

Arnold Schoenberg, Max Reger

Arnold Schoenberg

(1874 — 1951)

Variations on a Recitative Op 40

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| 1 | Recitative | (1' 16) |
| 2 | Variations | (11' 04) |
| 3 | Fugue | (5' 22) |

Max Reger

(1873 – 1916)

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| 4 | Benedictus Op 59 No 9 | (5' 23) |
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Introduction, Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme in F Sharp Minor Op 73

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| 5 | Introduction | (6' 55) |
| 6 | Theme and Variations | (27' 49) |
| 7 | Fugue | (5' 35) |

Total Time (63' 32)

MARTIN SOUTER

ORGAN

Producers: Gwyn L Williams and Martin Souter

Engineer: Edward Horn

Recorded in Princeton University Chapel

Like the Princeton instrument itself, this recording has a very wide dynamic range. All organs are wind instruments and it is possible clearly to hear the blower noise on this recording. Occasionally mechanical noises can be heard from the organ, particularly when there are changes of registration.

Cover image: *Arnold Schoenberg* Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980) © Fondation Oskar Kokoschka/ DACS 2013
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Arnold Schoenberg was arguably the most important composer of the 20th century; he was one of the first categorically to relinquish tonality in its conventional sense. With the increasingly chromaticism of his early works, any sense of key became gradually lost. He remained wedded, however, to traditional forms and saw himself fundamentally as part of a long musical tradition. Works such as 'Gurre-lieder' (1913), an oratorio on a massive scale, pushed the bounds of harmony further than they had ever been pushed before and he found the constraints of a conventional musical language too severe, and felt that it now left nothing more to say. A work such as 'Verklärte Nacht', a string sextet at first dating from 1899, paid massive homage to his idol Johannes Brahms in its textures and harmonies, but Schoenberg soon set out in a different direction, the composer feeling 'the air of other planets', in the words of a contemporary poet, as he became increasingly dissatisfied with his

own sound world. Although the 'Five Piano Pieces' of 1911 continue to be highly influenced by the world of Brahms. The pieces retain the textures of piano music from late Brahms, but tonality has all but disappeared. Schoenberg also introduced new techniques of performance into his music in such works as 'Gurre-lieder' and in the opera-cantata 'Pierrot Lunaire' from 1912. Here we hear a technique called Sprechgesang, in which the singer half sings and half declaims the text. This was new to classical music, although a similar style 'penillion' already existed in, for example, the folk music of Wales. This is a technique which has been dated as early as the 18th century of singing and declaiming accompanied by an instrument.

At the same time as writing tutor books on conventional harmonies and counterpoint, Schoenberg was developing his system of serial music, in which all 12 chromatic notes of the scale had equal value and there was no tonal hierarchy as you would expect from a major or minor scale. The 12 notes were arranged by the composer into an artistic order and used quite rigidly instead of the scale. This note row was in no way restrictive, and Schoenberg in fact felt a new artistic freedom through it. The row could be presented in many ways, and all the notes could theoretically be heard simultaneously and in retrograde, in inversion, retrograde inversion and even transposed. Along with his pupils, Alban Berg and Anton Webern, Schoenberg, almost by default, and in homage to the past, founded the Second Viennese School. The first Viennese School was part of a tradition stretching back at least as far as Beethoven, a way of writing music fundamentally based on harmony and counterpoint in its conventional sense.

The American music publisher, WM Gray commissioned an extensive 'Contemporary Organ Series' during the 1930s. By this time Schoenberg was already resident in the United States of America, having left Europe in 1933. He began writing an organ sonata for this company in a serial style, using a tone row, but only two fragments of this piece remain and he abandoned the work after only a short while. Instead, Schoenberg wrote a set of variations in tonal idiom, once more paying homage to the music he had known and admired as a young man. Like many of his own early works, this set of variations is monumental in its scope. It was completed by the spring of 1941, published in 1943, and given its first public performance the following year in New York. The organist who gave this performance was Carl Weinrich; the task had befallen him of working on the edition a few years previously. When Schoenberg wrote the score he indicated the pitches he wished to hear; pitches that were not necessarily those which could be played on a conventional organ. His own comments on this are instructive in this regard:

I write always the pitch which I want to hear... I am not very fond of unnecessary doublings in octaves. I realise that the organ to some extent can become louder only by addition of upper and/or lower octaves. I realise that one must allow an organist to do this if there is no better way of balancing the voices according to their structural importance. But I would like to have such doubling avoided if clearness and transparency can be achieved without addition of octaves.

It fell to Weinrich to realise the composer's intentions. Weinrich's own remarks concerning his edition are of equal interest:

The suggestions for registration throughout the Variations are intended for the organ at Princeton University. To carry out the intentions of the composer it will be necessary for the performer to follow the pitches which have been indicated for the pedal — sometimes with and sometimes without 16' stops... In measure 92, the manuscript contains a C sharp above the compass of the organ keyboard. I have suggested that passage leading up to this note be played on octave lower, but have kept the pitch desired by the composer by using stops above 8' pitch only.

In fact, Weinrich's edition gives a complete tonal palette for the whole work, that is based on the 1928 Ernest M. Skinner organ at Princeton. In the intervening years this organ was much altered and added to, but a restoration in 1991 by the London firm of NP Mander restored the organ and allowed the 1928 original instrument to be heard in full. It is now possible to use only this part of the organ, although changes to the physical layout of the instrument actually improved it and changes to the acoustic of the chapel improve the sound still further. So in combination with Weinrich's suggestions it was possible to reconstruct the 1943 edition and to record the instrument and the music as the first edition intended it to sound. The full specification of this remarkable instrument is included here.

Schoenberg's work is quite remarkable. The Recitative is his own and its shape and form allow plenty of scope for the variations which follow. After the variations there is a cadenza which leads into the final Fugue. Throughout the piece Schoenberg's love of counterpoint clearly can be heard, although frequently Schoenberg is also lyrical in his writing.

Maximilian Reger was of a psychologically older generation than Schoenberg, but in many ways they shared the same musical problems. Reger, too, was fundamentally a traditionalist who found himself in the midst of his own musical revolution. Steeped in the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, he wrote in all the musical forms of the great man, from simple chorale preludes to complex variation sets, fantasias, fugues and toccatas. But in addition to his vast knowledge of 18th-century music Reger was a fully paid-up member of the Romantic movement, and many of his works pay homage to his more recent past particularly the harmonic language of Wagner and Liszt. Reger's music is quite special, and it uses all the resources of the instruments he knew as well as being technically demanding of the player. Much was written in learned musical journals in the first part of the 20th century deriding Reger for writing too many notes! In fact his compositional technique owes much to the virtuoso keyboard music of Liszt and to the amazing organs of his time, such as the wonderful Sauer organ in Berlin Cathedral. This type of instrument was very different from what had gone before. Its sound is dominated by many stops of the same 8' pitch, voiced for their different tonal characteristics and together building into a vast wall of sound. The classical organs of Bach's day were rather different and were based on a contrast of pitches and physical separation of the divisions of the organ. Ernest Skinner was one of the finest American builders in this romantic style, which he also successfully combined with a sense of the original classical organ, creating instruments which, although requiring because of their immense size assisted actions rather than traditional purely mechanical ones. This combination of techniques meant that the organs he built were capable of realising a vast corpus of organ literature.

The 'Introduction, Variations and Fugue' may be one of the technically hardest pieces of organ music ever written. The work dates from 1903. The Introduction is not dissimilar from Schoenberg's Recitative, as it searches for a harmonic root in its restless short phrases. Even the second note of this vast piece has an accidental sign and the Introduction continues restlessly until the arrival of the Theme. The ensuing Variations take Reger ever further from the Theme and the work concludes with a stunning Fugue. The performance heard here makes full use of all the resources of the Skinner/Mander instrument, including the 'Rollschweller'. This device had been pioneered in Reger's day. It is a revolving footpedal which can be used to add and subtract stops extremely quickly.

The 'Benedictus' is an altogether different vein from these two monumental variation sets. Its harmonic world is more conventional, and reminds us more of the music of Reger's near contemporary Siegfried Karg-Elert, a composer of a huge series of smaller scale organ pieces, often with Romantic titles, and rarely retaining the traditional nomenclature preferred by Reger and Schoenberg. The 'Benedictus' provides a wonderful foil to the two works either side of it, although its opening melody takes a similar shape to that of Reger's larger piece.

Princeton University Chapel Organ
 Ernest M. Skinner, 1928, 1954-1956
 NP Mander 1991

GREAT ORGAN

Double Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
First Diapason	8
Second Diapason	8
Concert Flute	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Octave	4
Principal	4
Flûte Harmonique	4
Stopped Flute	4
Twelfth	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Piccolo	2
Cornet	III
Full Mixture	III-IV
Sharp Mixture	IV
Trombone	16
Tromba	8
Clarion	4

CHOIR ORGAN

Open Diapason	8
Violoncello	8
Chimney Flute	8
Principal	4
Spitzflute	4
Nazard	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Flageolet	2
Tierce	1 3/5
Larigot	1 1/3
Mixture	III
Trumpet	8
Cremona	8

SWELL ORGAN

Bourdon	16
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SOLO ORGAN

Contra Gamba	16
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Diapason	8	Hohl Flute	8
Rohr Flute	8	Doppelflöte	8
Flauto Dolce	8	Viola	8
Flute Celeste	8	Viola Celeste	8
Gamba	8	Echo Dulciana	8
Gamba Celeste	8	Dulciana Celeste	8
Salicional	8	Flûte Ouverte	4
Voix Celeste	8	Harmonic Piccolo	2
Octave	4	Cor Anglais	16
Flûte Triangulaire	4	French Horn	8
Unda Maris II	4	Bassetto	8
Flautino	2	Orchestral Oboe	8
Sesquialtera	II	Chorus Mixture	VII
Mixture	V	Contra Tuba	16
Plein Jeu	IV	Tuba	8
Posaune	16	Tuba Clarion	4
French Trumpet	8	(Unenclosed)	
Cornoepen	8	Tuba Mirabilis	8
Oboe	8		
Vox Humana	8		
Clarion	4		

PEDAL ORGAN

Double Diapason	32
Diapason Wood	16
Diapason Metal (Great)	16
Violone	16
Gamba (Solo)	16
Bourdon	16
Principal	8
Cello	8
Gedeckt	8
Fifteenth	4
Open Flute	4
Grave Mixture	IV
Mixture	IV
Contra Bombarde (ext)	32
Contra Fagotto (ext)	32
Bombarde	16
Trombone (Great)	16
Fagotto	16

NAVE ORGAN

(On Great, Swell, or Solo)	
Diapason	8
Cor-de-Nuit	8
Cor-de-Nuit Celeste	8
Octave	4
Superoctave	2
Fourniture	III
Cymbal	III
Trumpet	8

NAVE PEDAL

Contra Bass	16
Principal	8
Superoctave	4
Cornet	III

WEST GALLERY (On Choir)

Trumpet	8
Bassoon	8
Clarion	4
Hautboy	4

Fanfare Trumpet	8
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