

The analytical study of Anton Bruckner Symphony NO.8

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ABSTRACT. *As a representative composer of late romanticism, Bruckner created many classic works in his life. The Eighth Symphony is one of the representative classical works in his later years. In the summer of 1884, Bruckner began to work on The Eighth Symphony, which was completed in the fall of 1887. During the creation of The Eighth Symphony, Bruckner ushered in two major events in his life, namely, The Deum and The Seventh Symphony successfully performed for the first time, and received wide appreciation and spread. All of these helped Bruckner gain a worldwide reputation. In view of the classic of The Eighth Symphony, many composers are studying it carefully. However, there are still many problems troubling researchers in the study, which restrict the development of contemporary music. Based on this, this paper briefly analyzes Bruckner's Symphony NO. 8.*

KEYWORDS: *Theme; Polyphony; Harmony; Music form*

1. Introduction

As a famous composer in the late period of romanticism, Bruckner often used religious music forms such as Mass in his works[1]. Based on this, he combined with the folk national music and expressed his feelings and beliefs thoroughly. His music works are very poetic and religious, with strong romantic and lyrical characteristics. The Eighth Symphony is full of life philosophy. The classic of it is its ability to tug at the heartstrings, and expressing a strong piety and reverence for religion. Although many domestic and foreign musicians have done much research on Symphony NO.8 at present, the analysis and research on the creation techniques are not deep and detailed enough and lacks integrity. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the research on it, so as to improve the level of modern composition and

lay a solid foundation for the creation of classical music works.

2. The background of Symphony NO.8

Admittedly, Bruckner's Symphony NO.8 is excellent, but like his other works, he encountered many setbacks and difficulties in the early stage of creation. After finishing Symphony NO.8[2], Bruckner wanted to have the work performed by Hermann Levy, a renowned conductor who had conducted many classic pieces including Anton Bruckner Symphony NO.7. But Hermann Levy refused because he was full of doubts about this work. He thought that he did not understand the essence of this work so much that he recommended it to the excellent young conductor Felix Weingartner, who also refused. At that time, the ultra-modern language style and complex playing techniques of The Eighth Symphony were the main reasons for its being questioned. It was hard for the audience to accept. After several twists and turns, in the sixth year after the completion of the creation, 1892, The Eighth Symphony was successfully premiered. It was played by the world-famous Vienna philharmonic orchestra; conducted by the renowned conductor Hans Richter. Judging from the effect of the performance, we can call this show as a grand event in the field of music, which attracted the attention of people from all walks of life. Even the famous composers Johannes Brahms and Hanslick came to see the premiere of The Eighth Symphony. Mr. Bruckner, who attended the premiere with illness, remained humble and serene, but as he got older, his mind and body inevitably showed signs of aging. At the premiere, the supporters and opponents of The Eighth Symphony gathered. Supporters were pleased with the premiere, applauding for the symphony and the orchestra's skill, while opponents were unhappy with the symphony and walked out. Hanslick also left before the fourth movement of The Eighth Symphony. Although the performance of the eighth symphony was well received, its influence was not as lasting as expected, and musicians were not interested in it at all. This phenomenon formed a sharp contrast with the extensive and continuous attention and research on the seventh symphony in Europe and America. At the time of publication, there were four editions of The Eighth Symphony: First edition of 1892, Second edition of Haas, and two edition of Nowak. In the study, the two versions of Nowak are often adopted by scholars, because they are very close to the original manuscript and are of great

significance[3].

3. The study of the first movement of Symphony NO.8

The Eighth Symphony is composed of four movements. The first movement highlights the tragic color which is similar to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The first movement as well as the fourth movement takes sonata form as its basic structure. It has three themes, each with its distinctive character and tonality. As far as the music is concerned, it still uses its own convention to play with the violin. Play the F tune in vibrato, then the G tune, then the bB major with viola and cello, and then the main motif in C minor, thus set up a great hero image. While music may sound like a sigh, a question, or an upset feeling, it can also convey a more powerful emotion. The motif is distinctive. Music is full of unstable harmonies, the melodic line of an overtone, the rhythmic pattern with some notes and a chromatic descending tone. These special features add to the feeling of anxiety and struggle of music. By combining the tremolo of the violin and the echoing of the woodwind instrument, it perfectly creates a nervous and restless atmosphere, and the tone is very dark. Since then, in the process of constant development and change of theme motivation, music gradually moves towards the climax. It is worth pondering that at the beginning of this music tonality is actually very vague and almost belongs to the Free State. Because of excessive semitone, the tonality of C minor did not become clear until the end of the first paragraph. Then the music became more peaceful. Followed is subtopic, through the first violin playing the lyrical melody and always sing on the basis of clear G major, which contrasts sharply with the first theme in terms of tonality, mood and style by combining ascending conjunct melodic lines with Bruckner rhythmic patterns and chromatic murmurs. The tone in the process of continuous change accumulated a lot of power, and finally broke out a solemn and stirring momentum. The whole music also entered the climax. Later, music began to slowly sink, and then the third theme came into being. The third theme is played by horn and woodwind instruments in bE minor and bE major. It can burst out a kind of impassioned momentum when the strength is increasing, giving a sense of heroic shouting. In the last part of the first movement, it begins the introduction of the expansion section in the repeated and molded thematic motif of the main section. The expansion section is very short, mainly using brass and woodwind instruments.

It adopts the technique of imitating counterpoint to develop the subject material step by step. The theatricality of the recapitulation section is very strong, and music is pushed to the climax by it. The drama of the recapitulation section is very strong, and music is pushed to the climax by it. At this time, the theme also becomes contradiction and struggle. The final part of music does not end with the glory of victory like the previous music, but with temporary failure through the strength of pp[4].

4. The study of the second movement of Symphony NO.8

The second movement is actually a scherzo, which is supposed to be in the third movement, whereas in The Eighth Symphony Bruckner advances the scherzo as a buffer between the high drama of the first movement and the softness of the third. Composers have interpreted the scherzo. Some scholars think that the composer's interpretation is actually a joke; some scholars believe that the composer's interpretation of the scherzo is very rigorous and serious, which is worth our reference. In other words, we can think of scherzo as a portrait sketch of the legendary German Michel. In the 19th century, this figure had a strong political connotation, and its prototype was actually St. Michael, a hero born before the 17th century, who was regarded as the patron saint of the German nation. Germany's Michel is also gradually evolved from the image of St. Michel; he represents the hero of noble character[5].

Following the usual practice, the second movement is also composed of three parts. The theme of the first part includes two longitudinal contrasting motivations: One of them is the descending parallelepiped chord with dreamlike color, and the other is the arpeggio motif showing the characteristics of the secular world. Descending parallelepiped chords are played by the violin, mainly in the form of tremolo and played softly, as in Mendelssohn's dream world in a Midsummer Night's Dream. The instruments used in arpeggio motor are mainly viola and cello, which can be understood as Michel's clumsy dancing sound. After that, brass pipes and bass drums are added to make the music manifest a kind of nervous and enthusiastic emotion. The central theme is the slow lyric melody, which forms a sharp contrast with the music paragraph[6].

5. The study of the third movement of Symphony NO.8

The third movement belongs to adagio, which is a large-scale adagio with a huge and solemn declaration. The length of the movement is very long, much longer than the first movement, so it becomes the central part of the piece. In this part, the composer constructs a profound and grand spiritual world, which is deep, solemn and warm. It feels like a conversation with god[7]. The third movement adopts the ABABA form, which contains two distinct themes, forming a strong contrast in melody, tonality and character. The first theme is played by the violin, which plays out the restraining motivation in bD major and repeats it twice which creating a situation that slowly elaborates the hero's story. Then the violin and woodwind will be used to play out the high-pitched descending melody motive with unease, solemnity, hope, pathos and sighs, rendering the atmosphere of heroic shouting. The second theme mainly USES the cello, playing a more lyrical melody, in which the melody is full of the semitone descending melody lines of the big leap interval.

6. The study of the fourth movement of Symphony NO.8

The fourth movement is the finale. As mentioned earlier, this movement adopts a sonata-like structure like the first movement. It composed of entirely different themes of character, but with more freedom of expression. The main theme is composed of bb minor and bD major, played by brass instruments. The second theme part is played by the horn and strings. The melody in bA major and f minor is played in the style of chants, serious and deep, giving people an uneasy feeling. The third theme adopts the way of playing march-style melodies in be minor and bE major, with two instruments of woodwind and string. After that, it entered the expansion part, where the power gathered more and more, and was integrated into the whole song in the reappearance part. Finally, music ended with the carnival of victory.

7. Conclusion

Symphony NO.8 is very large in scale, rich in life philosophy and of great significance. In-depth research on it is of great help to improve the contemporary music creation. Therefore, the research on it must be intensified to provide advanced

experience for the creation of contemporary music.

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