

PREFACE

The composition of the chorale fantasias

Reger's study of chorales and his use of them in large-scale forms is closely associated with a decisive event in his life. Following a complete physical and psychological breakdown triggered by financial worries, professional uncertainty, unsettled circumstances and the stresses of military service, Reger returned to his family home in Weiden in June 1898.

The 'beneficial rest and inner composure' which accompanied this change enabled the ambitious composer to 'devote himself to the development of his artistic plans and designs without any external distractions'.¹

This led to a particular focus on the composition of major organ works which, from Reger's perspective and in contrast with contemporary works, were once again to be orientated more towards the style and legacy of Johann Sebastian Bach. Here, the essential characteristics for Reger were 'the *inexorable* logic of the writing, the solidity of the part-writing, the deliberate *avoidance* of all so-called *lyrical* (i.e. mostly sentimental); never a *playing* with the tonal effects of the different registers, but a *purposeful* true composition for organ'.²

Between 1898 and 1901, when Reger moved to Munich, he composed the majority of the organ works he himself called 'elephants'³, including all the chorale fantasias, the First Sonata in F# minor Op. 33, the Fantasia and Fugue on B-A-C-H Op. 46 and the Symphonic Fantasia and Fugue Op. 57.

Three further aspects were significant for the composition of the chorale fantasias: firstly, Reger intensively explored the texts and melodies of Protestant chorales, leading to his famous declaration, 'The Protestants don't know what they've got with their chorales!'⁴ Secondly, his study of the central aspects of human existence was reinforced by his intensive study of contemporary literature. Finally, Reger's reception of works by Richard Strauss led to Reger's positioning between the conflicting priorities of absolute and programme music.

Even though the young composer proclaimed the ideals of a style founded on Bach, Beethoven and Brahms to be a guiding compositional principle, he admired Strauss for the kind of sound he created and – for all his rejection of the superficially programmatic – regarded Bach's chorale settings as 'symphonic poems in miniature'⁵.

Ultimately for Reger, 'each work of art which reveals something to me spiritually [is] a symphonic poem'⁶. Thus it is that Reger's friend Fritz Stein also recognized that his work with or based on Protestant chorales was caught between the poles of 'elemental power and mystic contemplation'⁷: 'The Catholic Reger discovers and reveals the depths of the Protestant hymn which the secular naturalism of the world at that time failed to recognize. Reger – and this is the essential fact – does not experience these fundamental religious forces in denominational terms, he experiences them [...] from the hiddenmost depths of Bach's art.'⁸ The composer himself described the closeness to programme music in a letter to Caesar Hochstetter: 'While retaining the chorale melody as a c. f. [cantus firmus], every verse is illustrated musically.'⁹

The organ music of the 17th and 18th centuries, especially that of Samuel Scheidt, but also the expansive chorale fantasias of the North German organ style, which fully exploited the tonal and compositional language of the day, offers models for a detailed interpretation of the Protestant chorale in content and technique. Nevertheless, Reger created something new with his seven chorale fantasias. His biographer Guido Bagier aptly put it: 'We have in the most extreme sense a kind of programmatic music before us, for the power of the textual underpinning grips Reger with such intensity that the musical imagination is completely filled with its ideas and all tonal constructs are intuitively dependent upon it.'¹⁰

Max Reger composed his seven chorale fantasias within two years, between August 1898 and October 1900. At the same time, they form the conclusion of his preoccupation with this large-scale form, excepting the chorale cantatas intended for use in a different context. They comprise two contrasting pairs of works: Opp. 27, 30 and 40/1 & 2 as well as the sequence of Fantasias Op. 52/1–3 conceived as a trilogy. In his overall assessment, Fritz Stein described Reger's tremendous contribution to the genre as follows: 'The defiant courage of the Lutheran hymn, fear of the world and the longing for death, all the horrors of the guilt of sin and fear of death, the result of heartfelt contemplation of the divine mystery, unshakable confidence in faith – "credo, quia absurdum!" – , praise of eternal goodness in the beholding of divine glory, – through all the heights and depths of human existence and experiencing God, the soul of the struggling artist, torn apart by demonic forces, has walked with the pious poets of these ancient chorales, and has found itself and its God in the desolation of these years of struggle.'¹¹

¹ Adalbert Lindner, *Max Reger. Ein Bild seines Jugendlebens und künstlerischen Werdens*, Stuttgart 1922, p. 109.

² Letter from Max Reger to Hugo Riemann dated 18 March 1899, in: Susanne Popp (ed.), *Der junge Reger: Briefe und Dokumente vor 1900*, Wiesbaden 2000, p. 401.

³ Letter from Max Reger to Otto Leßmann dated 14 January 1901, Max-Reger-Institut Karlsruhe, Ep. Ms. 185.

⁴ Adalbert Lindner, see note 1, p. 136.

⁵ Max Reger, preface to the edition *Job. Seb. Bach, Ausgewählte Orgel-Choralspiele (für Klavier zu zwei Händen bearbeitet)*, Munich 1901.

⁶ Max Reger, "Offener Brief", in: *Die Musik* 7. (1907), Vol. 1, p. 12.

⁷ Fritz Stein, *Max Reger. Sein Leben in Bildern*, Leipzig 1941, p. 18. [1956: p. 15]

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Letter from Max Reger to Caesar Hochstetter dated end of September 1898, in: Susanne Popp, see note 2, p. 347.

¹⁰ Guido Bagier, *Max Reger*, Stuttgart, Berlin 1923, p. 120.

¹¹ Fritz Stein, *Max Reger*, Potsdam 1939, p. 116.

Sr. Hochwürden Herrn Professor Dr. Julius Smend hochachtungsvollst zugeeignet

Fantasie

über den Choral

„Alle Menschen müssen sterben“

INTRODUZIONE

Max Reger, op. 52 Nr. 1
(1873–1916)

Assai agitato e molto espressivo (vivace)

The musical score is written for piano and organ. It begins with a piano introduction in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. The first system shows the piano introduction with a forte (fff) dynamic, marked 'Assai agitato e molto espressivo (vivace)'. The second system continues the piano introduction with a 'più fff' dynamic. The third system introduces the organ part (Org. Pl.) with a 'meno fff' dynamic, marked 'strin - - gen - - do'. The score includes various musical notations such as treble and bass staves, dynamic markings, and performance instructions.

Opus 52 Nr. 1

A Autograf für Karl Straube
Max-Reger-Institut, Karlsruhe, Signatur: Mus. Ms. 010

Titel: *Phantasie | für | Orgel | über den Choral: | „Alle Menschen müssen sterben.“ | Max Reger op 52 | № I | Exemplar des Herrn | Karl Straube*

Reger verwendete wie üblich schwarze Tinte für den Notentext und rote Tinte für die Vortragsanweisungen. Darüber hinaus weist das Autograf keine weiteren Eintragungen auf. Am Schluss der Partitur ergänzte Reger einen Kommentar für Straube: *Recht inniges Vergnügen, lieber Carl! Im Falle es beim Anhören dieses „Verbrechens“ Todte geben sollte, übernehme ich die Beerdigungskosten. Besten Gruß dein alter Organiste Max Reger.*

As usual Reger used black ink for the musical text and red ink for the performance instructions. Beyond that, the autograph shows no further inscriptions. At the end of the score, Reger added a commentary for Straube: 'Real heartfelt pleasure, dear Carl! If there should be any deaths whilst listening to this "crime", I will cover the funeral costs. Best wishes, your old organist Max Reger.'

S Stichvorlage
Universal Edition, Wien; Dauerleihgabe in der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Wien, Signatur: L1.UE.389

Titel: Gesamttitel für Op. 52: *Drei | Phantasien | für | Orgel | über die Chorale | „Alle Menschen müssen sterben.“ | „Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme!“ | „Halleluja! Gott zu loben, bleibe meine Seelenfreud!“ | von | Max Reger op 52 | Verl. № a No 1. | Verl. № b No 2. | Verl. № c No 3. | Eigentum des Verlegers. Eingetragen in das Vereinsarchiv | München, Jos. Aibl Verlag. | Copyright 1901 by Jos. Aibl Verlag. | Aufführungsrecht vorbehalten.*
Einzeltitel: *Sr. Hochwürden Herrn Professor Dr. Julius Smend hochachtungsvollst zugeeignet. | Phantasie für Orgel | über den Choral: | „Alle Menschen müssen sterben.“ | Max Reger op 52. № I*

In üblicher Weise verwendete Reger schwarze und rote Tinte. Von Verlagsseite erscheinen handschriftliche Eintragungen sowie Stempel. Als Schlussbemerkung schrieb Reger: Fine | Max R

As usual Reger used blank and red ink. Handwritten entries and stamps appear on publisher's side. As a concluding note, Reger wrote: Fine | Max R

E Erstdruck
Jos. Aibl Verlag, München, Juni 1901, Plattennummer 2989a
Ab 1904 Übernahme Universal Edition, Wien, U.E. 1247

Titel: *DREI | Phantasien | für | ORGEL | über die Chorale | 1. „Alle Menschen müssen sterben“ | 2. „Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme!“ | 3. „Halleluja! Gott zu loben, bleibe meine Seelenfreud!“ | von | Max Reger. | Op. 52. | Verl. № 2989a. № 1. M 3,- | Verl. № 2989 b. № 2. M 3,- | Verl. № 2989 c. № 3. M 3,- | Eigentum des Verlegers. Eingetragen in das Vereinsarchiv | MÜNCHEN. JOS. AIBL VERLAG. | Copyright 1901 by Jos. Aibl Verlag. | Aufführungsrecht vorbehalten. | Oscar Brandstetter, Leipzig.*

Einzeltitel: *PHANTASIE | für Orgel über den Choral: | „Alle Menschen müssen sterben.“*
Widmung in Kopfzeile: *Sr. Hochwürden Herrn Professor Dr. Julius SMEND hochachtungsvollst zugeeignet.*

Opus 52 Nr. 2

A Autograf für Karl Straube
Max-Reger-Institut, Karlsruhe, Signatur: Mus. Ms. 011

Titel: *Meinem Freunde Karl Straube in herzlichster Dankbarkeit zugeeignet. | Phantasie für Orgel | über den Choral: | „Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme!“ | Max Reger op 52 № II. | Dieses Originalexemplar ist Eigentum | des Herrn Karl Straube. | Max Reger 22 Okt. 1900.*

Reger verwendete wie üblich schwarze Tinte für den Notentext und rote Tinte für die Vortragsanweisungen, ab T. 133 nur noch schwarze Tinte. Die Angaben werden ab hier immer ungenauer und weniger detailliert. Darüber hinaus weist das Autograf handschriftliche Eintragungen Karl Straubes auf. Diese umfassen neben einem Besitzvermerk auf der Titelseite, Vortragsanweisungen, Finger- und Fußsätze sowie Manualangaben, was auf eine praktische Verwendung zum Üben bzw. bei der Ausführung hindeutet. Am Schluss der Partitur vermerkte Reger: *Fine. Max Reger. | 15. September 1900. | Weiden, bayerische Oberpfalz*

As usual, Reger used black ink for the musical text and red ink for the performance instructions, from bar 133 onwards only black ink. From here on, the indications become increasingly imprecise and less detailed. In addition, the autograph contains handwritten entries by Karl Straube. Besides a note of ownership on the title page, these include instructions for performance, fingering and 'feeting' as well as manual indications, which indicates a practical use for practice or performance. At the end of the score Reger noted: *Fine. Max Reger. | 15. September 1900. | Weiden, bayerische Oberpfalz*

S Stichvorlage
Universal Edition, Wien; Dauerleihgabe in der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Wien, Signatur: L1.UE.389

Titel: Gesamttitel für Opus 52: siehe Opus 52 Nr. 1 – hier nur die Nr. 2 unterstrichen.
Einzeltitel: *Meinem Freunde Karl Straube in herzlichster Dankbarkeit | Phantasie für Orgel | über den Choral: | „Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme!“ | Max Reger op 52 № II.*

In üblicher Weise verwendete Reger schwarze und rote Tinte. Von Verlagsseite erscheinen handschriftliche Eintragungen sowie Stempel. Als Schlussbemerkung notierte Reger nur seinen Namen ohne Datum.

Reger used black and red ink in the usual manner. Handwritten entries and stamps appear on the publisher's side. As a final note, Reger only noted his name without the date.