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CLASSICS

Max Reger • Organ Works

Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme, Op. 73
Introduction, Variations and Fugue in E minor, Op. 127
Shorter Preludes and Fugues

David Goode
Symphony Organ
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MAX REGER

ORGAN WORKS

CD 1

Introduction, Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme, Op. 73

1	Introduction	[6.53]
2	Variations	[23.59]
3	Fugue	[5.17]

Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue in E minor, Op. 127

4	Introduction	[5.14]
5	Passacaglia	[15.49]
6	Fugue	[10.38]

Total timings: [67.52]

CD 2

Five Easy Preludes and Fugues, Op. 56

No. 1 in E major

1	Prelude	[6.09]
2	Fugue	[3.54]

No. 2 in D minor

3	Prelude	[3.18]
4	Fugue	[2.53]

No. 3 in G major

5 Prelude [5.03]

6 Fugue [5.50]

No. 4 in C major

7 Prelude [3.42]

8 Fugue [2.37]

No. 5 in B minor

9 Prelude [6.23]

10 Fugue [5.08]

Two Bach Transcriptions

Prelude and Fugue in G major (Book II, Well-Tempered Clavier)

11 Prelude [3.14]

12 Fugue [1.35]

Prelude and Fugue in C-sharp minor (Book I, Well-Tempered Clavier)

13 Prelude [3.50]

14 Fugue [5.59]

Total timings: [59.39]

DAVID GOODE

SYMPHONY ORGAN

SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM

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MAX REGER (1873-1916)

Organ Works

The two major works on these discs (his longest for organ) show Max Reger at the height of his powers; not only do they sustain a structural coherence over an impressive span, but they show an almost inexhaustible proliferation of invention.

The *Introduction, Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme* Op. 73, in the unusual key of F-sharp minor, was written in 1903 when Reger was living in Munich. Much of it is notable for its tone of melancholy lyricism, employing a chromaticism that is daring, almost impressionistic, whilst remaining thoughtful.

The *Introduction* itself falls into three sections: a mysterious, yearning succession of phrases, often built on the rising melodic figure of tonic, major second, perfect fourth (referred to below as 'figure A'); a more vigorous, structured section in five-part counterpoint (with its own short *pianissimo* interlude); and a brief return to the brooding style of the opening.

The theme is *andante*, in a spacious 6/8 metre. The third bar reveals the source of the important

rising figure from the *Introduction*, while the semitonal shifts downwards to the 6-4 first on C natural and then on B are significant moments.

The *Variations* are as follows:

1. free contrapuntal ornamentation
2. *scherzando* exchanges
3. a light and chromatic toccata in D minor
4. a free harmonic paraphrase of the theme, moving back to F-sharp minor
5. vigorous counterpoint with the theme in the pedals
6. a delicate *moto perpetuo*
7. a free fantasia built around the inversion of figure A
8. a toccata across three manuals, built around forms of figure A in the top and bottom parts
9. a free chordal toccata
10. a powerful fantasia built on a chromatic version of figure A, building to a formidable climax
11. a transitional variation obviously recalling the theme; mysterious exchanges lead, momentarily, to a cadence in F-sharp major
12. an idyllic interlude, with translucent textures, in the Neapolitan G major, with figure A as an ostinato in the left hand

13. inversion of figure A in the pedals returns us abruptly to reality; extravagant bravura writing
14. a delicate return to the theme, now in the major, and an exquisitely lingering cadence

The *Fugue* is relatively short by Regerian standards, and often light and *scherzando* in style and texture. Nonetheless, by the end it accumulates enough substance to absorb the weight of the preceding material; and the final cadence, resolving into a resplendent F-sharp major, is majestic.

The *Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue* Op. 127 is from the last period in Reger's life when he was increasingly incorporating into his writing a neo-classical aesthetic, namely greater leanness in the counterpoint, more translucent textures, and often greater brevity (although the latter does not apply in this case, it can be clearly seen in the *Nine Pieces* Op. 129 written later that year).

So, after the traditional alternation of densely chromatic chordal writing and bravura flourishes at the opening of the *Introduction*, we soon hear some limpid figures in the right hand, lightly accompanied, before the heavier writing returns.

The *Passacaglia* theme which is then announced softly in the pedals uses eleven notes of the chromatic scale (F natural is absent) and is followed by no fewer than 26 variations. They fall into a carefully-modulated scheme consisting of three groups: an early intensification of speed and weight, a retreat to a meditative central point, and a second, and more conclusive, intensification. A precise account of the progress of the variations will give an indication of the effective control of pace and excitement achieved by Reger.

1. mainly crotchets
2. quavers
3. triplet quavers
4. triplet quavers in thirds between manuals
5. semiquavers, developing right-hand motif
6. antiphonal writing between hands, using semiquavers
7. *scherzando*, with triplet semiquavers in thirds in the right hand
8. alternating flourishes and triplet semiquaver chords
9. lighter canonic writing in demisemiquavers
10. heavier chords and flourishes
11. rich counterpoint with semiquaver triplets – the early climax
12. *ritenuto* and *diminuendo*, highly chromatic, in semiquavers

13. soft crotchet chords, decorated by arpeggios
14. the still centre of the piece – magical crotchet chords beginning on E major
15. mysterious chromatic quavers
16. distant recollection of the *Introduction* with staccato octaves in the right hand
17. return of *scherzando*, triplet semiquavers in thirds in the right hand
18. rippling triplet demisemiquavers passed between hands
19. demisemiquavers in sixths between the hands, alternating with chords
20. dense chordal counterpoint in quavers
21. bravura toccata texture
22. increasingly bravura exchanges in triplet semiquavers
23. demisemiquavers in thirds in both hands – the extreme combination of speed and density
24. more declamatory chordal writing
25. heavy chordal counterpoint in up to eight parts, heralding conclusion
26. climactic return to opening rhythm, now doubled massively in up to eleven parts

The double *Fugue* is amongst Reger's freest, in particular the first section which develops like a fantasia. It begins as an innocuous *scherzando* with semiquavers, played on the lightest 8.4.2. registers, showcasing Reger's new style. In due

course these become triplets, recalling textures from the *Passacaglia*, and then demisemiquavers in a challenging trio texture. The opening texture returns, but now steadily accumulates weight and volume until a cadence in D minor is reached. A second theme with a different shape and a more *sostenuto* style appears, *ppp*; but, before long, it too is overrun by triplet semiquavers and eventually a flurry of demisemiquavers. There is nothing to be done but to combine the themes (artfully designed, of course, for that very purpose) and to build to a conclusion of truly awesome grandeur, in which it seems as though every possible chord is tried out before E major finally arrives.

The *Five Easy Preludes and Fugues* date from 1901, between the great Op. 52 *Chorale Fantasies* and the formidable *Symphonic Fantasy and Fugue* Op. 57; one might speak of them, as of Beethoven's *Bagatelles*, as 'chips from the master's workbench'.

No. 1 in E is one of Reger's most lyrical inspirations. It begins as a trio, moves through episodes of atmospheric chordal writing before the opening material reappears, deliciously embellished with counterpoint. The *Fugue* builds steadily from its calm opening; an unusual feature

is the appearance of the theme in augmentation for the first pedal entry.

The D minor *Prelude* is a mercurial conception, mingling *scherzando* moments with those of a more shadowy nature. The *Fugue* is fast, restless and intensely chromatic, quite belying its description as 'easy'.

The G major adopts the pastoral associations of that key, with a meandering *Andante Prelude* which occasionally threatens to reach a powerful climax but invariably veers to gentler reaches. The *Fugue* is a spacious affair in *alla breve* time.

The C major *Prelude* is the most overtly Baroque of the set – it conjures memories of the *style brisé* of the C major *Prelude* from Book II of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The *Fugue* is a very good-natured scherzo in 2-4 time; it is unusual in ending quietly.

The B minor *Prelude* looks forward to Op. 73 in its melancholy tone and short rhetorical exchanges. It is notable for a contrapuntal central episode whose subject curiously recalls *Aus tiefer Not*, inverted. The *Fugue* is sinuously chromatic throughout; at bar 32 it presents a counter-exposition with the subject inverted,

after which both versions jostle for supremacy towards the conclusion.

By way of a postscript, the opportunity has been taken here to include two of Reger's transcriptions of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, which, apart from anything else, intriguingly suggest (in the detail of their performance instructions) an early 20th-century mode of performance for Bach's actual organ works.

The G major is a more straightforward realisation. In the *Prelude*, however, Bach's arpeggiated textures are ingeniously reworked. In the *Fugue* Reger contents himself with adding dynamic inflections and involving the pedals in some agile writing.

The C-sharp minor *Prelude* emerges as dark and intense as a Turner night landscape. The *Fugue* builds from hushed meditation to exultant heroism, before subsiding again.

Notes by David Goode

DAVID GOODE

David Goode has been Organist and Head of Keyboard at Eton College since 2005. He was a music scholar at Eton, and then organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge from 1991-4, studying organ with David Sanger and, in Amsterdam, with Jacques van Oortmerssen. From 1996-2001 he was Sub-Organist at Christ Church, Oxford; following prizes at the 1997 St. Alban's Competition, and the 1998 Calgary Competition, he concentrated on a freelance career between 2001 and 2003. In 2003 he moved for two years to Los Angeles as Organist-in-Residence at First Congregational Church, home to the world's largest church organ.

He made his Royal Festival Hall and Symphony Hall debuts in 2002, and played Bach's *Art of Fugue* in the QEH in 2009. In 1999 he made the first of numerous appearances at the Proms, including a solo recital in 2006; in recent years he has played all over Europe and the US. He has an established duo partnership with the trumpeter Alison Balsom, with recent concerts including the Moscow Arts, Three Choirs, and Passau Festivals. His CD releases since 1994 (from Cambridge,



Oxford, Los Angeles, Eton, and most recently Freiberg for Signum Records) have received excellent reviews; he has also forged a strong relationship on Radio 3 with the BBCNOW and the BBC Singers. Volume 1 of his series of the Complete Organ Music of Max Reger was widely praised; he has also played numerous contemporary works, including Francis Pott's *Christus* (a performance described by *The Times* as 'a stupendous achievement').

SYMPHONY ORGAN

SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM

The Symphony Organ was inaugurated on Friday 19 October 2001 as part of Symphony Hall's 10th Birthday celebrations.

It was designed and built by hand using traditional craftsmanship by Johannes Klais Orgelbau, a long-established family firm from Bonn that has an enviable worldwide reputation.

The organ has over 6,000 pipes, which stretch over 2 and a half miles when laid end to end and weigh more than 30 tonnes. It is nearly 65 feet tall and contains wood from over 20 massive trees. The pipes, ranging from 32 foot to 6 inches in length, are made from a range

of woods and metals including oak, fir, and pine plus soft metal alloys from tin, lead, and zinc.



Manual I: Positiv

1. Quintadena 16'
2. Praestant 8'
3. Voce umana 8'
4. Gedackt 8'
5. Principal 4'
6. Koppeflöte 4'
7. Nasat 2 2/3'
8. Octave 2'
9. Terzflöte 1 3/5'
10. Siffelöte 1 1/3'
11. Scharff V 1/3'
12. Dulcian 16'
13. Trompette 8'
14. Cromorne 8'

Tremulant

Swell to Positiv

Solo to Positiv

Chamade to Positiv

Manual II: Great

15. Praestant 16'
16. Principal 8'
17. Flaut major 8'
18. Gambe 8'
19. Bordun 8'
20. Quinte 5 1/3'
21. Octave 4'
22. Nachthorn 4'
23. Terz 3 1/5'
24. Quinte 2 2/3'
25. Superoctave 2'
26. Mixtur V 2'

27. Cymbel III 1/2'
28. Cornet V
29. Trompette 16'
30. Trompette 8'
31. Clairon 4'

Positiv to Great

Swell to Great

Solo to Great

Chamade to Great

Manual III: Swell (enclosed)

32. Bourdon 16'
33. Flûte harmonique 8'
34. Gamba 8'
35. Voix céleste 8'
36. Rohrflöte 8'
37. Principal 4'
38. Flûte octaviante 4'
39. Nasard 2 2/3'
40. Octavin 2'
41. Tierce 1 3/5'
42. Sifflet 1'
43. Plein jeu V 2'
44. Basson 16'
45. Trompette harmonique 8'
46. Hautbois 8'
47. Voix humaine 8'
48. Clairon harmonique 4'

Tremulant

Solo to Swell

Chamade to Swell

Chamade to Solo

Manual IV: Solo (enclosed)

49. Salicional 8'
 50. Cor de nuit 8'
 51. Traversflöte 8'
 52. Céleste 8'
 53. Viola 4'
 54. Rohrflöte 4'
 55. Waldflöte 2'
 56. Baryton 16'
 57. Clarinette 8'
- Tremulant
58. Trompette en chamade 8'
 59. Trompette en chamade 4'

Sub-octave Chamade to Chamade

Chamade on Solo

Chamade on Great

Chamade on Positiv

Right-hand Echo Division (enclosed; inside reverberation chamber)

60. Unda maris I-II 8'
61. Trombone 16'
62. Trumpet 8'
63. French Horn 8'

Left-hand Echo Division (enclosed; inside reverberation chamber)

64. Tuba 8'
65. Cor anglais 8'
66. Tuba clarion 4'

Right Echo on Positiv
Left Echo on Great

Pedal

67. Openflute 32'
68. Untersatz 32'
69. Principal 16'
70. Violon 16'
71. Subbass 16'
72. Octave 8'
73. Cello 8'
74. Gedackt 8'
75. Superoctave 4'
76. Hohlflöte 4'
77. Mixtur IV 2 2/3'
78. Contrabombarde 32'
79. Bombarde 16'
80. Fagott 16'
81. Trompete 8'
82. Clairon 4'

Positiv to Pedal

Great to Pedal

Swell to Pedal

Solo to Pedal

Chamade to Pedal

Great & Pedal Combs Coupled

Manual compass: C-C4

Pedal compass: C-G1

Performer's notes and acknowledgements

Several things need to be said. Firstly, that it is unusual to find organs of the scope, musical coherence and power that this music, particularly Opp. 73 and 127, demands. I am therefore enormously grateful to Paul Keene for the opportunity to record in Symphony Hall, whose organ possesses an impressive combination of structural rigour and Romantic colour.

Secondly, this has been a labour of love, so I am extremely grateful for the support, patience and encouragement of friends, family and followers over the (rather too-many) years in which this volume has lain, in its constituent parts, on the shelf until time and resources could be found to put it together.

Thirdly, for the dedicated work of Jonathan Lane over many years. Finally, to Signum, with its impressive track record, for adopting the project.

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