those concertgoers interviewed said,

Bruckner's music, with its unique musical quality, always leaves audiences with an unforgettable feeling. Previously, near the end of 2007, the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra collaborated with the conductor Claus Peter Flor for the first time and performed Bruckner's music, which was well received by audience. Following the success of the 2007 performance, the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra once again invited Maestro Flor to conduct Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 in the well-remembered concert of June 27, [2009]. (Su, 2009)

On October 21 and October 22, 2009, the Shanghai Grand Theatre presented a concert of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4, performed by Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, conducted by the Italian conductor, Riccardo Chailly.¹⁵

On September 24, 2010, the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra conducted by Christian Edwards,¹⁶ performed Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 in the Shenzhen Grand Theater in Shenzhen, Guangdong.

On January 22, 2011, the Qingdao City Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Lior Shambadal, performed Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 in the People's Assembly Hall, in the province of Shandong.¹⁷

Very recently, on April 6, 2011, in the Beijing Zhongshan Park Music Auditorium, the China Aiyue Symphony presented Bruckner's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26. The violin soloist was Fei Li, the chief violinist of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. The concert was conducted by Long Yu, the Music Director of the China Aiyue Orchestra.¹⁸

Publications

In China, published books and articles on Bruckner cover various aspects of the composer's life and works. Several relevant publications were translated into Chinese, including Philip Barford's *Bruckner's Symphonies*, translated by Shi Pu and published by Huashan Wenyi Publishing House in Shijiazhuang, in April 1999.¹⁹ Karl Grebe's *Anton Bruckner* translated by Taizhi Wang and Huizhu Shen was published by Beijing People's Music Publishing House in May of 2006,²⁰ and Manfred Wagner's *Anton Bruckner—Sein Werk und Leben* translated by Hui Zhou was published by Beijing Central Conservatory of Music Press in November of 2009.²¹

¹³ The premier performance of Bruckner's music for the Orchestra.

¹⁴ China Violin Net Forum.

¹⁵ Shanghai Yongle Ticket Business Poster, 228.com.cn.

¹⁶ Jing Tao, Shenzhen New Net Station. The conductor's name is transliterated from Chinese by Jing Tao.

¹⁷ Qingdao Symphony Orchestra Network Station.

¹⁸ <http://ent.people.com.cn/GB/14338064.html>; http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_43e5b40f0100qjy3.html; <http://www.xclassics.org>.

¹⁹ 巴佛尔德著, 蒲实译, 《布鲁克交响乐》, 石家庄, 花山文艺出版社, 1999年4月第一版 (Philip Barford, 1996, translation, Shi Pu, 1999, *Bruckner's Symphonies*, Shijiazhuang: Huashan Wenyi Publishing House).

²⁰ 卡尔·格雷贝著, 王泰智, 沈惠珠译, 音乐家传记丛书《布鲁克纳》, 北京: 北京人民音乐出版社, 2006年5月第一版 (Karl Grebe, 1972, translation, Taizhi Wang, Huizhu Shen, 2006, *Anton Bruckner*, Beijing: People Music Publishing House).

²¹ 曼弗雷德·瓦格纳著, 周慧译, 《安东·布鲁克纳生平和作品》, 北京: 北京中央音乐学院出版社, 2009年11月第一版 (Manfred Wagner, 1995, translation, Hui Zhou, 2009, *Anton Bruckner—Werk und Leben*, Beijing, Beijing Central Conservatory of Music Publishing Press).

There were about 19 articles on Bruckner published in various Chinese journals during 1986-2011. In addition, there have been two master's graduate research papers submitted at Chinese universities. The topics of the articles are varied. For example, Lei Ma's article (2007) focuses on composition technique and characteristics of style in Bruckner's Symphony No. 4;²² Qiong Wang's article (2007) discusses Bruckner's Mass No. 3 in F minor and attempts to analyze the relationship between polyphony and Western sacred music in terms of religion and culture.²³

There are eight more articles that study and introduce Bruckner's works from various perspectives. Five of them discuss Bruckner's Symphony No. 7. These were written by Jiazhen Xu (2008) who recalls Wagner while listening to the second movement of Anton Bruckner's Symphony No. 7;²⁴ Chengwen Lu and Hongli Hou (1997) share their thoughts upon listening to Bruckner's Symphony No. 7;²⁵ Yan Zhou (2009) discusses Bruckner's belated masterpiece Symphony No. 7;²⁶ Liman Su and Danni Liang (2010) study the refraction of sacred music in an analysis of the first movement, exposition theme of Bruckner's Symphony No. 7.²⁷ And Chengwen Lu (1998a) discusses the heroic in Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 and Bruckner's Symphony No. 7.²⁸

Two other articles focus on Bruckner's Symphony No. 4. They are by Yanmin Li (2002) who discusses the infinite universal spirit of Bruckner in his symphony No. 4,²⁹ and by Yuzhong Jin (1986), who deals with a topic concerning Bruckner and his Symphony No. 4.³⁰ There is one article, written by Qiang Mou (1994) that deals with the theme of farewell in the last movement of Bruckner's Symphony No. 9, the last symphony completed by the composer.³¹

²² 马磊,《布鲁克纳及其(第四交响曲)简析[D]》,湖南,长沙:湖南师范大学学报,2007 (Lei Ma, 2007, Bruckner and Symphony No. 4, Hunan, Changsha: *Journal of Hunan Normal University*).

²³ 王莹,《从布鲁克纳(f小调第三弥撒曲)看复调音乐与宗教音乐关系[D]》,上海:上海音乐学院学报,2007 (Qiong Wang, 2007, From Bruckner's Mass No. 3 in F Minor to View the Relationship Between Polyphonic Music and Sacred Music, Shanghai: *Journal of Shanghai Conservatory of Music*).

²⁴ 徐家祯,《一首悼念瓦格纳的颂歌,听安东·布鲁克纳《E大调第七交响曲》第二乐章[J]》,上海:音乐爱好者,2008(10) (Jiazhen Xu, 2008, A Remembrance Song to Wagner, Listen to Anton Bruckner's Second Movement of Symphony No. 7, Shanghai: *Music Lover Journal*, 10).

²⁵ 鲁成文,侯红骊,《听听布鲁克纳吧—由(第七交响曲)(英雄)想起[J]》,上海:音乐爱好者,1997(6) (Chengwen Lu and Hongli Hou, 1997, Please Listen to Anton Bruckner—Thought From His Symphony No. 7 (Hero), Shanghai: *Music Lover Journal*, 6).

²⁶ 邹彦,《迟到的成名之作—布鲁克纳(第七交响曲)[J]》,上海:音乐爱好者,2009(2) (Yan Zhou, 2009, The Belated Masterpiece Bruckner's Symphony No. 7, Shanghai: *Music Lover Journal*, 2).

²⁷ 苏里曼,梁丹妮,《宗教意识的折射—布鲁克纳(第七交响曲)第一乐章呈示部主题分析[J]》,广东,佛山:佛山科学技术学院学报(社会科学版),2010(4) (Liman Su and Danni Liang, 2010, Refraction of Religious Consciousness—An Analysis of the Theme of the Exposition of the First Movement of Bruckner's Symphony No. 7, Guangdong, Fushan: *Journal of the Institute of Fushan Science and Technology (Social Science Edition)*, 4).

²⁸ 鲁成文,《从“英雄”到“英雄”—献给贝多芬(第三交响乐)和布鲁克纳(第七交响乐)[J]》,上海:音乐爱好者,1998(6) (Chengwen Lu, 1998, From Hero to Hero—To Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 and Bruckner's Symphony No. 7, Shanghai: *Music Lover Journal*, 6).

²⁹ 李彦明,《“无限”的宇宙精神—布鲁克纳与他的(第四交响曲)[J]》,广东,广州:星海音乐学院学报,2002(4) (Yanming Li, 2002, The Infinite Spirit of the Universe—Bruckner and His Symphony No. 4, Guangdong, Guangzhou: *Journal of Xinhai Conservatory of Music*, 4).

³⁰ 金裕众,《布鲁克纳与他的(第四交响曲)[J]》,上海:音乐爱好者,1986(4) (Yuzhong Jin, 1986, Bruckner and His Symphony No. 4, Shanghai: *Music Lover Journal*, 4).

³¹ 牟强,《告别生命的最后乐章—听布鲁克纳的(第九交响曲)[J]》,中国和台湾:发烧友,1994(5) (Qiang Mou, 1994, The Last Movement of Farewell to Life—Listen to Bruckner's Symphony No. 9, China and Taiwan: *Enthusiasts*, 5).

One article, written by Chen Zhang (2011), focuses on Bruckner's various symphonic scores, editions, and publication dates.³² Another article, written by Chengwen Lu (1999), evaluates features of orchestras' performing styles and interpretations of various scores and editions;³³ and another is a translation by Da Xin (1996) of an article by Stephen Johnson, which focuses on different editions of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8.³⁴ An article written by Chengwen Lu (1998b) compares typical compositional features of Bruckner's and Mahler's music.³⁵

In addition, three articles serve as introductions to Bruckner and his music; these were written by Hongli Hou and Chengwen Lu (1998),³⁶ Weiguo Zhang (2001)³⁷, and Xiangning Shi (2009).³⁸

One article is written by Tian Chu (2005),³⁹ which shares its author's feelings after listening to concert performances of works by Bruckner and others. Another, written by Ge Yi (1996), is a song in praise of Bruckner.⁴⁰ This article was written on October 11, 1996, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Bruckner's death (September 4, 1824-October 11, 1896). By recapturing the ups and downs of Bruckner's life and his outstanding achievements in his compositions, the author describes how Bruckner persisted in composing music with indomitable determination and meticulous attention to details. He concludes that Bruckner made important contributions to music by broadening symphonic space, which is a major part of Bruckner's greatness.

Recordings

All recordings of Anton Bruckner's music currently available for sale in China are imported. These are recordings by foreign symphony orchestras and conductors, such as recordings of Bruckner's Symphony No. 9, by the Berliner Philharmoniker, conducted by Herbert von Karajan (Karajan BPO, 1966, [Flac]) and Bruckner's complete symphonies conducted by Herbert von Karajan (Karajan, BPO); recordings of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4, Symphony No. 7, and Symphony No. 9, by the Hamburg North German Radio Symphony Orchestra, (Sinfonieorchester des Norddeutschen Rundfunks, Hamburg), conducted by Güter Wand, reissued by Jiuzhou

³² 张晨,《布鲁克纳交响曲的研究现状[J]》,辽宁,济南:音乐生活,2011(1)(Chen Zhang, 2011, Research Status of Bruckner's Symphonies, Liaoning, Jinan: *Music Life Journal*, 1).

³³ 鲁成文,《汲汲于迷一般的音乐—布鲁克纳音乐演释谈[J]》,上海:音乐爱好者,1999(2)(Chengwen Lu, 1999, Pursuit of Mystic Music on Interpretation of Bruckner's Music, Shanghai: *Music Lover Journal*, 2).

³⁴ 斯蒂芬·约翰逊,辛达译,《布鲁克纳(第八交响曲)版本种种[J]》,四川,成都:视听技术,1996(10)(Stephen Johnson [Author's name is transliterated from Chinese by Da Xin], translation, Da Xin, 1996, Different Editions of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8, Sichuan, Chengdu: *Viewing and Listening Technology*, 10).

³⁵ 鲁成文,《悲哀与胜利—布鲁克纳与马勒的世界[J]》,上海:音乐爱好者,1998(1)(Chengwen Lu, 1998, Sorrow and Victory—Bruckner and Mahler's World, Shanghai: *Music Lover Journal*, 1).

³⁶ 侯红骊,鲁成文,《布鲁克纳节[J]》,上海:音乐爱好者,1998(3)(Hongli Hou and Chengwen Lu, 1998, Bruckner Festival, Shanghai: *Music Lover Journal*, 3).

³⁷ 张维国,《三B外之B—布鲁克纳及其交响曲[J]》,北京:音响技术,2001(6)(Weiguo Zhang, 2001, The B Outside of Three Bs—Bruckner and His Symphonies, Beijing: *Journal, AV Technology*, 6).

³⁸ 师向宁,《交响曲大师安东·布鲁克纳[J]》,云南,昆明:民族音乐,2009(3)(Xiangning Shi, 2009, Master of Symphony Anton Bruckner, Yunnan, Kunming: *Journal, National Music*, 3).

³⁹ 楚天,《从布鲁克纳到赖内克,从奎勒到格拉夫—听上交的两场音乐会[J]》,上海:音乐爱好者,2005(5)(Tian Chu, 2005, From Bruckner to Reinecke, From Gueller to Graf—Listen to Two Concerts of Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai: *Music Lover Journal*, 5).

⁴⁰ 乙戈,《精诚所至,金石为开—布鲁克纳百年祭[J]》,四川,成都:视听技术,1996(10)(Yi Ge, 1996, Metal and Rock Can Be Moved by True Faith—Commemoration of One Hundredth Anniversary of Bruckne's death, Beijing: *Journal, Viewing and Listening Technology*, 10).

Audio and Video Publishing Company in China.⁴¹ No recordings of a Chinese orchestra performing Bruckner's music are available at this time.

According to Zihui Zhang,⁴² the former vice-chief editor of China Recording Company in Beijing,⁴³ and the Vice President and Chief Editor of China Science Culture Audio and Video Publishing Company in Beijing,⁴⁴ recordings of Bruckner's music come to China from two different channels:

The first channel is to import original recordings from outside of the country and sell them directly in China. The number of each recording edition is limited and the sale price is a little more expensive compared to reissued recordings. Examples of this process are Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 performed by Berliner Philharmoniker, conducted by Simon Rattle (EMI 384723 22), recorded in October 2006; the recording of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8, performed by Munich Philharmonic and conducted by Hans Knappertsbusch, recorded during 1957-1964, published in 2004 (LS 1047); the recording of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4, performed by Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Heinz Rogner (0030632-BC) released in 1994; the recording set including Bruckner's nine symphonies (RCA 09026639302), performed by Kolner Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Günter Wand; the recording (HMC901322) of Bruckner's Mass No. 2 in E minor recorded by La Chapelle, Royale Choir, Collegium Vocale, and Ensemble Musique, conducted by Harmonia Mundi; and the recording (PTC5186051) of Bruckner's Symphony No. 7 recorded by Vienna Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Yakov Kreizberg. Some of Bruckner's Symphonies may have several different recording editions being sold in China.

The China Book Import & Export Corporation has imported quite a few recordings of Bruckner's symphonies and his other works in various years, and copies of each recording edition were usually limited in a range from 100 to 500.

The second channel is to buy copyrights of original recordings made outside of China, then to reissue and sell them in China. The sale price of recordings produced this way is lower. The variety of recordings is quite limited. Based on the information offered by China Jiuzhou Audio and Video Publishing Company,⁴⁵ the company has released recordings of Bruckner's music, such as Bruckner's Symphony No. 4, performed by the Hamburg North German Radio Symphony Orchestra, recorded in 1992, which was reissued and released by the company on October 15, 2009, with 3,000 copies in China (Sony Music Entertainment China Holdings Limited, ISBN: 9787889296816); Bruckner's Symphony No. 7, performed by Hamburg North German Radio Symphony Orchestra, recorded in 1992, which was reissued and released by the company on October 15, 2009, with 3,000 recording copies (Sony Music Entertainment China Holdings Limited, ISBN: 9787889296823); and Bruckner's Symphony No. 9, performed by Hamburg North German Radio Symphony Orchestra, recorded in 1993, which was reissued and released by the company on October 15, 2009, with 3,000 recording copies (Sony Music

⁴¹ 九洲音像出版公司 (Jiu Zhou Yin Xiang Chu Ban She), a publisher of China audio/visual which was established in 1993, Beijing. <http://baike.baidu.com/view/1578552.htm>.

⁴² Phone interviews and email communications with Zihui Zhang during March-June, 2011. Zihui Zhang is an Associate Professor at the China People's University in Beijing.

⁴³ 中国唱片总公司 (China Record Corporation).

⁴⁴ 中国科学文化音像出版社 (Zhong Guo Ke Xue Wen Hua Yin Xiang Chu Ban She), a publisher of China science and culture audio/visual in Beijing.

⁴⁵ Communications with Zihui Zhang, June, 2011.

Entertainment China Holdings Limited, ISBN: 9787889298865). All reissued recordings are usually released with 3,000 copies. But it is difficult to trace all recordings of Bruckner's music that have been sold in China.

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