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## MAX REGER

String Trios  
Piano Quartet

## TRIO LIRICO

Franziska Pietsch, Sophia Reuter, Johannes Krebs  
& Detlev Eisinger, piano

**MAX REGER (1873-1916)****String Trio No. 2 in D minor, Op. 141b**

- I. *Allegro* 9:06
- II. *Andante molto sostenuto con variazioni* 9:47
- III. *Vivace* 3:39

**String Trio No. 1 in A minor, Op. 77b**

- I. *Sostenuto – Allegro agitato – Meno mosso* 8:08
- II. *Larghetto* 6:58
- III. *Scherzo. Vivace* 2:29
- IV. *Allegro con moto* 6:17

**Piano Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 133**

- I. *Allegro con passione (non troppo Allegro)* 12:49
- II. *Vivace – Molto meno vivace – Tempo primo* 6:01
- III. *Largo con gran espressione* 9:53
- IV. *Allegro con spirito* 8:18

**Not far from Mozart, and yet entirely different:****Max Reger's String Trios, Opp 77b & 141b, and Piano Quartet, Op. 133**

Not only does chamber music make up the biggest part of Max Reger's oeuvre, but from his Violin Sonata, Op. 1, through to the Clarinet Quintet, Op. 146, completed shortly before his death, it also reflects a condensed version of his stylistic development as a composer. Reger wrote for numerous combinations of instruments, ranging from one solo instrument (violin, viola or cello), via duets and sonatas for a solo instrument with piano accompaniment, trios in different combinations, string quartets, piano quartets and piano quintets through to the string sextet. Chamber works with piano take on particular significance since Reger could often be found at the keyboard during their premieres.

In contrast to his string quartets, which often appear to take on almost symphonic forms, the two String Trios Opp 77b and 141b seem not so much symbolist-expressive as historicist-classicist. The confident, at times even cheerful, character of these works is accompanied by a clear formal disposition (the first Trio has four, the second three, movements), frequent parallel writing in two or three parts and only isolated chromatic passages, conveying the superficial impression of simplicity. On the exterior, the opening movements of the two Trios appear to follow the recommendations of a conventional formal theory: the dynamic structure of the first theme is predominantly *forte* or *fortissimo* and *agitato*, whilst that of the second theme is *piano*, *dolce* and *espressivo*; in the development section, both themes are brought into a close relationship with one another. Despite this apparent simplicity, Reger managed to remain true to his own style, as he also explained himself in a letter to his publishers, Lauterbach & Kuhn, where he described the composition as "absolutely not 'un-Regerian'". However, the characteristics of this "Regerian" style – dense modulations, surprising metric asymmetries and interesting part writing – are in this case subordinate to the small number of instruments and therefore do not immediately emerge. In this respect, Reger exaggerated somewhat when he declared to his publisher Henri Hinrichsen that his second String Trio in D minor, Op. 141b, was "absolutely clear and simple music".

The external complexity of his opera 70 to 75 – the symbolist-sensualist *Gesang der Verklärten*, Op. 71, for choir and orchestra; the famous Violin Sonata in C major, Op. 72 (where the home key is encircled rather than touched); the highly challenging Organ Variations, Op. 73; and the String Quartet in D minor, Op. 74, which Reger prepared for publication and which is based on Hugo Wolf's string quartet; all framed by two extensive and extremely demanding song settings – represent, without question, a highpoint in Reger's oeuvre in relation to the complexity of his idiom. Towards the end of this creative phase, alongside the first of his *Schlichte Weisen*, Op. 76, for voice and piano, the composer strove towards a "new simplicity"; at the beginning of June 1904 he wrote to his publishers Lauterbach & Kuhn: "I know exactly what our music today lacks: a Mozart! – And now, entirely openly: the first fruits of this insight, which I have been considering for a fair while, are these: Op. 77a, Serenade for Flute, Violin and Viola, and **Op. 77b, String Trio for Violin, Viola and Cello.**" For Reger, Mozart was the epitome of musical lightness and ingenious compositional mastery, which clearly led Reger to seek out not only a similar style and aspirations, but also similar genres: he was obviously inspired by Mozart's Divertimento in E flat major, K563, and the Op. 9 String Trios by Beethoven (as has

often been commented upon, Reger frequently enters into an intensive dialogue with historic works of music). In May, Reger had begun work on the trio, whose manuscript he submitted for printing soon after, on 23 June. After receiving the corrections for the Flute Serenade in D major, Op. 77a, he commented contentedly: “Op. 77b is even more beautiful than 77a.” At the same time as the String Trio in A minor, Op. 77b, Lauterbach & Kuhn in Leipzig also published the Cello Sonata in F major, Op. 78; Variations and Fugue on a theme by Johann Sebastian Bach for piano, Op. 81; the afore-mentioned *18 Gesänge*, Op. 75; and the first volume of *Aus meinem Tagebuche* [From my diary], Op. 82. The String Trio’s scherzo movement was arranged for the piano by the composer himself and incorporated, as the seventh piece, into the first volume of *Aus meinem Tagebuche*. The larghetto from the same Trio concludes, as No 12, the first volume of the *Tagebuch* pieces; the variation movement from the Flute Serenade was also, in piano format, included in the volume. The String Trio was premiered on 29 November 1904 by members of the Munich String Quartet at the Palais Porcia in Munich, where it won the audience’s unanimous approval. Reger wrote to his publishers: “Op. 77b was a resounding success last night! The scherzo had to be repeated immediately. At the premiere of a chamber work that surely means a lot! I think the reviews will be very good!” Indeed the majority of the reviews were positive (Theodor Kroyer called it a “masterwork”); only Rudolph Louis, Reger’s most hated critic for the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, wrote that the composer, thanks to his technique, had managed, “with perfect assurance and seemingly effortless ease to avoid the sonic pitfalls which a restriction to three string instruments can bring about”. The content, on the other hand, had once again represented a conundrum: “The mystery consists of the music not comprising anything mysterious at all. I mean, it is astounding that the same man, who otherwise speaks a musical language which deviates from all that is customary, all of a sudden speaks like ‘one of us’. Who knows how to explain this mystery – did Reger, in a humorous mood, permit himself the gag of wearing a neoclassicist’s mask, or did he, out of sympathy for less advanced contemporaries, deign to write, for once, for the present time, rather than exclusively for a distant future?” Reger promptly felt attacked; however, since we now know that his compositions are often characterised by a certain tension between reverence in the sense of historicism – also common in the German Empire’s architecture of his day – and progressive symbolism, which embraces some historical elements but is nonetheless a clear precursor of expressionism, Louis’ remark turns out to be essentially perceptive, rather than malevolent.

Surely it was also Mozart’s spirit, and not just the resounding success of the double opus 77a/b, which inspired Reger to revisit the concept of those two works when he wrote his “miniature chamber music” Serenade in G major, Op. 141a, and **String Trio in D minor, Op. 141b**. The second string trio, to which Reger referred in letters as early as 1913, was completed in April 1915 at his villa in Jena, presumably alongside the Violin Sonata in C minor, Op. 139. “Now begins the free, Jenaian style”, Reger announced after relocating to the university town in the spring of 1915. Despite limitations on account of the war, the double opus was published in the same year, on 28 September, by C. F. Peters. Once again, the reaction of both audience and press following the premiere on 30 November 1915 at the Munich Palais Porcia given by members of the Hösl Quartet was decidedly positive. The degree of popularity which the work enjoyed amongst chamber music enthusiasts is reflected in the extraordinarily large commercial success of the printed edition of the study score – the initial print run of 500 had to be supplemented after only one year.

In November 1909, whilst rehearsing the Brahms Piano Quartet in C minor, Op. 60, Reger had decided to write a piano quartet of his own which he intended to perform at the Tonkünstlerfest in Zurich at the end of May 1910 (the premiere took place on the planned date; however, the performers played from manuscript parts). First sketches for the second **Piano Quartet in A minor, Op. 133**, did not emerge until April 1914 whilst the composer stayed at a spa in Merano; at the end of June (at the same time as giving up his position as *Kapellmeister* at the court of Duke Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen), the composer began writing the score which he submitted for printing five weeks later. The work was not published until March 1916, following several performances using proof copies. Due to the war, he generously relinquished part of his fee and promised “gradually to ‘work off’ more of this fee – for a piano quartet, by its nature, is harder to sell!”

The premiere on 7 February 1915 at the Leipzig Gewandhaus contradicted these concerns – the piano quartet was emphatically celebrated by the critics who praised its “glorious sonorities” and its “vocal, vivid and catchy” melodies. His intensive engagement with the Meiningen Court Orchestra had brought about a stylistic transformation in Reger, which is often equated with his “free, Jenaian style”, but which has its roots in his final months at Meiningen – maybe even in his stay at Merano; in a sense, the Tyrolean spring sun shines through many of Reger’s late scores.

From the outset, the work exudes the spirit of the *Mozart Variations*, to which it is related not merely in harmonic terms. The sense of form is clear and concise; the instruments seldom enter into contrapuntally dense competition, but instead frequently join each other in parallel motion, producing a particularly smooth tone. This results, certainly in places, in a softening of the outbursts when compared to the preceding quartet; the decision to let all movements except the finale subside in a *ppp* also speaks volumes. In the opening movement, build-ups are diminished by *tranquillo* passages, the scherzo is “unusually fragrant and tender, even for Reger” (Max Steinitzer), and the slower trio section is dreamily restrained by way of a pedal point in the viola, stretching over fifty-five bars. The *Largo con gran espressione*, which shares its rare title with the Violin Sonata Op. 72, the Piano Concerto Op. 114 and the String Sextet Op. 116, appears, according to Susanne Popp, “as a prayer in its musical prose, where all the BACH quotations, hidden throughout the work, are condensed.” Even in early 1916, Richard Würz, writing for the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, points out that the movement leads into a “deep and rich world of expression, forming a bridge to works such as Beethoven’s final quartets and the great chamber works by Johannes Brahms.” The concluding *Allegro con spirito* with the indication of *grazioso* reveals a close expressive relationship to many of Reger’s scherzo movements; here, however, the composer draws a contrapuntal veil over the opening of the reprise by having the main theme enter in inversion.

When the work was performed in Munich on 8 January 1916 by Reger and the Vienna Concertverein Quartet, Richard Würz ranked it, together with the Violin Sonata in C minor, Op. 139, among the “most beautiful, mature and purified [...] ever written by Reger, as well as among the most substantial produced by modern chamber music”.

Jürgen Schaarwächter (Max-Reger-Institut Karlsruhe)

Translation: Viola Scheffel



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**FRANZISKA PIETSCH** violin

was born in East Berlin. Aged eleven, she made her debut at the Komische Oper Berlin. She began her studies at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin. In 1986, she was able to enter West Germany where she continued her studies with Ulf Hoelscher, Jens Ellermann and Dorothy DeLay; masterclasses rounded off her musical training. Franziska Pietsch has won numerous national and international competitions. Her busy concert schedule has taken her across Europe, as well as to America and Asia. She has held several posts as concertmaster.

Franziska Pietsch plays a violin by Carlo Antonio Testore (Milan) of 1751.



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**SOPHIA REUTER** viola

was born in Dresden. She studied violin with Klaus Hertel at the Hochschule für Musik Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy in Leipzig, with Peter Tietze in Berlin and with Yehudi Menuhin and Alberto Lysy at the International Menuhin Music Academy Gstaad, Switzerland. Later in her career, she went on to teach viola and chamber music at the same establishment. She honed her viola technique with Alfred Lipka at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin. Sophia Reuter has performed as a soloist with many renowned orchestras.

Her viola was made by the Erfurt luthier Wilhelm Brückner.

**JOHANNES KREBS** cello

studied cello and chamber music in Hanover, Madrid, Basel and Cologne with Frans Helmerson, Friedrich-Jürgen Sellheim, Klaus Heitz and Reinhard Latzko. He also took part in masterclasses given by renowned artists including Boris Pergamenschikow, Bernhard Greenhouse, Menahem Pressler and Yehudi Menuhin. Numerous prizes from national and international competitions paved his way into international concert halls. Johannes Krebs teaches at the Hochschule für Künste in Bremen and gives masterclasses in Germany, Poland, Italy and Spain.

He plays a cello by Carlo Antonio Testore (Milan) of 1746.



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**DETLEV EISINGER piano**

Detlev Eisinger studied with Walter Krafft and later with Professor Erik Then-Bergh at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich. In 1986, he won a scholarship to attend the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. After graduating, he embarked on a busy career as a performer in Germany and abroad. He was invited to give concerts e.g. in Vienna, Graz, Salzburg, Berlin, Paris, at the Kissinger Sommer, the Richard-Strauss-Tage in Garmisch, the Kodály Festival in Hungary as well as in Canada, South Africa and the USA. Alongside his career as a soloist, Detlev Eisinger also performs chamber music and appears as an Lied accompanist. Since 2012 he has appeared regularly with the violinist Franziska Pietsch, resulting in successful concerts and recordings.



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