

VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

'Modern' Organ Style in Karl Straube's Reger Editions

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for Mary

A man that looks on glasse
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it passe,
And then the heav'n espie. (*George Herbert*)

The art of performance only *begins* when the player learns to read 'between the lines',
when the 'unspoken' comes to light. (*Max Reger*)

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Abbreviations

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| <i>HR</i> | = <i>Handregistrierung</i> , stops drawn by hand as distinct from those drawn in combinations or by the Walze |
| 1K | = 1. <i>Komb.</i> (Combination 1), 2K = 2. <i>Komb.</i> , 3K = 3. <i>Komb.</i> |
| KS | = <i>Karl Straube zu seinem 70. Geburtstag. Gaben der Freunde</i> (Leipzig undated, for Straube's 70 th birthday on 6.1.1943) |
| KSB | = <i>Karl Straube: Briefe eines Thomaskantors</i> (Stuttgart 1952) |
| MMRG | = <i>Mitteilungen der Max-Reger-Gesellschaft</i> (Stuttgart 1921-1928, Leipzig 1932-1941) |
| MMRI | = <i>Mitteilungen des Max-Reger-Instituts</i> , 1-20 Vols. (Wiesbaden 1954-1974) |
| MRB | = <i>Max Reger: Briefe eines deutschen Meisters</i> , ed. Else von Hase-Koehler (Leipzig 1928) |
| MuK | = <i>Musik und Kirche</i> , Kassel 1929 ff. |
| NZfM | = <i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i> |
| X | = Mixture stops, when stops are listed by pitch only |
| ZfM | = <i>Zeitschrift für Musik</i> |

Preface

In his seminal *Deutsche und Französische Orgelbaukunst und Orgelkunst* (1906) Albert Schweitzer wrote that ‘the artistic essence of an organ...is defined by the manner in which one proceeds...from *piano*...to *fortissimo* and back again’.¹ A significant part of this study is concerned with the mechanics of dynamic change on the organ, particularly Karl Straube’s treatment of the Swell and the Walze in his 1912 and 1919 editions of organ works by Max Reger.

‘Modern’ (late-Romantic) organ style as codified by Straube in these editions, however, is much more than a mere realisation of the dynamics in Reger’s scores. It is a systematic and unique presentation of post-Wagnerian performance practice on the organ. It covers all aspects of performance, including dynamics, phrasing, touch, texture, registration, tempo and the modification of tempo. In Chapters two to five this study attempts to place the treatment of these parameters both in the immediate context of Reger’s personal experience, and in the wider context of turn-of-the-century Germany.

With at least the nominal agreement of the composer for the 1912 edition,² Straube imposed a personal system of performance on Reger’s organ music, derived from ‘modern’ mainstream musical practice and from his own experience as a performer – practical, musical and aesthetic.

Due to external forces (principally World War I and the organ reform movements that resulted in changing attitudes in organ performance and building) the full flowering of ‘modern’ organ style was short-lived, and Straube’s Reger editions have received scant attention from player and scholar alike. In his later years Straube himself appears to have been somewhat embarrassed by the ‘modern’ organ and its playing techniques with which he was associated throughout his long career (see Chapters six and seven). However, Straube’s ambiguous stance in relation to the survival of ‘modern’ organ style implies a level of regret at its demise that is explored in Chapter six.

By means of an examination of these editions this study hopes to rekindle an interest in Post-Wagnerian performance practice as a contemporaneous approach to Max Reger’s organ works.

¹ Schweitzer 3. ‘Das künstlerische Wesen einer Orgel, und noch viel mehr das ganze Wesen der Orgelmusik, wird bestimmt durch die Art, wie man auf diesem Instrument vom Piano zum Forte, vom Forte zum Fortissimo gelangt und vom letzterem wieder in die Anfangsklangfarbe zurückkehrt.’

² Straube’s 1912 Reger edition is headed ‘with the agreement of the composer’ [‘im Einverständnis mit dem Komponisten’]. As Reger died in 1916 it can only be assumed that he would have had no objection to the publication of a further set of his organ pieces edited by Straube in 1919. Friedrich Högner, in fact, did claim that this edition was published with the express permission of Reger (in Högner C 305 ‘Der Verlag Peters hat diese [1919] Straubesche Ausgabe mit ausdrücklicher Zustimmung Regers gedruckt und veröffentlicht’). However, it seems that several key writers on Reger’s organ music muddled the issue – see, for example, Wunderlich A, where it is obvious that Heinz Wunderlich thinks that the 1919 edition was published during the composer’s lifetime. The fact that at least a dozen of the movements later to be edited by Straube were given single performances by him between spring 1906 and summer 1907 (see Appendix 3) may indicate that Straube was indeed planning his 1919 Reger edition at this point, a decade before Reger’s death.

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