

Bernard Haitink, (born March 4, 1929, Amsterdam, Neth.), Dutch conductor best known for his interpretations of Gustav Mahler, Anton Bruckner, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Franz Liszt. His conducting, which continued the tradition of Willem Mengelberg, was noted for its careful attention to detail combined with an uncommon strength of character and conviction.

After studying at the Amsterdam Conservatory, Haitink joined the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic as a violinist. He studied conducting with Ferdinand Leitner at the Netherlands Radio Union's annual conductor's courses, 1954-55, and became their second conductor in 1955. His association with the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam began in 1956, and he was appointed its coconductor in 1961 and permanent conductor in 1964. He also served as artistic adviser (from 1967) and artistic director (1970-79) of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1972 Haitink turned his attention to opera, which led to his appointment in 1978 as music director of the Glyndebourne Festival in East Sussex, Eng. He became music director of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in London in 1986, and he held that post until 2002. In 2002-04 he was principal guest conductor of the Staatskapelle Dresden, and in 2006-10 he led the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as principal conductor. Haitink's many recordings include cycles of the symphonies of Mahler, Bruckner, and Beethoven and the tone poems of Liszt.



BRUCKNER

SYMPHONY NO. 4

“ROMANTIC”

CONCERTGEBOUW ORCHESTRA, AMSTERDAM
BERNARD HAITINK



Bruckner's Fourth Symphony was the one which began a reversal of the composer's fortunes for the better. The Vienna premiere under Hans Richter in 1880 was a resounding success. So elated was the composer that after a very promising rehearsal he pressed a coin into the conductor's hand with the enjoiner to have a beer. At the performance, Bruckner was called out for a bow after each movement.

The original version of 1874 was reworked into an almost totally new work, the most conspicuous changes being the replacement of the mysterious-sounding original scherzo with the now familiar "Hunting" one; a new finale subtitled "Volkfest" replaced the original, only to be replaced again with a less programmatic one two years later. Along with extensive reworking of the first two movements, these changes were all incorporated into the version most commonly known and performed today, being designated as the version of 1878-1880. A further 1887-1888 revision by Bruckner's pupils Lowe and Schalk has largely disappeared.

The subtitle "Romantic" was derived from a program Bruckner was persuaded by friends to append to the work, evoking images of medieval knights, castles, hunting, and other things. That Bruckner halfheartedly accepted the suggestion may be divined from his reply to a query regarding the finale: "I've quite forgotten what image I had in mind." And yet, the first movement's designation of "Dawn at a

medieval citadel...knights sally forth from the gates on proud chargers...the wonder of nature surrounds them..." is admittedly a bit appropriate. Against a mysterious tremolo a horn call emerges to be followed by the weighty and heroic main theme; a more idyllic "song period" follows, evocative of nature and replete with bird calls, followed in turn by a more imposing third subject; the movement's climax is a broad and blazing brass chorale which caps the development; the recapitulation ends with the horns powerfully repeating the symphony's opening notes against reiterated forte chords. The slow movement, a softly-treading andante in lieu of the usual Bruckner adagio, is said to represent a tryst of two medieval lovers; this alternates with a more spiritual chorale-like episode and works up to a climax for full orchestra which seems to invoke heroism more than romance. The following scherzo is perhaps the only undisputed tone-painting in the symphony, a rollicking, thundering depiction of a medieval hunt which is a tour-de-force for the horns; the trio is one of Bruckner's most engaging Ländlers, saturated with the serenity of the countryside. The finale of the 1880 version is expansive and episodic, commencing with a prolonged crescendo of an introduction and erupting into a theme derived from the opening of the symphony; a relaxed, winsome second theme alternates with passages of Wagnerian intensity and occasional fleeting references to the preceding movements; the long coda is a typically Brucknerian workup to a sonorous tapestry of sound with the work's opening motive woven into the fabric, bringing to a close what is often deemed the first of Bruckner's mature symphonies.

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- 1 Bewegt, Nicht Zu Schnell 18:06
- 2 Andante Quasi Allegretto 15:45
- 3 Scherzo (Bewegt) - Trio
(Nicht Zu Schnell. Keinesfalls Schleppend) 9:39
- 4 Finale (Bewegt, Doch Nicht Zu Schnell) 19:36

Recorded 10-12 May 1965 by Philips



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