

ROLAND GLASSL

suites
for viola

reger
busch
weinreich



audite

Max Reger (1873-1916)

Suite No. 1 in G minor Op. 131d 11:37

Suite No. 2 in D major Op. 131d 9:25

Suite No. 3 in E minor Op. 131d 8:58

Adolf Busch (1891-1952)

Suite Op. 16a in A minor 10:25

Justus Weinreich (1858-1927)

Suite No. 1 in E-flat major 11:52

Suite No. 2 in F major 15:21

Suite No. 3 in G major 12:24

ROLAND GLASSL VIOLA



Brought in from the shadows

The repertoire for a string instrument without accompaniment is not vast. Although the stock of works for solo violin increased considerably from the era of the great nineteenth and twentieth century virtuosos, far less was written for solo cello; and the viola (both in the solo and concerto genres) was treated as an orphan until the early twentieth century. Despite the relative expansion of virtuoso pieces for violin, the two cycles by Johann Sebastian Bach remained the touchstone and epitome of solo string works: the Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin and the Six Suites for Solo Cello. They represented the basis of a revival movement which included the string, and in particular the viola, repertoire.

Max Reger's Suites

For Max Reger "Sebastian Bach" meant the "beginning and end of all music: he is the basis and at the root of any true progress!" In contrast to the exponents of the German singing and organ movement, he did not (mis)understand the old master to be an invitation for creating Neo-Baroque frugality, covered with the grey cloak of Anti-Romanticism. For him, Bach's forms and methods served as a model which he intended to recreate according to modern appreciation, and in a new and individual manner. His viola suites are written for the maximally reduced scoring of one string instrument, following Bach's example; however, Reger chose the one instrument for which Bach had not written any solo works. Reger also adopted Bach's title although he did not interpret it in the sense of a series of stylised baroque dance movements, but instead in the light of the (Classical) sonata in four movements.

Composed in November 1915, the Suites for Solo Viola represent the fourth cycle in Reger's opus 131, also comprising the Six Preludes and Fugues for Solo Violin (Op. 131a), Three Canons and Fugues "in the old style" for Two Violins (Op. 131b) and the Three Suites for Solo Cello (Op. 131c). The complete absence of any exterior extravagance in these works marks the antithesis to Reger's great, even monumental, orchestral and organ works. At times, they are characterised by an almost aphoristic brevity and density. The sequence of movements is arranged in Classical fashion: if the opening movement demands a swift tempo, the slow movement comes second and the scherzo in third place. In that case, the latter tends to have a light, relaxed – rather than a particularly fast – pace. Reger composed his second suite in this constellation. Here, the scherzo corresponds more to a minuet, as would have been common until the Classical era. The overall form could be described as an arch, extending from the clearly defined opening theme of the first movement through to the final bars of the last movement. This also corresponds to the key structure, setting out in D major, leading to A major and G minor, then returning back to D. The keys of the middle movements are mirror-symmetric to the home keys of the outer movements.

However, where the first movement begins with a moderate to calm tempo, it is often followed by a very fast scherzo, with the slow movement coming in third place, forming a great contrast to the lively finale. Reger used this model for the first and third suites. The resulting movement sequence (slow-fast-slow-fast) was the same as in the Baroque *sonata da chiesa* (the term "church sonata" does not imply that these works were only played in church). Historically speaking, in the form cultivated by Arcangelo Corelli, it is mostly deemed a source of chamber music. The parallel form is structured in groups of two, which Reger accentuates with the tonal layout of the third suite: all movements are centred around E, three of them in the minor key, whilst the slow third movement is in the major.

The first suite combines moments which later on are developed separately. Organising the four movements according to the formula of the *sonata da chiesa*, Reger does not maintain the linearity of the tonalities as strictly as in the third suite. The second movement, a swift, dance-like scherzo, has a calmer middle section which appears as an antiphonal structure featuring unison and two-part passages. Its character and tempo seem to be intensified and independent in the third, slow movement. The two inner pieces of the suite are thus closely linked together, and as a result the opening and closing movements are also interrelated. The virtuoso finale, a *perpetuum mobile*, forms a pronounced contrast to the restrained opening of the suite. The formal cohesion tying together the centre and the frame corresponds to the Classical sonata, whereas the external sequence of the movements matches the pattern of the Baroque *sonata da chiesa*.

Reger's Friend: Adolf Busch and his Suite

Max Reger dedicated his suites to three friends and colleagues; the first one to the gynaecologist Heinrich Walther, who had been a trustee of the Gießen concert society since 1895 and who had won Reger for performances in that Hessian university town. Over the years, they became close friends. On 14 November 1915, the month during which he composed his viola suites, Reger gave his last concert in Gießen. The second suite was dedicated to Richard Sahla who, after a career as a child prodigy and virtuoso as Kapellmeister at the Bückeberg court, gained transregional attention for his orchestra; as a violinist and conductor, he was devoted to Reger's music. The Munich violinist Josef Hösl, dedicatee of the third suite, championed the compositions of his friend as a soloist and chamber musician. A fourth suite was planned for Karl Doktor, the then violist of the Busch Quartet. According to him, Reger had already been playing the themes of this planned work to him: the composer died before he was able to complete it. Adolf Busch, the quartet's leader and himself a composer, wrote his own viola sonata, fulfilling, as it were, the legacy of his late colleague. He had first met Reger in 1907 and, after Henri Marteau, became his preferred chamber music partner for the complex violin sonatas. Busch's viola suite was frequently called "Reger's fourth" – not entirely without good reason. It resembles his works in form and dimension; like Reger, Busch also worked with the forms of sonata and suite; externally, he accentuated the latter by using a subtitle. The second movement has the character of a gigue with its typical 6/8 metre; the trio, however, is calmer in character, as was common in the Classical scherzo, but not in the Baroque gigue. The third, slow movement is entitled sarabande, without focussing too much on this dance's characteristic rhythm. The resolute bourée comes closest to the Baroque model. The layout of the movements, on the other hand, differs from historical tradition: originally, the gigue tended to come at the end, whilst the bourée, if it featured at all, was positioned somewhere in the middle. Busch evoked the stylised dance characters like an imago, entirely in the Romantic sense. He opened his piece with a *lento* funeral music, featuring Bachian inflections here and there – a commemorative piece for Max Reger as well as his musical avowal.

In Johannes Brahms' sphere: Justus Weinreich

As Susanne Popp has shown¹, Busch and Reger met under the sign of Brahms' music. As a performing duo, their favourite pieces included Brahms' G major Sonata, Op. 78, alongside Reger's Sonata in F sharp minor. This CD's discovery, the viola suites by Justus Weinreich, recorded here for the first time, also forms part of that Brahmsian sphere. Generally accessible textbooks do not reveal much about this artist; music dictionaries do not mention him. He was a court musician in Karlsruhe and thus a member of the orchestra who premiered Brahms' First Symphony in 1876 (probably before his time) and who continued to feel connected to the Hamburg-born composer. As a number of educational pieces by

¹ Susanne Popp: Max Reger und Adolf Busch – Ein musikalische Wahlverwandschaft; in: Reger-Studien 5; Wiesbaden, 1993; pp. 85-104.

audite



Weinreich survive, it would be fair to assume that he also taught music, presumably at the Karlsruhe Musikhochschule and its precursors². His compositions, particularly his viola suites, trace the image of a musician who, like Reger and Busch, felt an affinity to the Brahms tradition which, in turn, went back to composers such as Mendelssohn and Schumann. These three composers had studied the Bach Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin intensively; Mendelssohn and Schumann added a piano accompaniment whilst Brahms arranged the Chaconne from the D minor Partita for piano (left hand alone). All comprise pieces which refer to Baroque dances and suites. Weinreich's suites continue this line of creative historical awareness. They were written in 1894 – before the respective works by Reger and Busch – and they are also conceived in four movements whilst staying closer to the Baroque model. As with Bach's cello suites, all three begin with a prelude; two end – as was common in the Baroque period – with a gigue: the march at the end of the third suite points toward the historically later serenade practice. Weinreich's works reveal a thorough familiarity with the Baroque movement characters – in this sense his composing was more precise than Adolf Busch's. However, he did not create style copies, but brought historical forms to the present time, as was the practice amongst the Romantics, with changing proximity and distance. Sometimes he went into Baroque formulae, at other times he moved far away from them. After his evolution of the Classical genres, occasionally expanded into gigantic dimensions, he acquired the perspectives of a flexible chamber style from the earlier period. In each of his three suites he realised a specific concept. The first opens with a fantasy on a decisive gesture and its possible transitions into virtuoso figurations. The minuet is also developed out of a characteristic impulse. The gavotte, on the other hand, has the same flowing character as can also be found in Brahms' arrangement of a gavotte by Gluck. The vigorous opening becomes a beacon of energy in the concluding gigue, erupting into brilliant fluency. According to the Baroque models, its second part begins as an inversion of the first, almost as a plunging fanfare.

The prelude of the second suite opens as though it were a riposte to one of Paganini's violin caprices. This is the only suite to have a distinctly slow movement. It radiates into the subsequent, unusually broad and vocally designed, minuet. The two inner movements thus close ranks and consequently, as in Reger's first suite, the opening movement and the finale form a stronger outer bracket. In the finale, Weinreich uses the call and response principle to construct an imaginary dialogue, a virtuoso conversation of the instrument with itself.

The third suite is developed out of motion, presenting various forms of articulation. It knows no slow movement. The rapid *perpetuum mobile* prelude is answered by the gavotte with accentuated gestures. The *corrente* interprets the beats as impulses, as renewed momentum each time. Both dance movements comprise contrasting central sections. The ternary structure which is also prevalent in Reger's suite movements is augmented in the concluding march, forming a rondo-like five-part-structure with an ABACA pattern. The speed of the movements is successively reduced, corresponding to impact, whilst motion itself becomes increasingly precise and eloquent. This CD brings a rarely acknowledged genre as well as a musician in from the shadows. At the same time it epitomises the continuing tradition of productively internalising Bach.

Habakuk Traber
Translation: Viola Scheffel

² In 1910, the Karlsruhe Musikhochschule emerged from the unification of a private music education establishment, founded in 1812, and the Grand Ducal Conservatoire, in existence since 1883.

ROLAND GLASSL

Roland Glassl has established his reputation as a soloist and chamber musician. Numerous prizes at international competitions (first prize at Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition plus Peter Schidlhof Prize for the finalist with the most beautiful tone; first prize at Washington International Competition for Strings; winner of the first International Viola Competition Vienna; first prize at the Viola Competition of the German Viola Society, Celle) as well as sixteen years of playing in the Mandelring Quartet have taken him to many of the great international concert stages and festivals.

Roland Glassl has appeared in cities such as Berlin, London, Beijing, Chicago, Dallas and New York. As a soloist, he has performed alongside numerous orchestras under conductors such as Sir Colin Davis and Hermann Bäumer. His chamber music partners include Leon Fleisher, Julia Fischer, Sophia Jaffé, Lisa Batiashvili, Pekka Kuusisto, Sharon Kam as well as the Danel and Henschel Quartets.

Born in Ingolstadt, Roland Glassl comes from a family of violin makers and plays one of his father's instruments from 2002. It was also his father who gave him his first violin lessons; later he was taught by Gerhard Seitz in Munich. From 1992 Roland Glassl studied with Prof. Ana Chumachenco at the Munich Musikhochschule where he received his diploma with distinction in 1996. Even as a student he was fascinated by the extraordinary sonority of the viola and after initial encouragement by Thomas Riebl, Roland Metzger and Hariolf Schlichtig he decided to devote himself fully to the viola. He continued his studies with Atar Arad at Indiana University in Bloomington, USA, for which the German Academic Exchange Service awarded him a scholarship. After graduating with an Artist Diploma, Roland Glassl returned to Germany in order to start his career as a chamber musician and soloist. Alongside his intensive involvement with the Mandelring Quartet (1999-2015) he has given many concerts with the Trio Charolca, a colourful combination of harp, flute and viola, and has also continued performing as a soloist.

Roland Glassl teaches at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt am Main, whose staff he joined as professor of viola in 2004.



audite

Thank you for your interest in this audite recording. Please note that this PDF version of the booklet is for your personal use only! We kindly ask you to respect our copyright and the intellectual property of our artists and writers – do not upload or otherwise make available for sharing our booklets or recordings.

HD-DOWNLOADS
stereo & surround
available at audite.de

recording: July 20 - 22, 2015
recording location: Himmelfahrtskirche München-Sendling
recording producer: Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff
editing: Dipl.-Tonmeister Justus Beyer
equipment: Sennheiser MKH 20, MKH 8040
Schoeps MK 2S, MK 4
Neumann U 87
Dynaudio Air 6
recording format: pcm, 44,1 kHz / 24bit
photos: Georg Thum
art direction and design: AB•Design

audite

e-mail: info@audite.de

© 2016 + © 2016 Ludger Böckenhoff

(LC)04480