

LAWQ
CLASSICS

Josef Rheinberger.

THREE
LATE
ORGAN
SONATAS

ORGAN
WORKS



HALGEIR
SCHIAGER
*
ORGAN

OEUVRES
POUR
L'ORGUE

JOSEPH RHEINBERGER

THREE LATE ORGAN SONATAS

Josef Rheinberger was born in 1839 in Vaduz, Lichtenstein, and arrived in Munich in the early 1850s, where he worked until his death in 1901. In Munich, he became an organist at St. Michael's Church, a Professor of organ and composition at the Königliche Musikschule, and conductor in the royal chapel. As a composer, Rheinberger produced a large number of orchestral, choral, chamber, piano and organ works, in addition to operas. Among his most important organ works are the 20 organ sonatas which he composed between 1868 and 1901. After Mendelssohn's six organ sonatas, they should be considered the most important German contribution to this genre in the 1800s, although the organ sonatas by Gustav Merkel and August Gottfried Ritter also merit attention. Rheinberger envisioned a set of 24 sonatas, covering all minor and major keys, but he did not manage to complete them.

As a composer, Rheinberger must be regarded as part of the conservative German school. The contrast between him and the modernist Max Reger is evident, the latter having his first organ works published in the final year of Rheinberger's life. The use of dynamics in the organ sonatas is terraced, rather than the continuous crescendos and diminuendos found in Reger's organ works. In the final sonatas, however, there is a bolder harmony, and a concentration of texture that may prefigure Reger's organ style. Reger dedicated his *Fantasie und Fuge über BACH* op. 46 to Rheinberger, but there is no evidence to suggest that they were personally close.

In Central Europe, including Scandinavia, a shift in musical values led to Romantic organ music disappearing from the repertoire in the first half of the 1900s. This was related to the developments in organ building, where builders looked back to the organ ideals of the Baroque and Renaissance periods. The gap was less evident in the USA and Great Britain, and Rheinberger retained his place in concert programmes. The English organist Harvey

Grace (1874—1944) did Rheinberger a great service in the 1930s with his Novello editions of Rheinberger's organ sonatas, adapting them for English organs. A renaissance of Romantic organ music towards the end of the 1900s secured his organ works a place within the standard repertoire.

Rheinberger's early sonatas have been performed more often than his later ones. The aim of this recording has been to showcase the qualities of some of his later sonatas on an organ clearly inspired by the German organ building of Rheinberger's era.

THE LATE SONATAS

Sonata No. 12 in D flat major, op. 154 (1888), is dedicated to the organist of the Stadtkirche in Weimar, Alexander Wilhelm Gottschalg (1827—1908). From 1865, Gottschalg was editor of *Urania*, the most comprehensive journal for organ and organ music in Germany, and he was familiar with most German organ music from the 1800s and up to the works of Max Reger. He was also a keen advocate for the organ works of Franz Liszt, and they remained in frequent contact. Gottschalg noted in his review of *Sonata No. 12* that, where organ sonatas were concerned, Rheinberger was a supreme 'ruler' in Germany (*Urania* 1889/14). The sonata is in three movements, with the final movement preceded by an introduction. The first movement opens with a majestic introduction, Phantasie, before transitioning into a dramatic section, Allegro agitato, in C sharp minor. The movement concludes with a reprise of the introductory section. The second movement is a Pastorale, a title that also appears in two of the other sonatas. It is in A major and is a lyrical movement, with a melodiousness that evokes associations with the folk music of the Alps. The introduction to the final movement continues in

the same key before modulating to a fugue in C sharp minor, which concludes in D flat major, incorporating material from the introduction and conclusion of the opening movement. This provides the framework for the sonata.

Sonata No. 16 in G sharp minor, op. 175 (1893), is again in three movements, with a final movement consisting of an introduction followed by a fugue. It is characterised by a slightly mournful, melancholy undertone, perhaps reflecting the fact that Rheinberger lost his wife a few months before its publication. Gottschalg uses words such as 'sorrow, consolation, grave and death' in his review of the work (*Urania* 1894/7). Of the three themes in the opening movement, the last is in fortissimo with marked chords. In the next movement, Skandinavisch, Rheinberger travels to Denmark by incorporating the Danish folk tune 'Peer Rasmussens Frieri' ('Peer Rasmussen's Proposal'), drawn from the collection *Folke-Sanger og Melodier* (*Folk Tunes and Melodies*; first volume, second edition; Copenhagen, 1860), published by Andreas Peter Berggreen (1801—1880), a Danish composer, organist, educator, and collector of folk music. In this movement, Rheinberger continues in G sharp minor, foregoing the usual key contrast between movements, probably because the original melody in G minor sets the tone. The introduction to the final movement begins in E major and modulates to D sharp as the dominant of the fugue in G sharp minor. Near the conclusion of the fugue, the third theme of the opening movement is quoted, now in A flat major, giving the sonata a sense of structural unity.

Sonata No. 20 in F major 'Zur Friedensfeier' Op. 196 (1901), is Rheinberger's last and has four movements. As with the two preceding sonatas, he forgoes a fugue in the final movement. Gottschalg's reference to 'Fantasie-Sonate' (*Urania*, 1901/86) gives the impression of a more liberated approach to the sonata form, and Rheinberger used such a title in *Fantasie-Sonate No. 17* Op. 181. The first movement is a broadly structured Präludium



in sonata form, maintaining the tempo marking *Lento maestoso* throughout. The second movement, *Intermezzo*, is a title that appears in eight of the sonatas. The movement displays a relatively wide dynamic range by Rheinberger's standards, from *pp* to *ff*. The third movement, titled *Pastorale*, as in *Sonata No. 12*, is in 3/4 time. In *Sonata No. 20*, however, a more powerful dynamic is used, with the reprise in the middle section marked 'Volles Werk' ('full organ'). The final movement, *Finale*, is again in sonata form with three themes. As with the other two recorded sonatas, the movement concludes with a return of the introduction to the first movement, giving the sonata a cyclic character. According to Harvey Grace (*The Musical Times*, 1 May, 1924/412), the motto 'Zur Friedensfeier' is connected to the Peace Conference held in The Hague in 1900 (which actually took place in 1899), though this cannot be verified. In his review, Gottschalg uses the metaphors 'an inner and an outer peace' and 'peace with God and peace with oneself' (*Urania*, 1901/86).

SOUND CONCEPTION AND INTERPRETATION

Rheinberger's conception of organ sound was influenced by the organs he played. His new organ in St. Michael's in Munich was built by the Royal Court organ builder A. März, and was completed in 1896. His attitude towards the organ was already apparent in 1871, when he was engaged as an adviser for the new organ in the Pfarrkirche, in his birthplace, Vaduz. The organ was built by another South German organ builder, Steinmeyer. In his correspondence, it is revealed that Rheinberger had great respect for a third South German organ builder, Walcker, who was the most influential organ builder at the time.

The organ chosen for this recording, the Eule organ in Sofienberg Church, is clearly inspired by nineteenth-century German organs. It embodies the traits associated with this type of instrument, with the organ timbre based on the fundamental tone, and many stops imitating orchestral instruments, with names such as violin, cello, viola, gamba, and so on.

Performers have questioned whether Rheinberger's terraced dynamics, without any indications of crescendo or diminuendo in the scores, might allow for free interpretation. Opinions on whether the organ was suitable for flexible, orchestra-inspired dynamics were divided even at the end of the 1800s, and Rheinberger does not appear to have aligned himself with the modernists. Therefore, I have endeavoured to adhere to the notation in the scores, while the choice of stops relative to the indicated dynamic levels remains a matter of interpretation. For guidance, Rheinberger provided approximate indications of which organ stops correspond to each dynamic level, which must, of course, be adapted to the organ in question.



HALGEIR SCHIAGER

Halgeir Schiager studied organ with Magne Elvestrand in Oslo, and later in Munich and Strasbourg with Professors Franz Lehnrdorfer and Daniel Roth respectively. He made his debut in 1985 in Oslo Concert Hall. Schiager has given concerts in many European countries and made radio recordings in Germany and Norway. He has participated in several critically acclaimed CD productions featuring works by Leif Solberg and Kjell Mørk Karlsen, among others. He has recorded the complete organ works by the Czech composer Petr Eben for the British label Hyperion. In 2001 he received the Norwegian Critics' Prize. He has also premiered works by several Norwegian composers and has served as a jury member in international organ competitions. In 2008 he earned his doctorate at the Norwegian Academy of Music with a dissertation on interpretative aspects in Gustav Merkel's organ works. Since 2007, Schiager has served as cantor in the parish of Paulus and Sofienberg in Oslo. He initiated an organ project at Sofienberg Church, which came to fruition in 2014 with the new Eule organ in the German Romantic style. From 2019 to 2024, he was the cantor of Ullern Parish in Oslo and organised an organ concert series in the Paulus and Sofienberg Churches. He was director of the Oslo Organ Festival from 2018 to 2024.

SOFIENBERG CHURCH ORGAN HERMANN EULE ORGELBAU, OPUS 677

I. HOVEDVERK (C-A³)

Bordun	16'
Principal	8'
Viola da Gamba	8'
Doppelflöte	8'
Flauto amabile	8'
Octave	4'
Spitzflöte	4'
Quinte	2 2/3'
Octave	2'
Mixtur 4fach	2'
Cornett 2-4fach	2'
Trompete	8'

II. OVERVERK (C-A³)

Quintatön	16'
Geigenprincipal	8'
Flute harmonique	8'
Salicional	8'
Rohrflöte	8'
Octave	4'
Flauto minor	4'
Nasard	2 2/3'
Waldflöte	2'
Progressio harm. 2-4fach	2'
Basson	16'
Trompette harmonique	8'
Clarinete*	8'

III. EKKOVERK (C-A³)

Liebl. Gedackt	16'
Viola d'amour	8'
Vox coelestis (c°-)	8'
Gedackt	8'
Flauto traverso	8'
Fugara	4'
Zartflöte	4'
Violine	2'
Aeoline*	16'
Oboe	8'

*Free reed



PEDAL (C-F¹)

Untersatz (ekstension fra Subbass 16')	32'
Principal	16'
Violon	16'
Subbass	16'
Octavbass	8'
Violoncello	8'
Bassflöte	8'
Octave	4'
Posaune	16'

KOPLER ^{OG} SPILLEHJELPEMIDLER

Kopler: II/I, III/I, III/II, I/P, II/P, III/P
 Setterkombinasjoner med stepfunksjon
 Svellpedal til OV og EV
 Håndsvell til OV og EV
 Fortepedal (tritt)

CREDITS

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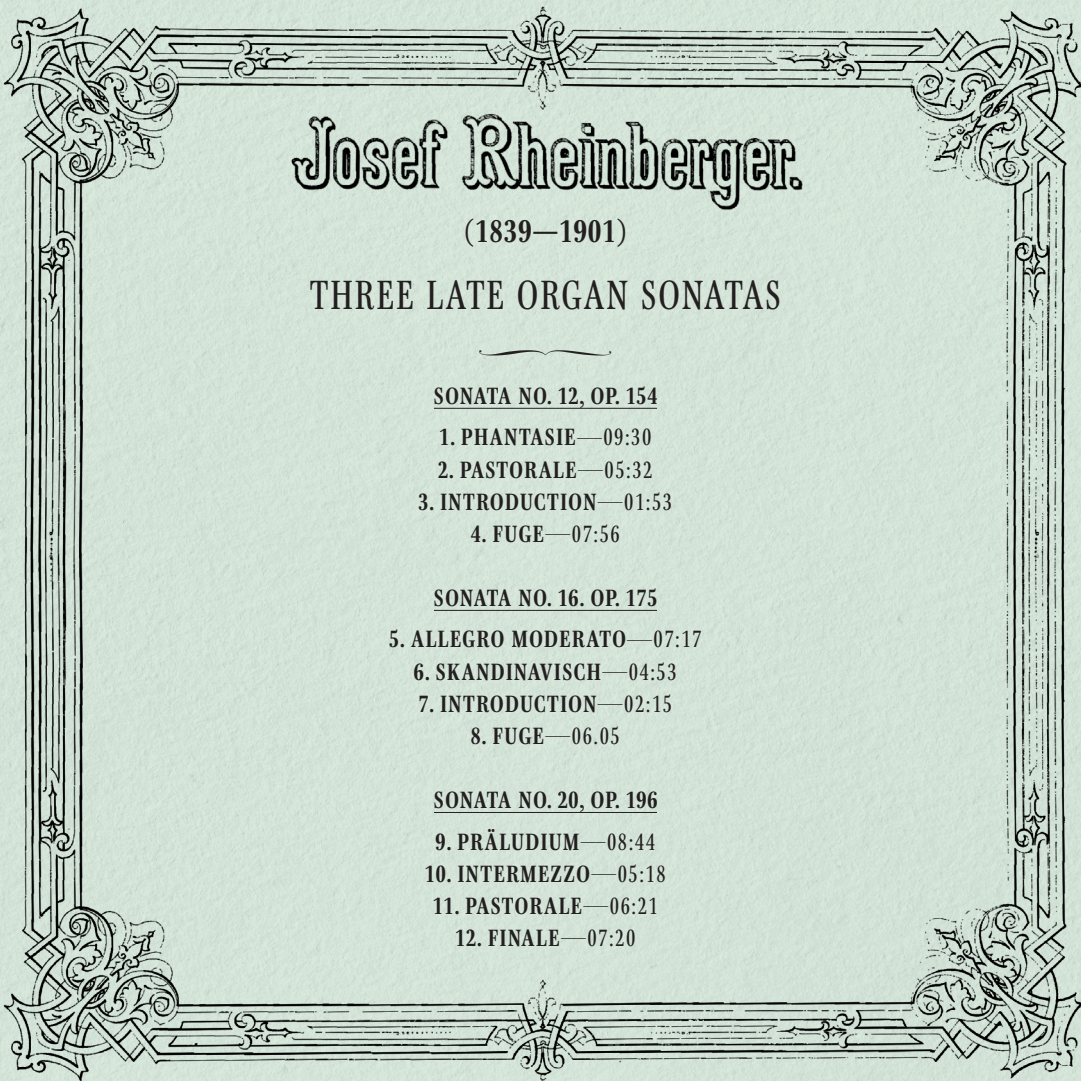
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Josef Rheinberger.

(1839—1901)

THREE LATE ORGAN SONATAS

SONATA NO. 12, OP. 154

1. PHANTASIE—09:30
2. PASTORALE—05:32
3. INTRODUCTION—01:53
4. FUGE—07:56

SONATA NO. 16, OP. 175

5. ALLEGRO MODERATO—07:17
6. SKANDINAVISCH—04:53
7. INTRODUCTION—02:15
8. FUGE—06.05

SONATA NO. 20, OP. 196

9. PRÄLUDIUM—08:44
10. INTERMEZZO—05:18
11. PASTORALE—06:21
12. FINALE—07:20