

Bruckner on the Terraces

ONE EVENING, one of those odd coincidences that come to us often occurred when I had just had a cause to look up a piece about Elias Canetti, the novelist who was interested in the study of crowd behaviour (See his *Crowds and Power*), when a Brucknerian acquaintance telephoned to say that whilst watching some European football matches he heard the chanting of the main Allegro theme of the first movement of Bruckner's Fifth Symphony. As I am not a football person I hadn't seen the matches and so had not heard this, and I can't recall

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any reference by any Brucknerians to such chanting in the past.

A simple theme it is but it seems there is no coincidence here. Indeed, there are numerous internet sites telling the story! And Bruckner may now even be one of the most popular, most played and most sung of composers around the world! The theme was a direct inspiration (from the symphony as far as one can tell) of the brother and sister rock duo, The White Stripes, and the tune is on the first track on their album called *Elephant*, released in 2003. The track is titled *Seven Nation Army* (Semi-acoustic guitar player, Jack White, states that Seven Nation Army is what he used to call the Salvation Army as a child.) When released as a single it reached #1 on Modern Rock Tracks, and it has been placed #8 by Q magazine in its list of 100 Greatest Guitar Tracks! Elsewhere it has been placed as #5 on the list of 50 Greatest Tracks of the Decade; also #21 on a list of the 100 Greatest Guitar Songs of All Time. Other accolades include the Best Rock Song of 2004. (One of the websites describes Bruckner as an Austrian gigantist!)

The song has an underlying riff, playing throughout, sounding like a bass guitar, but, it seems, actually created by running a semi-acoustic guitar through an octave pedal set down an octave, something like this:

