

## RICARDO LUNA

### REVIEWS OF THE CD "BRUCKNER UNKNOWN" AND OTHER RECORDINGS



#### CD Bruckner *unknown*

**"ANTON  
BRUCKNER,  
unknown  
Being"**  
*(...) "Particularly  
pleasing, Luna  
seems to be an  
excellent  
conductor,  
because the  
music breathes in  
the long,  
rhythmically yet  
sensitively  
structured arcs  
that are quite right for Bruckner" (...).*



#### CD review by Dr Wilhelm Sinkovicz 'Die Presse' (19.12.2013)

<https://diepresse.com/home/kultur/klassik/klassikneuheit/1509649/Anton-Bruckner-unknownes-Wesen->

#### CD Bruckner *unknown*

**BRUCKNER / LUNA: "Bruckner *Unknown*"** – [TrackList follows] – Ensemble ViennAyres/ Ensemble Weiz Linz/ Hard Chor Linz – Preiser PR 91250, 64:32 (Dist. by Albany) [5/20/14] \*\*\*\*:

*"What a grand idea for a CD. Bruckner Unknown is a collection of works by Bruckner that existed only in uncompleted sketches, or discarded ideas from Bruckner's compositions. It's all the work of Ricardo Luna, who was born in Buenos Aires and is a conductor, choral director, composer and singer who has lived in Vienna since 2000.*

*For much of his life, Ricardo Luna has dedicated time to the life of Anton Bruckner and has edited transcribed, orchestrated or reconstructed unknown movements of Bruckner's symphonies after extensive research. As a result, most of the works on this CD are world premiere recordings, as they are works he has completed and arranged for chamber orchestra. In the detailed booklet that comes with the CD, Luna himself explains his ambition, selection and approach of his arrangements, providing an insight into his love and respect of Anton Bruckner's works.*

*So is this discarded music worth a listen? Decidedly and emphatically, yes! The sound of the works will be immediately recognizable to Brucknerphiles, and yet everything seems new and fresh.*

*I especially enjoyed hearing two movements from the Symphony No. 1. The reconstruction is from earlier versions not pursued by Bruckner, yet they sound very 'right' and the playing by the Austrian musicians is excellent.*

*Also of note is this performance of Christus factus est, the original and later discarded version written in 1873. Bruckner later changed the instrumentation, but this version is very listenable and filled with Brucknerian emotion.*

*A word about the recording and the word is 'excellent'. The strings are clear and almost ethereal sounding. Separation and imaging are quite good and not over-extended. It's a realistic recording that further enhances the talented musicians.*

*Bruckner Unknown is a unique CD, and other than a few reconstructions of the Mahler 10th, I don't remember anything quite like it.*

*Listeners who like Bruckner will be most satisfied, and classical music lovers will find Bruckner Unknown is a CD worth listening to and appreciating."*

**Review by Mel Martin, Audiophile Audition (31.08.2014)**

**CD Bruckner unknown**

*(...) "This is a sketch of an unfinished symphony in B flat major, early versions of individual movements of the 1st and 9th symphonies, and the only recording to date of Christus factus est WAB 10 (1873) that is faithful to the score. (...)*

*The musical standard of the recordings is very high; the knowledgeable accompanying booklet, in which Luna analyses the individual works in detail, deserves special mention." (...)*

**Review by Hans Roelofs, Bruckner discography (8 November 2013)**

**CD Bruckner unknown**

*(...) "It is hardly known that he (Bruckner) made an attempt at a B flat major symphony in 1869 before the Zeroth (Symphony), which, however, did not go beyond a sketch of the beginning of the first movement.*

*It is very commendable that Ricardo Luna presents here the first recording of these bars to my knowledge (...). (...) a wonderful, sometimes surprising addition for true Bruckner enthusiasts. I like the CD very much."*

**Review by G. Hammerschmidt "Hephaistos" at Amazon.de (28.11.13), five stars**

**CD Bruckner *unknown***

*"An absolute must for Brucknerians. Pure excitement!"*

*Great performance by the Argentinian Ricardo Luna"*

**CD of the day plus - Radio Stephansdom**

**Review by Radio Stephansdom 'Critic Matinatta' (20.12.2013)**

**CD Bruckner *unknown***

*"Because of the carefully chosen content of the CD and the excellent performances by Luna and his orchestral and choral forces"*

**CD Review by Crawford Howie on Amazon.co.uk (11.28.2013), five stars**

**CD Bruckner *unknown***

*"Ricardo Luna's "Bruckner Unknown" is a remarkable release." (...)*

*(...) preparedness, clarity and comprehensibility were the stated aims of Schoenberg's ensemble, and it may well be that these same values, not merely the superficial choice of instrumentation, were adopted by Ricardo Luna, who for this recording forged into seamless unanimity the combined forces of the Ensemble ViennAyres, Klavierduo It is worthwhile noting that exceptional Gröbner-Trisko and in the concluding choral work, the Hard-Chor Linz and Ensemble Wien-Linz.*

*This is high quality recording, recorded in beautifully suitable Baroque acoustic spaces. Released by Austrian label Preiser, it is suitably complemented by Luna's detailed account of the works chosen and his editorial mediations. (...)*

*(...) The CD concludes with Bruckner's lesser known, second composition of Christus factus est, dating from December 1873, a work of unquestionable power and calm sublimity. (...)*

*(...) The spacious, radiant reading of this work owes much to Luna's extensive experience as choral conductor. Treasures indeed."*

**CD Review by John A Phillips on the "Bruckner Journal", March 2014**

**CD Bruckner *unknown***

**„Signs and Wonders“**

*"Friend or foe, it will be simpler and indeed, more merciful to my long-suffering handful of readers if I provide you with the notes from the booklet of this exceptional release."*

*"The CD Bruckner unknown of Austrian-Argentinian conductor, composer and Bruckner specialist Ricardo Luna, Vienna, presents the world premiere recordings of several unknown compositions by Anton Bruckner including both middle movements of the Symphony No. 1, Adagio and Scherzo (original versions as edited by Wolfgang Grandjean for the Bruckner Edition), the sketch for the first movement of a Symphony in B flat major [BOH - written after the First and Zero Symphonies and before the Second - only Bruckner could have written it - what a find!*

*How often do you get a chance to hear the opening of a new Bruckner symphony?], the Trio No. 1 to the Scherzo of the Symphony No. 9, and the second setting of the motet Christus factus est, 1873.*

*Other material includes the Scherzo of the Ninth and its Trios No. 1, 2 and No. 3 (with the latter being the final version [BOH: and the first two trios were cut from the 'finished product' so here is your chance to hear them!]) and the Finale (fragment) of the Symphony No. 9, which is based on the documentation of John A. Phillips, are also part of this exciting CD.*

*As if making an exploratory expedition, Luna edited, transcribed, completed, arranged and/or reconstructed sketches, unfinished movements and older versions of symphonic movements for chamber orchestra [BOH - and a piano joins the fray in the finale of the Ninth and it's particularly effective when the big Chorale returns at 19'34". Gaps in the source-material are noted and the coda is included].*

*This scoring results in an unusual transparency of counterpoint and an increased harmonic tension that permit a more intense perception of harmonic colour [BOH: I so agree - the music making is sensational]. This creates new perspectives and a new, more vivid experience of listening. With the appearance of the human voice after the instrumental movements of the symphonies, the lesser known, monumental second setting of the motet "Christus factus est" concludes the program of this exceptional CD [BOH: doubt no longer but believe!]."*

**CD Review by Bernard Michael O'Hanlon, Amazon.com (28.03.14), five stars**

### **To discover the conductor Ricardo Luna**

*"The Austrian conductor with Argentinian roots Ricardo Luna has been the artistic director of the Vienna Madrigal Choir for several years and has already given remarkable concerts with the choir. The works of Anton Bruckner play a major role in his programme.*

*In 2007, the choir gave a concert of instrumental motets by Bruckner at various venues, including St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, performing works that are otherwise rarely heard, and in 2008,*

*the Mass in F minor and the Te Deum were given a captivating performance in the Großer Musikvereinssaal, in which it was less the contemplative Bruckner and more the heavenly stormer that Bruckner must also have been that came to the fore.*

*There are recordings of these concerts, but they only circulate within the choir and are not (yet) generally accessible due to rights issues; however, some of the instrumental motets can be heard on YouTube, so you can get an impression.*

*In Florida/USA, Luna also conducts a symphony orchestra with which concerts (and CD recordings) of Bruckner's symphonic oeuvre are planned. It is to be hoped that a larger audience will soon be able to become acquainted with Luna's Bruckner interpretations.*

*Luna also composes: his Grande Messe "Saint Michel" from 2009 has now been released on CD."*

For those interested: [www.ricardo-luna](http://www.ricardo-luna).

### **Review by Hans Roelofs, Bruckner discography (17 April 2013)**

**Bruckner: Mass No. 3 in F minor WAB 28 (premiere of the 1883 Version)** (Chorus Master and Conductor) Concert at the Wiener Musikverein (Vienna, 22 June 2008).

*"In his recording (2008), Luna reveals a different side to Bruckner's score, one that often remains somewhat overlooked.*

*When Bruckner wrote his Third Mass, he was just over 40, had completed his First Symphony, the 'keckes Beserl' (cheeky little thing), and was working on his Second Symphony – could some of this have rubbed off on the Mass? This is not the music of a serene spirit, but of someone in his prime, bursting with energy.*

*The Kyrie comes along at a calm, measured tempo, striding along but not slowly.*

*The Gloria then kicks in fiercely, with the Allegro taken at a relatively brisk pace. Luna's approach to the music is extroverted: intense emotions find their way into sometimes crashing ff chords in passages that sometimes sound unusually precise rhythmically, but there are also very cantabile passages, such as the 'qui tollis' (from E). The soprano stands out with her beautiful diction, but her timbre seems a little light for sacred music; the alto sounds warm and serious.*

*The Credo surpasses even the Gloria: it is very intense and unusually fast, and the extremes between pp and ff are fully exploited. This naturally places great demands on the choir, which sometimes loses precision at this tempo, with the orchestra threatening to drown it out. Nevertheless, the effect is overwhelming.*

*'Et homo factus est' sounds sombre and atmospheric, 'Et resurrexit' (Allegro) picks up a fast tempo again, the brass comes to the fore, and at 'judicare' (270) the timpani crash in (also at 416) – no one can doubt that the Last Judgement will take place!*

*As with the dynamics, extremes are sought in the tempos, similar to Harding (2010). This also applies to the Agnus Dei, for example: the 'Dona nobis' is accompanied by loud timpani beats from 79 onwards. The large choir (which sings with some vibrato) masters the score with only minimal uncertainties, the*

*orchestra plays very reliably, although the violins unfortunately sometimes produce a somewhat scratchy and thin tone. The direct recording technique plays a major role, resulting in a bright, very analytical and, as it were, "objective" sound, whereby, for example, in ff passages, brass figures that would otherwise at best sound like filler in the background are now audible on an equal footing with the choir's singing, which sometimes distracts from the "big picture" of the music, but in other places effectively complements the sound.*

*An "exciting" recording of the third Mass in the best sense of the word!"*

### **Review by Hans Roelofs, Bruckner discography**

**Bruckner: Te Deum in C Major WAB 45** (Chorus Master and Conductor)  
Concert at the Wiener Musikverein (Vienna, 22 June 2008)

*"The concert recording under Luna was also made in 2008 (like Mehta's). The entrance is majestic, although the barely more than a hint of brass takes away the dullness of the overall sound that characterises many other recordings: Here we hear a radiant, bright C major.*

*A precisely singing choir, a reliable orchestra and a quartet of soloists who blend in beautifully and whose individual voices are pleasingly audible. Although section I is an alternation of ff and fff over long stretches, Luna grades the dynamics carefully.*

*Luna's Te Deum does not sound like a goods train roaring past or a parade of marching legionnaires, but rather lively and bright, and yet full of power. The clear recording technique supports the conductor in this - the organ is also clearly audible without sounding booming.*

*The tenor differentiates the dynamics in II, as Bruckner prescribed, has some audible problems with this, but does not resort to bellowing as a way out; he actually sings convincingly and beautifully, if somewhat nasally, and the other soloists complement him nicely.*

*The tenor also grades his part carefully in IV, but the dynamic differences remain limited. Unfortunately, the bass sounds somewhat ponderous; the separation at 'et extolle illos usque in / aeternum' (bar 296) is unattractive - but others have shown him how to do it...*

*In V, the mastery of the various tempo shadings is important; Luna keeps to the basic tempo, but incorporates short delays not specified in the score, for example at bar 393-395 and 426-427; at "a tempo" (bar 443) he picks up the correct tempo again.*

*The "alla breve" creates tension, which is then released in the coda; the ritardando at bar 491-492 corresponds to the score, but unfortunately not in the final bars. Otherwise, the coda is, as one would wish it to be: not too fast, with audible brass and swinging. A convincing recording!"*

### **Review by Hans Roelofs, Bruckner discography**