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A Study in 20th Century Performance Practice

By Bengt Hambraeus

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In 1904, the German organist Karl Straube published *Alte Meister*, an anthology in two volumes of organ music from the 17th and early 18th centuries (Peters 3065 a/b). The second of these volumes was replaced in 1929 with two new ones, with the same title (Peters 4301 a/b).

The 3065a volume, which is still available, bears the dedication “Dem jungen Meister Max Reger”. This dedication can be understood in two ways. Either: to a young master composer being on a par with his classical colleagues from past centuries; or: to a young promising composer (Reger, by then 31 years old, had already written many of his most important organ works).

We do not have to speculate about the intention of the dedication as such, only observe it in relation to three facts: (1) Both Straube and Reger were born in the same year (1873) and thus belong to the same generation; Reger died in 1916, Straube in 1950; since 1903 Straube had held different positions at the Thomas Church in Leipzig, until 1918 as an organist, and subsequently as choral director; furthermore he had been teaching the organ at the Leipzig Music Conservatory since 1907. (2) Since the beginning of the century, Straube had published a few practical editions of old and more recent organ music. Among the latter, we find his alternative versions to some already printed organ works by Reger. His various editions can easily allow us to understand how he himself may have performed the music, and how and why his interpretations became trendsetters for many of his students. (3) Regardless of repertoire (old or contemporary), Straube tackled all problems regarding performance practice in essentially the same fashion. His detailed indications for suggested tempi (and often very free tempo changes), for articulation, phrasing, manual- and pedal technique, registrations and dynamics (including frequent use in the early editions of the register crescendo roll, the

Abbreviations:

MdMRG: Mitteilungen der Max-Reger-Gesellschaft, 1–17, Stuttgart 1921–1928 (vol. 1–7) and Leipzig 1932–1941 (vol. 8–17). For specification, see SteinRWV, p. 574–576.

MdMRI: Mitteilungen des Max-Reger-Instituts, Bonn, 1–20, Bonn 1954–1974.

Popp/Str: Max Reger: Briefe an Karl Straube. Herausgegeben von Susanne Popp. Veröffentlichungen des Max-Reger-Institutes Elsa-Reger-Stiftung, Bonn, vol. 10. Ferd. Dümmlers Verlag, Bonn 1986.

SteinRWV: Thematisches Verzeichnis der im Druck erschienenen Werke von Max Reger einschliesslich seiner Bearbeitungen und Ausgaben, Breitkopf & Härtel Musikverlag, Leipzig 1953.

BeT: Karl Straube. Briefe eines Thomaskantors. Herausgegeben von Wilibald Gurlitt und Hans-Olaf Hudemann. K. F. Koehler Verlag, Stuttgart 1952.

German *Walze*) reveal the same kind of subjective interpretation for which many distinguished musicians of that period were known. A conductor like the Hungarian-born Artur Nikisch can serve as a good example. From 1895 until his death in 1922, Nikisch worked mainly in Leipzig, as the main conducting teacher at the Conservatory. He conducted the world premieres of Reger's *Violin Concerto* op. 101 (in 1908), and his *Piano Concerto* op. 114 (in 1910); to him, Reger dedicated his *Symphonic Prologue* op. 108 (1908).¹

In the beginning of this century both Nikisch and Straube represented a performance practice attitude, where an individual and subjective approach to a score was more important than a strict rendering of notes. On one hand, a performer's personal ideas could many times violate, or even distort a composer's work; questions regarding artistic responsibility, good taste and performance manners were therefore of vital importance. But in general, these two artists represented aesthetical trends which have a long tradition in Western music in terms of more or less free performance practices. Of course, we are not dealing here with a totally anarchistic situation. There were, even around 1900, certain written and unwritten rules which a good and well-trained musician had to follow; sometimes he had a choice of different approaches to performing a work. A written or printed score simply provided the basic material, the *res facta*, for his performance, the latter becoming almost as important as the composition itself. An interpreter could tamper rather freely with the composer's own indicated tempi and dynamics, and normally did so in any repertoire, old as well as contemporary. All this was halted, at least temporarily, when a historically oriented attitude arose during the 1920s, together with a growing hostile feeling against what was regarded as subjective romanticism. Under the rising sun of imagined neo-baroque or neoclassical objectivity, a rational—albeit frequently far too pedantic—relationship to a printed score tried to wipe out more arbitrary interpretations, replacing them with sometimes rigid and lifeless performances of the written music.

A closer look at Straube's earliest editions of older music reveals some interesting features, which may explain his attitude to both the old masters and to the young master Max Reger. Already on the first line in the preface to the first *Alte Meister*-volume from 1904 we read:

"Diese Ausgabe . . . will nicht der Historie dienen. Aus der Praxis hervorgegangen, ist sie für Praxis bestimmt."

Obviously, Straube makes his position quite clear: an edition of old music does not have to serve a "historic" purpose, only a "practical" one. At the same time, his statement reflects a common, more or less negative, attitude among many musicians towards history, musicology and theory. His confrontation with "history" (past)

¹ It seems almost symbolic that the Leipzig music journalist Eugen Segnitz dedicated his Reger monograph (Leipzig 1922) to Nikisch. The full title of his Opus 108, *Symphonischer Prolog zu einer Tragödie*, was obviously suggested by Straube, who thought that Reger's original title (*Ouverture*) was a little too modest. Cf. Popp/Str., p. 158, with an extract from Reger's letter to his publisher, Oct. 4 1908.

and "practice" (present) brings, as a consequence, the old repertoire into a modern environment with other customs and habits than some centuries earlier. Still to-day, one can sometimes hear the opinion that so called "practice" should have little or nothing to do with historical research. In Straube's case, this does not however preclude various philosophical and aesthetical comments on the music; I will return to this matter.

A little later in the same preface, Straube explains the function and effect of certain indicated changes in the registration to achieve new timbres:

"Die Wirkungen der angegebenen Registrierung sind in den seltensten Fällen als schreiende Kontrasteffekte gedacht. Sie sollen vielmehr, wie es das Klangmaterial der Thomasorgel in Leipzig z. B. zulässt, aus einem einheitlichen Farbenakkord herauswachsen, der dem ganzen Stück das eigentliche Gepräge gibt . . ."²

In the perspective of early 20th century composition technique and performance practice, these statements by the 31-year-old musician Straube are quite interesting. He speaks directly of a "colour chord"—*Farbenakkord*—actually five years before Arnold Schoenberg composed the now historic "Farben" movement in his *Five Pieces for Orchestra* op. 16 (Schoenberg had already previously discussed the idea about a "Klangfarbenmelodie", where either different pitches in a melody could get individual timbres, or the timbres could change successively on a constant pitch. There is, of course, a fundamental difference between Schoenberg's work and the one which Straube refers to in *Alte Meister*, a *Passacaglia* by J. K. Kerll; this is, by the way, one of the most elaborated transcriptions in the whole collection, and more than any other among the 14 pieces it gives the impression of a real orchestration.

But neither Schoenberg nor Straube invented the colour technique in a complete vacuum. It should be remembered that orchestration technique had been highly developed by many composers since the middle of the 19th century, like Debussy or Richard Strauss. As a consequence, timbre and dynamics got new functional status as parameters, sometimes almost at the same level as counterpoint, harmony and rhythm.³ In a similar manner, dynamics and timbre had been fundamental criteria

² Straube refers to the Sauer organ, which was completed in 1908 to his specifications. See stoplist below (fig. 1).

³ As a special phenomenon one can see the audiovisual experiments which were made in the beginning of the 20th century with combination of sound and real colours. The most important example from that period is Alexander Scriabin's *Prometheus* (1909–10). Scriabin's ideas became further developed in the Soviet Union during the 1960s and 1970s, both on artistic creative level, and in more scientific research. The former were first featured in the studio for electronic music in Moscow (which was established in the Scriabin museum, i.e. the composer's former residence); the latter was launched at the centre for aviation technique in Kazan under the title "Project Prometheus" in the mid 60s. Other similar multimedia centres exist from about the same time in the Soviet Union (in Kharkov, Poltava and Tbilis). See further B. M. Galejev: "SKB *Prometei*: Its Past, Present and Future" (in the Belgian periodical *Interface*, 4, 1975, p. 137–146). This development of audiovisual technique is of course not unique for the Soviet Union; it has been almost a standard feature in many multimedia works around the world in recent decades.

for the kind of "symphonic organ" which was featured in France by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll since around 1850.⁴

Real colour contrasts were perhaps less striking than the dynamics ones in early 20th century German organs; nevertheless, they offered—at least in Straube's opinion—a potential to structure and shape a desired character of a work. Compared with any other instrument, the organ, which functions as an "one person orchestra", has unique opportunities to expose surprising solutions in terms of tone colour and dynamics. In the already quoted preface to *Alte Meister* (1904), Straube states explicitly how important it is to bring old repertoire to life and to have it performed. To achieve that goal he finds it necessary—"as a modern human being"—to take advantage of the full potential of a contemporary organ (i.e. from around 1900) so that all "affects" in the music can become properly interpreted; this includes all dynamic possibilities with more or less dramatic contrasts. At the same time, Straube claims that he has found the appropriate mood and character in each single piece; but as we will see, that "appropriate mood" is closer to the time around 1900 than to 1600 or 1700. Moreover, his interpretation does not always correspond to an original form pattern and style in a work (as it has been documented by a composer); it must therefore be regarded as the performer's subjective opinion—although Straube's attitude is, of course, by no means unique.

However, in spite of all potential colours and dynamics, the sound which Straube refers to had obviously a more mellow than aggressive or harsh character; the organ-builder's method of scaling and voicing his instrument therefore made all dynamic transitions rather smooth and almost seamless.⁵ From a comment to his edition of Bach's G major Prelude and Fugue BWV 541 (in Peters 3331; see further below), we find that Straube appreciated the mellow sound of the Sauer organ in Leipzig's Thomas Church. Because his remarks, and recommendations how to perform this particular piece, have a bearing also on his Reger interpretation in those days (around 1910), it would be worth while to quote from the original the following:

"Die melodischen Linien des Stückes, von grösster Beweglichkeit, voll Leben und Weichheit, von einschmeichenden Liebenswürdigkeit, verlange zur Wiedergabe silberglänzende süsse Farben. Der weiche Klang der Thomas-Kirchenorgel in Leipzig gestattet dafür folgende Registrierung:

- I: Dulciana 8', Flauto dolce 8', Gemshorn 8', Gemshorn 4'.
- II: Dolce 8', Gedackt 8', Rohrflöte 8', Flauto dolce 4'.
- III: Aoline 8', Gedackt 8', Gemshorn 8', Flûte d'amour 8', Spitzflöte 8', Traversflöte 4', Fugara 4', Flautino 2'.
- Ped: Lieblich Gedackt 16', Salicetbass 16', Subbass 16', Gemshorn 16', Dulciana 8', Bassflöte 8', Gemshorn 8', Flauto dolce 4'.

⁴ See my article "Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, Charles-Marie Widor: The Organ and the Orchestra. Some Aspects of Relations Between Organ Registration and Instrumentation." (In "L'Orgue à notre époque. Papers and proceedings held at McGill University, May 26–28, 1981, edited by Donald Mackey". Montréal 1982, p. 185–190.)

⁵ It is possible, that similar criteria were featured in the (since long destroyed) organ which was built 1903 in the Gothenburg Cathedral in Sweden by the Sauer student Eskil Lundén.

Ich teile sie *in extenso* mit, um ein Beispiel zu geben in welcher Weise die Grazie dieser Töne zu klingendem Leben erweckt werden kann."

Together with all meticulously, almost pedantically, indicated phrasings and articulations, this represents a typical organ-orchestration for which Straube was famous in the beginning of the 20th century. One could also note the significant use of Gemshorn in the timbral alloy (n.b. that the 16' Pedal Gemshorn does not appear in the stoplist as presented in fig. 1, and may have been added after 1908).

If we compare Straube's general remarks with how they were achieved by himself in the fourteen compositions in the volume, we find that he uses softer and less powerful stops as sort of basic colour platform, with different timbres for the individual pieces.⁶ Far more important though, not the least for the listener, are the detailed recommendations for increased dynamics above these basic registrations. They are indicated by a *W* (referring to the German type of foot-controlled register crescendo, *Walze*), followed by a number between 0 and 12; the number 12 represents the full organ (*Tutti*; *Organo Pleno*).⁷ In Straube's early edition of old masters' music, a completely new dynamic structure has actually been superimposed on the original composition. One of the more drastic examples can be found in a short harmonic cadence in the middle of Georg Muffat's F major Toccata (from his *Apparatus musico-organisticus*, 1690), where during two bars the dynamic level rises from *W. 0* up to *W. 12*, after which *W. 0*, with softest possible basic registration, follows immediately (without any diminuendo). Needless to say, such a dramatic thunderstorm—almost in the spirit of Abbé Vogler—was certainly never intended by the composer.⁸

Straube deals with tempi in a similar subjective and almost arbitrary manner. In many cases, they change frequently during a piece, sometimes with exactly specified metronome marks. The result is recollective of that kind of emotionally inspired *tempo rubato* which has been an essential part of much keyboard performance

⁶ *Bach*: In dulci júbilo; *Böhm*: Chorale Variations (Christe, der du bist Tag und Licht); *Buxtehude*: Passacaglia in d minor; Prelude and Fugue in f sharp minor; *Ciaconna* in e minor; *Kerll*: Passacaglia; *Muffat*: Toccata in F major; Passacaglia in g minor; *Pachelbel*: Toccata in F major; Chorale Prelude (Vater unser im Himmelreich); *Ciaconna* in d minor; *Scheidt*: Fantasia on Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ; *D. Strunck*: Chorale Prelude (Lass mich dein sein und bleiben); *Walthert*: Chorale Variations (Meinen Jesum lass ich nicht).

⁷ The register crescendo mechanism seems to have been invented in 1839 by the German organ builder E.-F. Walcker. (See W. Walcker-Mayer: *Die Orgel der Reger-Zeit*; in "Max Reger 1873–1973. Ein Symposium; herausgegeben von Klaus Röhling". Wiesbaden 1974, p. 31 et seq.) The first description occurs in J. G. Töpfer's *Lehrbuch der Orgelbaukunst*, 1855. Allegedly, the whole idea goes back to certain performance manners of Abbé Vogler, who used the organ to imitate an orchestra crescendo and diminuendo. (See Michael Schneider: *Die Orgelspieltechnik des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland, dargestellt an den Orgelschulen der Zeit*; Regensburg 1941, p. 56.) A register crescendo mechanism could not only be operated by the player's feet—which is normal today—but also manually with a lever or a wheel, which an assistant could handle. This explains the otherwise impossible register crescendi/diminuendi which occur in some of Reger's original organ scores, at times when the organist has to perform intervals or passages with both feet.

⁸ It is interesting that Samuel de Lange's edition from 1888 of Muffat's *Apparatus musico-organisticus* includes recommendations for similar dynamic developments as those given by Straube for the two Muffat compositions in his anthology. The de Lange edition is still available (Peters 6020).

practice (for instance, in piano music by Chopin or Liszt)—but not all musicians had the same opportunity to notate every detail in the almost pedantic way of Karl Straube. Together with all dynamic features, the fluctuating tempi reflect also a Wagnerian mood, or at least a rather common aesthetic ideal around 1900, when the pathetic and the bombastic belonged to artistic expression both in music and in architecture. Broad, sometimes very broad, tempi gave a distinct pacing, which could permit an allegro but only rarely a real presto in organ performance from that period.

Was all this Straube's own personal and subjective idea? Some answers to this question can be found in Schneider's book on early 19th century organ technique (see above). According to many quoted authorities from the late 18th and 19th centuries, fast tempi should generally be avoided in organ playing (which implicitly means that he virtuoso piano technique developed by Liszt and his contemporaries did not belong to the organ area).⁹

Four authors on organ performance practice are particularly interesting: J. H. Knecht (1752–1817); C. H. Rinck (1770–1846); J. Chr. F. Schneider (1786–1853), and L. E. Gebhardi (1787–1862). They not only deal with questions related to tempo and dynamics but also to articulation and phrasing. Many of Michael Schneider's quotations from their pedagogical handbooks, with selected examples, correspond almost exactly to what Straube was teaching, as documented in his practical editions from 1904 (*Alte Meister*); 1907 (*Choralvorspiele alter Meister*); 1913 (Bach), and 1917 (the new Liszt edition).¹⁰ This applies also to Straube's Reger editions (see further below).

There may be both practical and pragmatical reasons for the recommended slow tempi in organ performance. One such reason might have concerned the sometimes heavy tracker action in many large old organs, which made it difficult to perform fast passages in *fff*; also the question of insufficient wind supply may have been a problem. On the other hand, new technical inventions since the mid 19th century, like the Barker machine (which was used in France, in Cavallé-Coll's instruments, since the middle of the 19th century), made organ playing less laborious and would not really have prevented fast tempi. However, we must also consider that the art of pedal technique had declined since Bach's time. Therefore, many organists simply did not have sufficient skill to perform works which included more difficult pedal parts in a polyphonic context, and if the music was played at all, it was often done in a modest tempo.

Another, perhaps more general, reason for slow tempi in organ performance had

⁹ As a consequence, an interesting question arises: how did Franz Liszt want the alternative organ or piano versions of some of his greater works to be performed with regard to tempi on the respective instruments?

¹⁰ The 1917 Liszt edition (in two volumes; Peters 3682 a–b) replaced the earlier one from around 1900 (Peters 3084) which was withdrawn when the new volumes were published. In the preface to the 1904 *Alte Meister*, Straube refers directly to his early Liszt edition with regard to certain registrations. Because I have not been able to see a copy of that early edition, I cannot comment on possible differences between the respective publications.

to do with the acoustical conditions in many churches, where a long reverberation time makes fast tempi less practical than moderate or slow (although even churches with exceptionally long reverberation time do not offer the same problem when they are filled with a large crowd of worshippers or concert-goers.¹¹ It is possible that such technical questions may have had a direct bearing on Straube's interpretation (especially of Reger's music), although they do not cover all aspects. In any case, Straube was without any doubt regarded as one of the most outstanding organists in the beginning of the 20th century.

Yet another rationale may be considered regarding the recommended slow tempi for organ performance. Because most organs were built in churches, they automatically became part of a liturgical environment. For different reasons, hymns were often performed in a very slow tempo during the romantic era in many countries. One explanation is that slow and majestic pacing was supposed to correspond to certain ideas about religious dignity; this obviously also had an impact on any non-liturgical repertoire performed in a church.

In general, Straube seems therefore to have followed certain traditions in German organ performance practice since the 19th century. He also benefitted from important personal influence from the Berlin composer and organist Heinrich Reimann (1850–1906) with whom he studied, and whom he also substituted as an organist in the beginning of his career. Reimann featured a performance style for Bach's music, where a fugue, for instance, was played with a gradual crescendo from beginning to end. Such a crescendo was often combined with an *accelerando*, so that a piece would end at least twice as fast and loud as it had started.

This kind of Bach performance was regarded as a remarkable innovation in the German organ world at a time when such a repertoire was generally performed just in a loud fortissimo without any nuances.¹² By featuring a new practice, organists like Reimann, and his student Karl Straube, tried to bring historical repertoire more up-to-date and appealing to the public. One informative way to promote this new ideal—at a time when the phonogram technique was still hardly developed—was to publish “practical” editions, where the music had been adjusted to modern taste and performance style (like *Alte Meister*).

In this context, however, one must remember Robert Schumann's remarkable *Sechs Fugen über den Namen BACH* op. 60, which was composed in 1845 (and first published in Leipzig 1846). In the first and the last one of these fugues, the composer indicates that both tempo and dynamics should increase gradually from a slow beginning. Did Schumann inspire some organists to apply a similar method in

¹¹ Of special interest in this context is the performance tradition which was developed by some important French organists, explicitly because of the long reverb (like in Notre Dame in Paris). I refer here to one among many examples, namely Marcel Dupré's magnificent recording of Bach's G major Fantasia (BWV 572), which was made in 1959 on the Cavallé-Coll organ in St.-Sulpice in Paris (Mercury MMA 11122; MG 50230).

¹² Cf. BeT, p. 8–9. One may also compare the “Reimann crescendo technique” with the kind of improvisation which flourished in France with organists like Widor and Vierne. See my article *Aristide Cavallé-Coll, Charles-Marie Widor: the Organ and the orchestra* (cf. above, p. 40, footnote 4).

Bach's fugues—or had he been influenced by some musician? In any case, this is actually how Reger indicated the tempo development in at least two of his fugues (op. 46, on BACH, and op. 59:6).¹³

Straube's completely revised version of the second volume of the well known Peters edition of Bach's complete organ works is quite revealing; the alternative Straube edition (published in 1913; Peters 3331) has, however, long been discontinued and no longer appears either in the American or in the European Peters catalogues. Among the comments made by Straube for each single work in the volume, the following is eloquent enough:

“Der Spieler versuche in der Registrierung den Glanz und die Pracht des Meistersinger-Orchesters wiederzugeben. Die Dynamik des Praeludiums wie der Fuge muss in einem kraftvollen in sich biegsamen *forte* weben und schweben.”

This Wagnerian approach to the piece in question, the C major Prelude and Fugue (BWV 545), may have been typical for Straube's organ playing at that time. In the same year he made his first appearance in Denmark and was praised as “the most famous European organist”, as he comments himself in “Briefe eines Thomas-Kantors” (p. 23). In a historic perspective it is interesting to read how Straube attempts to amalgamate Bach's music with Wagner's orchestra sound: one can hardly get closer to a total integration of two different styles from two completely different eras. This was also Straube's philosophy behind the 1904 *Alte Meister* edition. It seems all to be part of a great and idealistical romantic dream.

But one must also bear in mind that Straube's very intention was extremely important. He really made his readers and his audience discover and appreciate many old and forgotten musical treasures. It should be pointed out, however, that his efforts to promote old music were neither unique nor pioneering at that time. As a matter of fact, anthologies like *Alte Meister* had been published by many scholars and organists in many countries during the 19th century; one may here refer briefly to those which were edited since 1892 by the eminent French organist and composer Alexandre Guilmant (1837–1911); some of them were planned in collaboration with the French musicologist André Pirro.¹⁴ Although the repertoire is selected from more or less related sources, there are however some important differences between Guilmant's publications and Straube's regarding the editing technique. The common

¹³ We do not know if Reger got this idea himself, or from Straube. But in the original version of his d minor fugue op. 135 b (which was not published until 1966), Reger did actually compose a successive accelerando in a very sophisticated way, without changing the metronome markings. See further below, p. 57.

¹⁴ The most famous example of the Guilmant-Pirro collaboration is the ten volumes *Archives des maîtres de l'orgue des XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, publiées d'après des Mss. et éditions authentiques avec annotations et adoptions aux orgues modernes* (Paris 1898–1914). It should be noted that Guilmant's suggestions how to perform old repertoire on modern organs (i.e. the kind of symphonic organ as represented by Cavaillé-Coll), are very cautiously notated; never do they affect or interfere with the compositional structure of a piece (which is frequently the case in Straube's editions). Among Guilmant's earlier publications in this genre are *Concert historique d'orgue* (*Morceaux d'Auteurs du XVI. au XIX. siècle*); Paris 1892–97, and *Ecole classique de l'orgue*; Paris 1898–1903.

purpose in both cases was to provide “practical” editions for performers but on the whole the Guilmant versions are much less dominated by personal taste than Straube's: the latter often actually have the character of “symphonic transcriptions” (see below).

Straube's method of editing may seem strange to-day in the light of what has happened on the musicological research and performance practice fronts in more recent decades. The results were actually quite akin to those “symphonic transcriptions” which Leopold Stokowski made of about 40 Bach compositions by translating organ and chamber works to symphony orchestra (Stokowski had begun his musical career as an organist).¹⁵ In many cases, the similarity in sound, dynamics, phrasing and articulation is striking if we compare Straube's organ editions with those Stokowski transcriptions—and recordings—of similar repertoire which have been published (and which much earlier existed in many gramophone recordings).¹⁶ We do not know for sure if Stokowski and Straube ever met or exchanged any information, although Stokowski spent some time in Germany in the beginning of this century and was greatly impressed by Artur Nikisch's performances. In any case, they seem to have formed their ideals with a common background. We also know that Philipp Spitta's remarkable Bach biography (1873–80; an English translation was published in 1883–85) was one of the most important sources of inspiration for Stokowski, and that Spitta's often very romantic comments on Bach's music were sometimes mentioned in Stokowski's own writings.¹⁷

It is not absolutely clear which organ Straube had in his mind for the suggested registration which occur in all his editions before 1920 (including the Reger volume from 1919; see below). It may have been the one in St. Thomas in Leipzig; at least he refers directly to that instrument in his preface to the 1904 *Alte Meister*. But some stops and free combinations which are recommended there were not added to this organ until 1908. Besides, his Liszt edition from 1917 also mentions a few stops which do not occur in the stoplist as it appears in the Sauer contract (fig. 1). According to Wilibald Gurlitt's *Nachwort* to *Briefe eines Thomas-Kantors*—especially p. 249–50—the design and the sound of Sauer's organs at that time represented Straube's ideal.

During the 1920s, Straube moved gradually away from his previous aesthetical opinion. The discovery and revival of the North German baroque organ style, as represented by Arp Schnitger and other builders in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, had many consequences for the rising “neo”-movements during the 20s and 30s; to Straube, this meant a completely different attitude to the performance of

¹⁵ See my article *Bach–Stokowski: a Matter of Applied Religion in Musical Transcription?* (in ARC, vol. 14, Fall 1986; publ. by the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill University, Montréal). The term “symphonic transcription” is Stokowski's own.

¹⁶ For instance, two settings from Bach's Schemelli Gesangbuch (1736): *Komm, süßer Tod*, and *Mein Jesu was für Seelenweh*; *Adagio from the C major Toccata*; *Toccata and Fugue in d minor*; *Passacaglia and Fugue in c minor*. All these scores were published between 1946 and 1952 by Broude Brothers, New York.

¹⁷ See O. Daniel: Stokowski. A Counterpoint of View. New York 1982 (passim).

I. <i>Manual C—a³</i>	II. <i>Manual C—a³</i>	III. <i>Manual C—a³</i> (<i>Schwellwerk</i>)	<i>Pedal C—f⁴</i>
Principal 16'	Salicional 16'	Liebl. Gedackt 16'	Majorbaß 32'
Bordun 16'	Gedackt 16'	Gamba 16'	<i>Untersatz</i> 32'
Principal 8'	Principal 8'	Principal 8'	Contrabaß 16'
<i>Geigenprincipal 8'</i>	Salicional 8'	<i>Viola 8'</i>	<i>Principal 16'</i>
Viola di Gamba 8'	<i>Harmonika 8'</i>	Aeoline 8'	Violon 16'
Gemshorn 8'	<i>Dolce 8'</i>	Voix céleste 8'	Subbaß 16'
<i>Dulciana 8'</i>	Flûte harmonique 8'	Spitzflöte 8'	Salicetbaß 16'
Doppelflöte 8'	Konzertflöte 8'	<i>Flûte d'amour 8'</i>	Liebl. Ged. 16'
Flûte harmonique 8'	Rohrflöte 8'	Gedackt 8'	Quintbaß 10 2/3'
<i>Flauto dolce 8'</i>	<i>Gedackt 8'</i>	<i>Gemshorn 8'</i>	Offenbaß 8'
Gedackt 8'	Oktave 4'	Quintatön 8'	<i>Principal 8'</i>
<i>Quintatön 8'</i>	<i>Salicional 4'</i>	Fugara 4'	Cello 8'
Quinte 5 1/3'	Flauto dolce 4'	Traversflöte 4'	Baßflöte 8'
Octave 4'	Quinte 2 2/3'	<i>Praestant 4'</i>	Dulciana 8'
Gemshorn 4'	<i>Piccolo 2'</i>	Quinte 2 2/3'	Octave 4'
Rohrflöte 4'	Cornett 3fach	Flautino 2'	Flauto dolce 4'
<i>Violini 4'</i>	Mixtur 4fach	Harmonia aetherea 3fach	Contraposaune 32'
Octave 2'	<i>Cymbel 3fach</i>	<i>Trompette harmonique 8'</i>	Posaune 16'
Rauschquinte 2 2/3+2'	<i>Tuba 8'</i>	Oboe 8'	Fagott 16'
Mixtur 3fach	Schalmei 8'		Trompete 8'
<i>Groß-Cymbel 4fach</i>	Clarinete 8'		Clarine 4'
Scharf 5fach			
Cornett 2- bis 4fach			
Trompete 16'			
Trompete 8'			

I/P, II/P, III/P; II/I, III/I, III/II; General cp. Register crescendo/diminuendo (Walze). 3 free combinations; 3 fixed combinations (*mf*, *f*, *tutti*)

Fig. 1. Specification of the organ in Thomas' Church, Leipzig, as rebuilt by W. Sauer 1908. The 21 stops which were suggested by Straube are printed in italics. (Quoted from R. Walter in *MdMRI*, vol. 20, 1974, p. 45–46).

old music. As we will see, it also had consequences for his interpretation of Reger's music. Instead of the symphonic Sauer organs, Straube's new ideal became Arp Schnitger's organ in St. Jacobi in Hamburg, which was built 1688–92; the stoplist to this organ is presented in the preface to the 1929 *Alte Meister* (fig. 2).¹⁸ In this preface Straube also emphasizes the importance of objectivity and rejects explicitly his earlier subjective opinion.¹⁹ His new approach is evident if we compare the *Alte Meister* publications from 1904 and 1929. Even if his suggested articulations and phrasings are more or less the same, the big difference lies in the recommended sound. In one case, we can compare directly the same composition in two different

¹⁸ Cf. in this context some important critical articles by Fritz Heitmann which have been reprinted in R. Voge: *Fritz Heitmann. Das Leben eines deutschen Organisten*. Berlin 1963, p. 120–140. Regarding the former Straube student Heitmann, see below.

¹⁹ The preface is presented bilingually, both in German and English. The reader may however observe that there are some interesting discrepancies between the two versions which give a slightly different bias and nuance to the content; this has nothing to do with the question of idiomatic translation from one language to another.

<i>Hauptwerk</i>	<i>Oberwerk</i>	<i>Rückpositiv</i>	<i>Brustwerk</i>	<i>Pedal</i>
Prinzipal 16'	Prinzipal 8'	Prinzipal 8'	Holzprinzipal 8'	Prinzipal 32'
Quintatön 16'	Holzflöte 8'	Gedackt 8'	Oktave 4'	Oktave 16'
Oktave 8'	Rohrflöte 8'	Quintatön 8'	Hohlflöte 4'	Subbaß 16'
Spitzflöte 8'	Oktave 4'	Oktave 4'	Waldflöte 2'	Oktave 8'
Gedackt 8'	Spitzflöte 4'	Blockflöte 4'	Sesquialter 2fach	Oktave 4'
Oktave 4'	Nasat 3'	Nasat 3'	Scharff 4–6fach	Nachthorn 2'
Rohrflöte 4'	Oktave 2'	Oktave 2'	Dulcian 8'	Mixtur 6–8fach
Superoktave 2'	Gemshorn 2'	Sifflöte 1 2/3'	Trechterregal 8'	Rauschpfeife 3fach
Flachflöte 2'	Scharff 4–6fach	Sesquialter 2fach		Posaune 32'
Rauschpfeife 3fach	Cymbel 3fach	Scharff 4–6fach		Dulcian 16'
Mixtur 6–8fach	Trompete 8'	Dulcian 16'		Trompete 8'
Trompete 16'	Vox humana 8'	Bärpfeife 8'		Trompete 4'
	Trompete 4'	Schalmei 4'		Cornett 2'

OW/HW; BW/OW; Tremolo OW.

Fig. 2. Specification of the organ in St. Jacobi Church, Hamburg (Arp Schnitger 1688–1692). Quoted from K. Straube, *Alte Meister, neue Folge*, vol. 1, 1929 (Peters 4301 a). The stoplist is mainly identical with the one which Schnitger designed. However, he did not build the organ entirely himself, because much pipework from an earlier instrument in the same church was used. See: G. Fock, *Arp Schnitger und seine Schule. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Orgelbaues in Nord- und Ostseeküstengebiet*. Bärenreiter Verlag, Kassel 1974, p. 52–65, where the rather complicated history of the Jacobi organ is told in detail. The stoplist in this fig. was chosen because of its direct relation to Straube's work.

versions from respective year. It is Pachelbel's well-known d-minor Ciacona. The 1904 version looks and sounds very much like Stokowski's most Wagnerian orchestra transcriptions of Bach (which were made between about 1915 and 1935); it is full of added doublings—which require another kind of performance technique than what is needed in Pachelbel's original—and very emotional tempo changes; at the very end, a written ornamentation, added by Straube, gives a dramatic, almost pathetic accent to the music, which is at this point performed with W. 12, i.e. the full organ. The 1929 version occurs as the last movement in a constellation which Straube made of three Pachelbel pieces, beginning with the great d-minor Prelude, and with a chromatic Fugue in d-minor as the middle movement. The “symphonic transcription” in late romantic style has now been discarded and even if the 1929 version is certainly no *Urtext*, Straube attempts to bring it closer to the 17th century than what he did 25 years earlier.

In his article *Max Reger und Karl Straube*,²⁰ the late German-Swedish musicologist Richard Engländer gives an explanation to Straube's changed attitude. Until around 1920, Straube seems to have been strongly influenced by Artur Nikisch, who had worked in Leipzig since 1895. From various comments about Nikisch's musicianship we learn that he represented a truly romantic ideal; he had an extraordinary feeling for sound, and he placed more trust in a spontaneous performance

²⁰ Published in *Mitteilungen des Max Reger-Instituts*, Vol. 1, 1954; in the following this periodical will be referred to as *MdMRI*.

than in pedantic rehearsals.²¹ Such descriptions correspond quite well with some of Straube's editions, especially the Bach volume from 1913 and the Reger volume from 1919. But, as Engländer remarks, at the time of Nikisch's death, Straube had begun to turn his interest to another kind of performance practice and sound (apart from his new interest in the baroque organ). Not Nikisch, but the rising Wilhelm Furtwängler (1886–1954) became a leading star on Straube's firmament. Together with Straube's increasing efforts to promote the North German baroque organ, the new spirit which emerged from Furtwängler's orchestra interpretations signaled a new direction in Straube's thinking. But here we must consider another fact: Furtwängler did not seem to appreciate Reger's music as much as Nikisch had done, and accordingly Straube's attitude to Reger's idiom gradually changed.

In his article *Rückblick und Bekenntnis* (published in BeT), Straube explains the rationale behind his own editions of old and newer music. They were not based on theoretical desk-philosophy but rather on spontaneous feelings, which became analyzed, written down and published. The following remark is of special interest: "I did not want the organists to follow my suggestions pedantically; rather, I wanted my ideas make the performers develop their own opinion and feeling, in personal freedom". This freedom obviously applied also to Straube's own performance practice over the years. In such a context it would be worthwhile examining the much debated question about Straube as an interpreter of Reger's organ works. Generally speaking, he was one of the most prominent European organ teachers of our century, with many outstanding students, who in their turn built up a certain tradition in the following generation of students.²² He had a solid reputation as an ideal Reger performer, authorized by the composer himself, and was therefore regarded as a trustworthy witness for authenticity. However, no phonograms seem ever to have been made of his Reger performances.²³ The following presentation must therefore be based mainly on his editions, his letters or statements, and on related evidence. It will hopefully also shed some light on the delicate problem regarding his possible infringement of the composer's own intentions.

Reger dedicated five of his major organ works to Straube: Phantasy on *Ein feste Burg* op. 27 and Phantasy on *Freu' dich sehr, o meine Seele* op. 30 (both 1898); Phantasy and Fugue on *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* op. 52:2 (1901); Variations and Fugue on an Original Theme op. 73 (1903); Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue op. 127 (1913). Straube's first performance of a Reger composition took place on 4 March 1897, when he gave the world premiere of the Suite in e minor op. 16; with a

²¹ In his booklet *Med notpenna och taktpinne* (Stockholm 1948), the late Swedish composer and conductor Kurt Atterberg gives interesting information on Nikisch's Wagner interpretation (p. 25 et seq.); the quoted example applies also to other musicians from that period, like Stokowski and Straube.

²² The Straube and Reger student Fritz Heitmann (1891–1953), one of the internationally leading organists in his days, was the teacher of two famous Swedish organists, Gotthard Arnér and Alf Linder.

²³ According to information in a letter to me of 9 December 1986, Dr Susanne Popp at the Max Reger Institute in Bonn (West Germany) has found no such documentation on either player organ rolls or gramophone records; I take this opportunity to thank Dr Popp for her kind assistance in this investigation. Regarding Reger's own recordings, and Straube's of other composer's music, see further below.

duration of 40 minutes, this four-movement work can be regarded as Reger's first major contribution to the organ literature. With the exception of op. 73, Straube gave world premieres of the other works shortly after they had been written.²⁴ From the viewpoints of history, style and performance practice one may in this context remember the years 1904 and 1913 regarding Straube's *Alte Meister* (dedicated to Reger) and his Bach edition. In 1903 (the year of the important opus 73), Reger and Straube together published *Schule des Triospiels*, which consisted of organ arrangements of Bach's two-part inventions; Reger had composed a third voice in Bach's style, to prepare organ students for more demanding works, like the Bach Trio Sonatas for organ (or pedal harpsichord). In historic perspective, the *Schule des Triospiels*—which is almost forgotten to-day—is an important milestone in the ongoing improvement of organ performance technique since 1900. It may also tell us a little about Straube's (i.e. the co-editor's) teaching method at this time. It seems symptomatic that the year of 1903 also saw publication of Reger's only theoretical treatise, *Beiträge zur Modulationslehre* (since then published in many languages and reprints; it is available still to-day): this little booklet gives us in a nutshell the key to Reger's harmony (and voiceleading principles), as well as his arrangement of Bach's Inventions tells us about his attitude to linear counterpoint.

Yet another Reger composition should be mentioned here, the Phantasy and Fugue in d minor op. 135 b (1915); this work was dedicated to Reger's friend Richard Strauss, but for reasons to be explained later, Straube seems to have been deeply involved with this piece before it went to the final printing.²⁵

Between 1912 and 1938, Straube published alternative editions of the following Reger works:

- op. 27: Phantasy on Ein Feste Burg.
- op. 59:5–9: Toccata; Fugue; Kyrie eleison; Gloria in excelsis; Benedictus.
- op. 65:5–8: Improvisation and Fugue; Prelude and Fugue.
- op. 65:11–12: Toccata and Fugue.
- op. 80:1–2: Prelude and Fughetta.
- op. 80:11–12: Toccata and Fugue.
- op. 85: Four Preludes and Fugues.

All of these were published by Peters, where Reger's originals had also appeared (including op. 27, which between 1899 and 1934 belonged to the Robert Forberg publishing house; since then it has been taken over by J. Rieter-Biedermann in cooperation with Peters; Straube's edition dates from 1938).²⁶ No such alternative

²⁴ The world premiere of op. 73 was given by the outstanding Berlin organist Walter Fischer on 1 March 1905; however, Straube played the work two days later in Leipzig.

²⁵ This work was actually composed in 1915, and not in 1916, as has often been stated. Cf. O. Schreiber: *Zur Frage der gültigen Fassung von Reger's Orgel-Opus op. 135 b* (in MdMRI, vol. 19, August 1973). Its original, unabridged version was not printed until 1966, and the first phonogram was recorded in 1976; all previous performances were (and are still frequently) based on the corrupted Peters edition which was until 1966 the only one which existed; see further below. The world premiere of the work was not given by Straube but by Hermann Dettmar in Hannover on 11 June 1916, one month after Reger's death.

²⁶ The Peters catalogue numbers for the Straube editions are: 3286 (op. 59:7–9), 1912; 3455 (op. 59:5–6; 65:5–8; 65:11–12; 80:1–2; 80:11–12; 85), 1919; 4440 (op. 27), 1938.

editions seem to have been published by any other company which had the copyright to various organ works by Reger.²⁷

Now, what do the alternative Straube editions of Reger's work mean? First, it is most interesting to note the rather luxurious promotion offered by the publisher: two alternative versions of the same work within a rather short period of time. Obviously, Peters must have been confident that such an investment would yield a good return; the publisher must have held Reger in high esteem, in spite of the controversial public opinion about his music (or perhaps even because of it!). The company must also have had an equal confidence in Straube's growing international reputation as a teacher and as an artist, to grant him the rather unique opportunity to present samples of his personal performance practice of Reger's music in print (especially because his opinion frequently seems to contradict what Reger had himself written in his scores).

But, secondly, we may perhaps consider this fact from the viewpoint of communication and information. Peters' publishing house was located in Leipzig; the management may have seen an opportunity to provide such a practical edition to feature two internationally established artists and teachers with strong connection to their own city. We must not forget that any "practical" edition, which demonstrates a single interpreter's opinion, is actually a certain equivalent to a modern documentary phonogram—of course with the difference that a score normally stimulates active participation from the reader whereas a phonogram mostly involves passive listening. By printing so-called "practical" editions, a publisher can allow students, teachers and scholars to examine alternative interpretations. There is a similar situation to-day, in the age of advanced phonogram technique, when we can easily compare various performances of the same work with many different artists, sometimes with quite individual character. A phonogram can sometimes invite imitation of a certain interpreter's manners in the same way as a practical edition can activate a trend-setting performance style among student musicians. One can therefore regard Peters' generous presentation of selected Reger works—both in an original *Urtext* and in a revised version by Straube—as a pedagogical project. It is perhaps revealing that such opportunities seem to have vanished with the development of more advanced recording techniques and as a large repertoire became available in many different recordings. Just as we can refer today to a certain phonogram as "Karajan's Beethoven"—or Christopher Hogwood's or Kleiber's—we may here speak of "Straube's Reger" (not just of Reger only).

The question of Straube's attitude to Reger's original scores has recently been intensely debated. For nearly 75 years it was more or less generally assumed that Straube represented the—perhaps—most authentic tradition and that his revised versions almost represented the composer's last will. Important objections and substantiated critical arguments were, however, presented in the early 1970s by the

²⁷ The publishers in question are: Aibl; Hermann Beyer; Breitkopf & Härtel; Bote und Bock; Otto Junne; Lauterbach & Kuhn; Leuckart; Schott (previously Augener); Simrock; Universal-Edition.

German organist and musicologist Wolfgang Stockmeier in his article *Karl Straube als Reger-Interpret*.²⁸ His criticism has correctly demonstrated how Reger's original tempo markings have been tampered with, to a degree that the overall time-flow of a composition gets incorrect and quite distorted proportions. It is not just a question about the basic tempo in a work, which may be generally slower or perhaps faster under certain acoustical conditions; it is rather the questionable and arbitrary principle of fluctuating tempi within individual pieces, by which direct conflicts arise with the composer's explicitly written intention. Likewise, Reger's original and structure-shaping dynamics have often been distorted. We know that Reger was meticulous with any marking of tempo, dynamics and phrasing; both as a pianist (frequently in chamber music performances) and as a conductor, he developed an almost unique feeling for nuances which all occur in his printed scores. One wonders therefore why Straube felt it necessary to offer a second opinion when he presented works by a close friend and colleague, whose music he obviously appreciated.

It has been said that Reger often indicated too high metronome values, with the result that the music would become blurred if the given tempo indications are followed exactly.²⁹ But there are some cases (which are not edited in print by Straube), where the accumulation of complex harmonic modulations, in extremely fast tempo, may in fact imply that Reger, on purpose, wanted a statistical field of sound events, with an overall shape, instead of detached details.³⁰ Some examples are, for instance, the beginning of *Symphonic Phantasy and Fugue* op. 57 (1901; first performed by Straube), or the last part of the a minor *Prelude* op. 69:9 (1903). The tempo indication in the former (*Vivacissimo ed agitato assai e molto espressivo*) gives in connection with the *fff* dynamics an impression of a wild dramatic outburst, which would hardly become properly rendered by a more polished performance; according to Reger himself the work was inspired by Dante's *Inferno*.³¹ On the other hand, Reger remarks in his *Bach-Variations* for piano op. 81, that indicated tempi in the fast sections are maximum limits; the music must always be clearly rendered. This must not, however, be taken as a binding argument in all cases. One has to bear in mind the distinction between the different characters in works like the *Symphonic Phantasy* and the *Bach-Variations*; the raging tornado in the former is far from the atmosphere in the latter composition. Reger's musical language has many nuances and cannot be generally identified and described from just one example.

Here reference can be made to some remarkable, today almost unknown, piano pieces (without opus numbers) which Reger wrote as "free arrangements" of other composer's works (cf. the matter of "symphonic transcriptions" discussed above).

²⁸ In "Max Reger 1873–1973. Ein Symposium". Wiesbaden 1974, p. 21–29.

²⁹ Cf. Stockmeier, op. cit.

³⁰ Cf. in this context K. H. Stockhausen's important article *Von Webern zu Debussy. Bemerkungen zur statistischen Form* (originally printed in 1954; reprint in his *Texte zur elektronischen und instrumentalen Musik*, I. Köln 1963, p. 75 et seq.)

³¹ In a programme note by Reger, dated 20 April 1904, and also in a letter from Reger to G. Beckmann 18/8 1904; see Stein RWV, p. 608.

One is an improvisation of Johann Strauss' *An der schönen blauen Donau* (1898; dedicated to the famous pianist Teresa Carreño). The other is called *Fünf Spezialstudien* (*Bearbeitungen Chopinscher Werke*) written in 1899, and published in the same year; the Strauss transcription was not published until 1930.³² Neither of these works occurs in the complete Reger edition (which does not include any of Reger's arrangements but of his own works); but in vol. 12 of the complete works we find another piano work (without opus number), *Vier Spezialstudien für die linke Hand allein* (1901, including a stunning Prelude and Fugue in e flat minor—for the left hand only!). As well as the previously mentioned "free arrangements" of Johann Strauss' and Frederic Chopin's compositions they offer a perhaps unique introduction to many difficult passages in Reger's organ repertoire. At the same time, they reveal the very close relationship between Reger's piano and organ music; one may, for instance, compare the dense texture in his monumental *Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue* in b minor for 2 pianos (op. 96) with some typical elements in his major organ works. We know that for many years a lot of the latter were regarded as impossible to perform in his own indicated tempi. Perhaps one reason was simply that too many organists at that time had insufficient technique? Most of the organ works require a good knowledge and command of the advanced piano technique which has been steadily developed since the days of Liszt and Chopin, and in our century by composers like Rachmaninov, Sorabji, Boulez or Stockhausen; how familiar are organists in general with this repertoire?

Before going into further details regarding Straube's interpretation of Reger, I want to shed some light on what we know about Reger himself as a performer. In this context it is interesting to read what Eberhard Otto writes, and quotes, in his article *Max Regers orchesterlicher Reifestil*.³³ Otto refers to a certain rehearsal in Meiningen (on 7 January 1912) where Reger conducted the court orchestra. A discussion took place about tempi in Brahms' Fourth Symphony, which was on the program. According to Reger, the tempi had to be much slower than usual because of the long reverberation time; if the music was played too fast, Brahms' polyphony and harmony would not become clearly perceived. Reger added: "Brahms writes too often fast tempi . . . because his excitement while composing usually tempted him to indicate too fast tempi". The music-loving Duke George II, a patron of fine arts, and Reger's immediate employer at that time, made the following comment in the margin of the letter: "I once asked Brahms why he did not use metronome markings to have his tempi settled definitively. The composer responded that he avoided this on purpose, because any tempo may change depending on the conductor's mood and feelings".

³² The Chopin works in question are: Waltz op. 64:1; Waltz op. 42; Impromptu op. 29; Etude op. 25:6; Waltz op. 64:2.

³³ In: "Max Reger: Beiträge zur Regerforschung. Herausgegeben von dem Reger-Festkomitee aus Anlass der 50. Wiederkehr des Todestages von Max Reger am 11. mai 1966". Meiningen 1966, p. 90 et seq. The documentation for his particular matter is found in a letter from Reger, written the same day to Georg II, Duke of Sachsen-Meiningen (published in "Max Reger. Briefwechsel mit Herzog Georg II . . . Herausgegeben von Hedwig und E. H. Müller von Asow". Weimar 1949, p. 91).

What consequences might this have had for Reger's own music, and for its interpretation? It is interesting how the question about his tempi and metronome markings became a controversial issue from the very beginning, with no definite answer. In MdMRG Nr. 4, November 1924, we even find (on p. 34) an anonymous editorial appeal to the readers to supply any information about how Reger used to perform his own music, especially with regard to tempi. The result of this inquiry—directed mainly at those who had been studying or performing with him—was to become documented in a later issue of the same periodical. But nothing seems ever to have been published; perhaps the answers were too vague to offer more substantial or methodical information. One answer may simply be that some of Reger's work feature certain parameters (e.g., density, velocity or dynamics), which are not so prominent in others, where a more linear counterpoint and less rapid changes of harmonies dominate the music. Therefore, the whole question of Reger's tempi must be related to a thorough analysis of the total structure of individual works, with regard also to parameters such as harmony, linearity and dynamics.³⁴ To our knowledge, nobody considered doing such research in the 1920s; in this situation, Karl Straube was regarded as a most reliable authority, at least for the organ works. On the other hand, it is hardly possible to discuss these compositions without any comparison with other Reger works for piano, choir, orchestra, solo voice or chamber ensembles. In an article in the same November 1924 issue of MdMRG, a former Reger student and musicologist, Emanuel Gatscher, reminds organists of the importance of having a perfect piano technique, to be able to perform Reger's difficult organ works.³⁵ Gatscher also mentions in the same article that terms like *vivacissimo* or *adagissimo* have less to do with real tempi than with the character of the work in question. Likewise, *crescendo*, *stringendo*, *diminuendo* and *rallentando* refer more to a general tempo rubato within a large overall structure than to exaggerated contrasts: the large structure must always be clearly rendered and it is most important that the performer conveys the idea of a basic melos. Gatscher also points out that one should not even try to apply identical performance practices to different pieces in the same genre (neither are all Phantasies alike, nor all the Fugues); rather it is necessary to find the appropriate character in each work; monumental compositions require a monumental interpretation. Gatscher's remarks about Reger's music seem to correspond almost exactly to what Straube wrote 20 years earlier, in the preface to *Alte Meister* about his search for the right mood in each of the fourteen selected baroque compositions.

In this context, it is interesting to compare the result of all questions about Reger's tempi and dynamics (both his own, and Straube's) with some comments which the late conductor Hermann Scherchen made about Anton Webern's music.³⁶

³⁴ Cf. Thomas-Martin Langner: *Studien zur Dynamik Max Regers*. Diss., Berlin 1952 (typewritten). Strangely enough, almost no attention is paid to Reger's organ music there!

³⁵ "Einige Bemerkungen zum Studium Regerscher Orgelwerke"; op. cit. p. 2–8.

³⁶ During an interview which I had with him in Stockholm, November 1955, in connection with the Webern Festival; the interview was published in the program booklet for this occasion by Stockholms Konserthörsförening (The Stockholm Concert Society).

What many musicians usually regard as more or less superficial additions to the pitches is indeed an essential element of the music itself; Scherchen also suggested that even if all the pitches were removed from the score of Webern's *Five Pieces for String Quartet* op. 5 (1909), and only the indications for tempi, expression and dynamics were retained, it would be possible to understand the work, even if the sound was missing. Without attempting to reach further conclusions from this interesting experiment with regard to Reger's music, one must remember that there are numerous parallels between the expressionistic characters in Webern's and Schoenberg's music, and Reger's.³⁷ Much of the debate about the correct performance of Reger's (organ-)music, which apparently began already during his lifetime, may simply depend on the fact that neither his, nor Webern's or the early Schoenberg's was completely understood; at least, Reger's organ works were often discussed without any comparison with other genres.

Do we know anything concrete about Reger's own performance? We can at least draw some conclusions from two recordings which he made on a player piano (1905) and on a player organ (1913). Both of them have been transferred to LP records.³⁸ None of the pieces on those records represents what Reger himself used to call "a work in large—or largest—style". Rather, they are character pieces; this applies also to the six chorale preludes from op. 67; no real virtuosity is involved, and neither music nor performance reveal the kind of advanced technique which Reger had developed in the above-mentioned piano studies (especially the ones for left hand only). The piano phonograms from 1905 confirm, however, what was said frequently about Reger as a pianist with regard to his exquisite command of dynamic nuances and sonority; both the compositions themselves, and the performance, are actually reminiscent of Scriabin's piano style, as documented in recordings which Scriabin made on a player piano (and which have also been re-issued on LP-records). Unfortunately, no record exists which could have demonstrated Reger's caliber as a chamber musician or as a Bach performer. Regarding his organ recording, it is hard to say if some jerking dynamics and registration changes depend on deficiencies in Reger's organ technique, or in the playback organ which was used for the transfer from the player organ rolls to the new LP record.

It has been said frankly that Reger was a mediocre organist.³⁹ According to some sources, Reger should not have been capable of performing anything but slow

³⁷ As a matter of fact, Reger was the most featured composer in the Society for Private Musical Performances in Vienna, which was administrated by Schoenberg and Webern between 1918 and 1922. During this time, 34 Reger compositions were performed (followed in the statistics by Debussy with 26; Schoenberg 15, Bartók and Ravel 12 each, and Scriabin 11). Cf. H. Moldenhauer: "Anton Webern. A Chronicle of his Life and Work". London 1978, p. 228.

³⁸ *Telefunken WE 28004* (in the series "Berühmte Komponisten spielen ihre Werke") includes three piano pieces (op. 82 Nr. 3 and 5 from the first volume of "Aus meinem Tagebuch", and the e flat minor Intermezzo op. 45:3). The *Columbia/Electrola C 80666 33 WSX 596* ("Max Reger spielt eigene Orgelwerke") features short pieces from op. 56, 59, 65, 67, 80 and 85. A photo from the organ recording session, which took place in Freiburg during the summer of 1913, is published in "Max Reger in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten", ed. by H. Wirth. Hamburg 1973, p. 78.

³⁹ Cf. Stockmeier, op. cit. p. 22.

movements on the organ. This is the opinion of a former Straube and Widor student, Hans Klotz (b. 1900; a well known organist and authority on organ history and theory). In his comments on the record jacket to "Max Reger spielt eigene Orgelwerke", Klotz explains this by referring to Reger's experience as a catholic church organist in his younger days, where liturgical repertoire was to be performed in a slow tempo (see above, p. 43). Klotz also remarks that Reger "plays the works [on this record] considerably slower than what he indicated in the scores" and that he adds "numerous musical commas and pauses which are not in the score. Such important pointers to the interpretation of Reger's works are equally as valuable to us as his interpretation, that makes these relatively simple pieces radiate with fervour and devotion".⁴⁰ But Reger's performance of *Benedictus* follows neither his own score exactly nor Straube's revision (although the chosen tempi are actually closer to those suggested by Straube). However, Reger's competence as an organist has also been evaluated quite differently. In an article, "Max Reger's Beziehungen zur katholischen Kirchenmusik",⁴¹ Rudolf Walter speaks about Reger's activity as a church organist in Weiden, 1886–89, and mentions the conflict of interests between the young dynamic musician and the church authorities. After that time, Reger had for various reasons little or no time to practice the organ on a regular basis; he himself wrote to the Duke of Meiningen (27 February 1914) that 20 years earlier he had been a decent organist but in later years he was not able to maintain his pedal technique.⁴² However, in 1903 he is reported to have given quite an impressive performance of his *BACH-Phantasy and Fugue* op. 46;⁴³ during the summers of 1907 and 1909, when he spent holidays in Kolberg (today Kolobrzeg, in Poland), he was invited to give improvisation recitals in the cathedral, where on the first occasion he played a Passacaglia (for which he had only the very theme notated as a little help for the memory), and at the second a Prelude and Double Fugue "in a very fast tempo", also ex tempore. According to an eye-witness, the Magdeburg organist Georg Sbach, Reger was in admirable command of both composition and performance techniques; he hardly looked at manuals or pedals while playing.⁴⁴ We do not know if these improvisations may have corresponded to any of Reger's written works. But some later improvisations which he made during many benefit and memorial church concerts in the beginning of the First World War, became the

⁴⁰ Klotz' comments are quoted from the English translation by V. W. Cary Lanza on the record jacket. On another gramophone record (Cantate 642228; published in 1961), Klotz himself gives interesting performances of Reger's *Wachet auf*-Phantasy, and of the E major *Prelude* from Reger's op. 56.

⁴¹ In "Max Reger. Ein Symposium ..." Wiesbaden 1973, p. 123 et seq.

⁴² In "Max Reger: Briefwechsel mit Herzog Georg II ..." (see above), p. 570. Reger had been asked to play a recital when a new organ was to be inaugurated in Meiningen. He declined (for the reason mentioned) and recommended Straube instead.

⁴³ R. Walter, op. cit.

⁴⁴ Cf. G. Sbach: "Max Reger im Kolberger Dom". MdMRG, Drittes Heft, February 1923, p. 8–9. In her book "Mein Leben mit und für Max Reger" (Leipzig 1930), the composer's widow Elsa Reger tells about Reger's organ improvisations in the Bavarian Carmelite monastery Lenggries during the summer of 1910.

Seven Organ Pieces op. 145, which he composed shortly after, in the winter of 1915–16.⁴⁵

We must not draw any definite conclusions about Reger's caliber as an organist from these reports, which may perhaps reflect respectful admiration more than objective and critical judgement; as we know, Reger himself emphasized that he was not a virtuoso performer, and the recording from 1913 does not really contradict his own statement. But in any case he knew perfectly well how to compose in an idiomatic virtuoso style both for organ and piano.⁴⁶ He was well informed about all relevant practical problems connected with organ construction and acoustics in different halls and churches, and he must then have been fully aware of the implications of his much debated tempo indications. At this point, the role of Karl Straube becomes somewhat intriguing.

In the preface to his 1904 *Alte Meister*, Straube tells us that he felt and performed as a modern human-being, and that he is not interested in serving history: old music ought to be performed according to modern standards and aesthetics. One would therefore expect that Max Reger, whose music he promoted almost constantly, should represent such a modern ideal. Reger knew how to use the full potential of a modern organ and how to compose idiomatically for the instrument (albeit sometimes on a very advanced level); he was, as a performing musician, familiar with all relevant questions concerning performance practice. Straube may therefore have had confidence in the written text and would have made every effort to render the original as correctly as possible.

Surprisingly enough, Straube's alternative editions give a very different impression, especially when it comes to tempi, dynamics, articulation and phrasing. What we encounter is indeed a very personal and subjective interpretation, which—as said before—often directly contradicts the composer's original form pattern in his music. In the article by Wolfgang Stockmeier quoted earlier, attention is drawn to how Straube changed and distorted the d minor *Toccata* op. 59:5.⁴⁷ As he points out, this is not a single case. A comparison between Reger's tempi and Straube's in the D major *Fugue* op. 59:6, which follows the *Toccata*, gives an interesting result; Fig. 3.

As we can see from Fig. 3, there is a remarkable difference between the composer's time structure and that of his interpreter. Like in the *BACH* fugue op. 46, Reger has indicated a continuous accelerando, together with a crescendo from *ppp* to *fff* (obviously in the style of a certain performance tradition; see above, p. 51); his own

⁴⁵ Cf. R. Walter: "Die Melodiequellen von Max Regers Choralbearbeitungen" (in "Der Kirchenmusiker", 15. Jahrgang, Berlin 1964, p. 192). Cf. also the critical comments to op. 145 in vol. 18 of Reger's complete works.

⁴⁶ Reger's many transcriptions of various Bach works (totally 228!) which he made between 1895 and 1916 are most interesting. One can here mention the one he did for organ of the *Chromatic Phantasy and Fugue*. Together with fourteen other transcriptions of Bach keyboard works, it was originally published in 1902/03, and has been reprinted by Universal Edition in 1973. None of the 228 transcriptions is included in the complete Reger edition (for reasons explained earlier). Cf. J. Lorenzen: "Max Reger als Bearbeiter Bachs", Wiesbaden 1982.

⁴⁷ Op. cit., p. 24 et seq.

Reger's original		Straube's revision	
Time signature: C		Time signature: C	
Con moto	$\text{♩} = 56; ppp$	Andante tranquillo	$\text{♩} = 92; ppp$
	meno <i>ppp</i>	cresc.	<i>pp</i>
un poco stringendo			
poco a poco crescendo	$\text{♩} = 60; pp$		
poco a poco crescendo	$\text{♩} = 64; \text{meno } pp$		
più stringendo	$\text{♩} = 68; p$	crescendo	
poco a poco crescendo		rallentando	
poco stringendo	$\text{♩} = 72; mf$	Più tranquillo	$\text{♩} = 72; p$
poco a poco crescendo	$\text{♩} = 74; f$	crescendo	
poco a poco crescendo	$\text{♩} = 76; \text{più } f$	un poco stringendo	$\text{♩} = 60; mf$
sempre poco a poco crescendo	$\text{♩} = 78; ff$	Un poco più mosso	
sempre poco a poco crescendo		crescendo; stringendo	$\text{♩} = 76$
		Allegro moderato	
		crescendo	
			più <i>f</i>
		rallentando; crescendo	
		Meno mosso	$\text{♩} = 69; \text{più } f$
		rallentando	
		Più moderato	$\text{♩} = 63$
	$\text{♩} = 80; fff$	poco a poco ritardando	
sempre stringendo e crescendo		Un poco sostenuto	$\text{♩} = 56; fff \text{ (ped)}$
		ritardando; crescendo (man)	
		Più Lento	$\text{♩} = 80; \text{più } ff \text{ (man)}$
	$\text{♩} = 86$	ritenuto; crescendo	
assai stringendo		Andante con moto	$\text{♩} = 60; \text{più } ff$
molto ritenuto	Org. Pl.	molto ritenuto; crescendo	
Adagio. sempre Org. Pl.		Adagio.	$\text{♩} = 50$
			<i>fff</i>

Fig. 3. Comparison of the two printed versions (Reger's original and Straube's revision) of the D major *Fugue* op. 59:6; both versions are published by Peters. Observe the different time signatures and the different note values which are used in both versions.

time signature is *Alla breve*, C , which implies that he is using the half-note as a counting unit; this note value is used for Reger's metronome markings. Straube changes the time signature to a plain C , but without changing the note values in the piece. Instead, he makes the eighthnote(!) to the first metronome value.

Another, better known, piece is the *Benedictus* op. 59:9. (Fig. 4.) Here Reger's *Adagio* is represented by a quarternote equal to 64, Straube's by an eighthnote equal to 72 (which gives a tempo almost twice as slow as the composer's. Likewise, we find two opposite opinions about how to interpret the fortissimo climax in the piece, which Reger presents with the halfnote equal to 130, Straube with a *Sempre ritardando* and *Sostenuto molto*.

The *Benedictus* is the last of three movements in a little organ mass, preceded by

Reger's tempi	Straube's tempi
Adagio ♩ = 64	Adagio ♩ = 72
Vivace assai ♩ = 96	Un poco mosso ♩ = 72–92
poco a poco stringendo	Un poco stringendo
	Più mosso
Più vivace ♩ = 130	Sempre ritardando
sempre rit.	Sostenuto molto ♩ = 92
Adagio ♩ = 64	Tempo I (Adagio)
rit.	rit.

Fig. 4. Comparison of the two versions of Reger's *Benedictus* op. 59: 9 with regard to the tempo structures. There are some minor accelerandi and ritardandi during the first bars in both versions.

Kyrie eleison op. 59: 7 and *Gloria in excelsis* op. 59: 8. In 1912, they were published by Straube in a separate volume (see above); on the front page we read the remark that they are presented “im Einverständnis mit dem Komponisten”—which seems to give a guarantee for authenticity. It is almost needless to say that a comparison between Reger's original and Straube's revision gives a rather strange impression of discrepancies instead of agreement. In *Kyrie eleison*, Reger's *molto agitato* becomes *Largo molto* (with the sixteenthnote value 76 as counting unit!). A following section, which was originally to be played a *tempo* (*Grave*) fluctuates between *Adagio* and *Agitato*. Likewise, *Gloria in excelsis* offers some surprises in tempo and tempo changes right from the beginning, where the composer's *Con moto, festivo* (halfnote 72) is slowed down to *Maestoso* (quarternote 80). Fig. 5 and 6.

One can continue the list of comparisons and come to interesting results. For the *Improvisation* op. 65: 5, the composer's basic *Vivacissimo* (without metronome number; the time signature is 6/8) turns sometimes into *Sempre un poco agitato, ma non Allegro* (eighnote 60) and sometimes into *Lento* (eighnote equal to 40). In the following *Fugue* op. 65: 6, Reger's *Andante con moto* is translated into *Molto tranquillo*, and *Sostenuto* (with sixteenthnote values of 76–84 and 66 respectively). In the d minor *Prelude* op. 65: 7, the basic *Vivace* becomes anything from eighnote equal to 100 and down to 46; the following *Fugue* op. 65: 8 has originally *Vivacissimo* as tempo indication (without metronome number). Straube transforms this into *Allegretto grazioso*, with the eighnote as a counting unit, beginning at 72–84 and reducing it gradually to 60. The *Allegro con brio* in the e minor *Toccata* op. 65: 11 turns into a galore of imaginative tempi, from quarternote equal to 76 down to *Lento* and *Più Lento*, with sixteenthnote equal to 92 and 84 (which actually means that the previous quarternotes become 23 and 21 respectively for the composer's original *Allegro con brio*).

Similar surprises are revealed in the e minor *Prelude* and *Fugue* op. 80: 1–2, and the a minor *Toccata* and *Fugue* op. 80: 11–12. The e minor *Prelude and Fugue* op. 85: 4 originally bears the indications *Moderato (un poco vivace)* for the *Prelude*, and *Moderato (con moto)* for the *Fugue*, in both cases without metronome marking. For the former, Straube recommends the eighnote as counting unit, in different tempi

Reger's tempi	Straube's tempi
Grave (ma non troppo)	Grave (♩ = 69)
Più Andante, sempre poco a poco stringendo (over 8 bars)	Più Andante (♩ = 76)
agitato	poco stringendo (over 4 bars) (♩ = 92)
molto agitato	ritenuto
sempre poco a poco rit.	Largo molto (♩ = 76)
	rit.
a tempo	Più Andante (♩ = 69)
Grave (a tempo)	rit.
Più Andante	Grave (♩ = 58)
molto stringendo	Adagio molto ed espressivo (♩ = 66)
	Più Andante (♩ = 76)
poco a poco rit.	Sostenuto (♩ = 66)
a tempo (Grave)	Adagio (♩ = earlier ♩)
assai stringendo; poco a poco rit.	Agitato (♩ = ♩)
sempre rit.	Adagio
	Agitato
	Adagio
	Agitato
	poco rit.
	Grave (♩ = 58)
	sempre rit.

Fig. 5. Comparison of the tempo structures in the two versions of Reger's *Kyrie eleison* op. 59: 7. N.B.: there are no metronome indications in Reger's original.

Reger's tempi	Straube's tempi
Con moto, festivo (♩ = 72)	Maestoso (♩ = 80)
poco rit.	poco rit.
a tempo	Con moto (♩ = 96)
	rit.
rit.	Maestoso (♩ = 80)
a tempo	rit.
	a tempo, ma leggiero (♩ = 92)
	rit.
Più mosso (♩ = 80)	Adagio (♩ = 50)
poco rit. (over 1/2 bar)	Allegro moderato (♩ = 88)
Un poco meno mosso (♩ = 76)	ritardando (over 2 bars)
poco rit.	Andante tranquillo (♩ = 60)
Più mosso (♩ = 80)	poco rit.
	Allegro moderato (♩ = 88)
	ritard.
sempre poco a poco rit.	Meno mosso (♩ = 80)
quasi Adagio.	ritard.
	quasi Adagio (♩ = 58)

Fig. 6. Comparison of tempi in the two versions of Reger's *Gloria in excelsis* (op. 59: 8). Like in the D major fugue (op. 59: 6; see fig. 3), the chosen note values for metronome indications differ drastically from each other.

between 92 and 60 (where Reger explicitly indicates a tempo!), which results in quarternote values 46 and 30 for a “*Moderato (un poco vivace)*”. The *Fugue’s* Moderato (con moto) becomes *Moderato assai*, *Molto tranquillo*, *Molto moderato* and *più lento*, with quarternotes equal to 63, 58, 54 and 48; the 58-value occurs when the second theme enters in the fugue, and the composer does not indicate any tempo change at all.

It would be time to ask by now whether there was any rationale behind Straube’s permanent meddling and tampering with a composer’s clearly defined intentions? And did he really understand the language which he was interpreting?

One quite interesting answer to this question can be found in an article, and also in a gramophone recording by a former Straube student, Heinz Wunderlich.⁴⁸ The article bears the title: “Zur Interpretation von Regers Symphonischer Phantasie und Fuge op. 57. (Karl Straubes Vortragsbezeichnungen)”. The record was made from a live performance on 20 February 1979 in Hamburg, on the 1970 Kemper organ in St. Jacobi Church.

The now internationally established organist Heinz Wunderlich, who was born in 1918, studied with Straube around 1940. According to the article, Straube told his students that the very title of the work in question implies a “symphonic” interpretation (cf. above regarding “symphonic transcriptions”). This would apply also to the fugue, where—according to Straube—a completely new form and tempo pattern must be superimposed. Nothing of the sort is to be found in Reger’s original score, and we have no documentation whatsoever which would inform us about the composer’s opinion.

Reger’s original main tempo for this fugue is *Allegro brillante e vivacissimo*, with a slight reduction to *Un poco meno mosso* for the second fugue, and a return to the first tempo character in the free development during the 28 bars which lead to the last section of the movement (where the two fugue themes are combined). 6 1/2 bars before the end, Reger indicates *stringendo*, *vivacissimo assai*, until the final presentation of the first theme (3 1/2 bars before the end), where we read *à tempo*, *sempre non ritardando*. The fugue ends with a final *ritardando*, leading to *Grave* in the very last bar. As usual, the composer has indicated phrasing and articulation meticulously, the former as longspun legati, which give an almost transfigured character to the Fugue. Although Reger was not too informative about this work, he mentioned explicitly that it was inspired by Dante’s *Inferno*; it would not be too farfetched to see the Phantasy as a representation of that region, and the Fugue as a symbol of Paradise (which is the last part of Dante’s work).

How does Straube—and Wunderlich—interpret Reger’s quite straightforward tempo and phrasing in the Fugue? To begin with: the opening *Allegro brillante e vivacissimo* becomes *Gemässigt Allegro* (i.e. moderate allegro), with eighthnote equal to 132; the *un poco meno mosso* (for the second fugue) becomes *Sehr breit, quasi langsamer Satz* (“very broad, quasi slow movement”) with eighthnote equal to

⁴⁸ MdMRI 19, August 1973, p. 15–25, and Arp Schnitger Records ASR 23 Stereo.

66, i.e. twice as slow as the beginning. When Reger returns to the first tempo, Straube transforms this part of the fugue into *Allegretto, quasi Scherzo*, with eighthnote about 168, followed by *Moderato assai* (eighthnote about 120–126) when the two themes occur together. The final *a tempo* becomes *sehr breit* (very broad).

In the same way as we have found earlier, Straube made some remarkable changes to the original score. Quite conspicuously, he often maintains the eighthnote value as a counting unit, when Reger’s 4/4 pattern would rather imply a quarternote—of course an eighthnote 120 would then be a quarternote 60! This would give the performer another idea of timeflow, and also lead him to more longspun phrasings, as the composer had himself indicated. As a matter of fact, Reger’s well balanced phrasing in the fugue has at least once been remarkably changed into a new pattern,⁴⁹ which Wunderlich maintained obediently in his 1979 performance and recording. One possible explanation why Straube recommended such phrasing may be that he was trying to imitate certain string techniques and articulations (bowings of various kinds) to make a long legato more activated; in this way a new personal accent could be added to the interpretation.⁵⁰ A problem arises, though, if a keyboard musician, without too close a personal relation to string instrument bowing technique, tries to follow the new message. A listener reading Reger’s score while listening to Wunderlich’s (Straube-influenced) recording, is quite puzzled: the interpretation seems to be very remarkable. Needless to say, the Phantasy in op. 57 has also been “interpreted”. A *vivace assai* or *vivacissimo* is, for example, transformed into *Moderato* and *Largo*(!). For a complete documentation, see Wunderlich’s article.

Apart from the question of articulation and phrasing, the fact remains that Straube made a miniature four movement symphony of the double fugue in op. 57, complete with both a slow movement and a scherzo. Such an intellectual and analytical approach is of course quite interesting, even if we do not know if it corresponds to what Reger himself had in mind. As we have seen earlier, the composer refers only briefly to Dante’s *Inferno* as a source of inspiration—but this does not preclude a possible influence from Liszt’s or Richard Strauss’s symphonic poems. As a matter of fact, Reger was very impressed by Strauss’s work in this genre; in a letter from 1902 he mentions especially *Ein Heldenleben*. Two years earlier, Reger had published some piano transcriptions of Bach Chorale Preludes; in his preface to the edition, dated in Weiden in May 1900, he describes these pieces as “symphonische Dichtungen en miniature”.⁵¹ We know that Reger was really impressed by the

⁴⁹ A facsimile of Straube’s changes in the score used by Wunderlich is published in the mentioned article.

⁵⁰ Students of the late Alf Linder may remember his humming imitation of bassoon articulation for certain bass passages in Bach’s organ music, or his comparison with string bowings in pieces like the G major Prelude and Fugue (BWV 541); such hints made the students discover the strong kinship between Bach’s keyboard (organ) music, and what he wrote for orchestra or chamber ensembles—and choir! I do not know how much of this had been recommended to him from his own former teacher, Fritz Heitmann, who had been one of Straube’s students (see above, p. 46, footnote 18). Cf. also BeT, p. 219 (letter from Straube to Hans Klotz, 8 August 1947).

⁵¹ Cf. Lorenzen, op. cit., p. 36–37 (with quotes from Reger).

performance which Straube gave in Basel, on 14 June 1903, of op. 57 and of the *Ein feste Burg* Phantasy op. 27; to commemorate this occasion, Reger dedicated later in the same year his *Variations* op. 73 to Straube, referring directly to the date of the Basel performance. We do not know if Straube had at that time discussed a possible symphonic interpretation of the fugue with the composer himself. In any case, Straube's approach to Reger's music was rather different in the beginning of the century than it was around 1940, when he made students like Wunderlich believe that a symphonic interpretation of the fugue was a true and authentic Reger tradition. But regardless of this, Wunderlich's documentation of Straube's performance practice sheds a most interesting light on Reger's own comments to Bach's Chorale Preludes; from a performance point of view, the whole subject is quite important.

One can compare the Wunderlich recording with another made around 1970 by Werner Jacob (who, by the way, did not study with Straube).⁵² As usual in his Reger recordings, Jacob follows the composer's original as closely as possible, both with regard to tempi, dynamics, phrasing and articulation. In his version, both the Phantasy and the Fugue stand, so to speak, on their own merits.

By strictly following the *Urtext*, Jacob reveals in a surprising and very convincing way how really progressive Reger's organ music was for its time, in the general history of contemporary music and not merely in the organ literature. The Straube-Wunderlich version leaves the listener with the feeling that Reger's almost avant-garde innovations have been tamed and brought back aesthetically to a previous era.

I would here like to bring up the question of two other of Reger's major organ works. Although there is no direct and explicit evidence of Straube's role as an editor, there are reasons to believe that he was involved directly with the music in question before the printed versions were published. One is the *Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue* in e minor op. 127, written in 1913 for the inauguration of the largest organ in Europe at that time, in the Jahrhundert-Halle in Breslau (Wrocław; today in Poland).⁵³ The other is the *Phantasy and Fugue* in d minor op. 135 b. None of these works had been publicly known in their original versions until 1966, when they were published in vol. 18 of the complete Reger edition. In op. 127, the differences mainly concern tempi, including numerous changes where Reger on purpose had written *a tempo*. It seems obvious that the first edition, published in 1913 by Bote & Bock, was simply based on a copy which Straube prepared for the premiere on 24 September 1913; a few register indications refer actually to the Breslau organ (like "Flöten", which was a special piston for the Flute stops). In his article, Rudolf Walter makes some interesting remarks about Straube's relation to

⁵² Christophorus SCK 70332 (SCGLX 73725), performed on the Steinmeyer organ in the Meistersingerhalle, Nürnberg; cf. also the comments on the jacket of the record.

⁵³ Cf. R. Walter: *Entstehung, Uraufführung und Aufnahme von Max Regers op. 127*. In MdMRG, 20, 1974, p. 45. The 200 stop Sauer organ does not exist any more. It became split up in three different instruments after the Second World War.

Reger's op. 127. The duration at the premiere was 40 minutes instead of 30 (the latter corresponding both to Reger's own metronome markings and to normal performance duration to-day).⁵⁴ Walter also mentions that Straube recommended his students to delete some variations in the Passacaglia so that the work would not be too long—which seems to be a strange compensation for a too slow tempo (40 min. instead of 30).

One may here refer to an interesting remark in a review of Straube's performance of Reger's op. 57: "... of course he did not play everything in the correct tempi (or rather: not in the indicated tempi; because Reger's well known preference to small note values may often become misleading, and falsify the composer's real intentions)".⁵⁵ Does such a comment say anything directly about the performer, or about the composer? Did the writer in question, Dr. Rudolf Louis, understand Reger's vehement and expressive music, especially in this work? A comparison may be made with the discussion above regarding Straube's/Wunderlich's and Jacob's interpretation of this particular work.

The opus 135 b is a more complicated case. According to an anonymous comment on the record jacket of the first gramophone recording of the original, unabridged version, Straube may have been responsible for major cuts in this work, altogether 41 bars (11 in the Phantasy, 30 in the Fugue; because of the latter, a whole important unit between the two fugues has been omitted).⁵⁶ As a matter of fact, for 50 years, between 1916 and 1966, one of Reger's most unusual and interesting fugues has been known only in a very corrupted version; unfortunately, the abridged version (Peters 3981) is still today the one most known and performed. Because the cuts are apparently made by Reger himself (i.e. in his handwriting), there is no direct evidence that Straube had used the score for a performance and made comments in writing. In his article on the final version of op. 135 b, Ottmar Schreiber sees the shortened version as the definite one, and as a final statement by the composer himself; he finds no documented graphological evidence for Straube's participation in the revision, and he recommends strongly that the recently discovered "complete" version should not be performed: the composer's "last will" ought to be observed.⁵⁷

For various reasons, I find it difficult to agree with Schreiber (one of the key persons at the Max Reger Institute in Bonn, and for many years the editor of MdMRI). From musical point of view, the missing sections, particularly in the Fugue, are too important from both formal-constructive and artistic points of view to become forgotten because of what seems to be sentimental and perhaps archival reasons. It may be noted that Schreiber wrote his article three years before the complete version became available in Werner Jacob's recording. This very convinc-

⁵⁴ A gramophone recording by Alf Linder (Caprice CAP 1129), which was made 1975 in Oscars Church, Stockholm, has a duration of 28'45'', without any cuts in the score.

⁵⁵ In "Munchener Neueste Nachrichten", 5 May 1904. See Popp/Str.

⁵⁶ Eurodisc 27425 KK.

⁵⁷ See above, p. 49, footnote 25.

ing phonogram confirms what was already evident in the score, namely that one of the previously deleted sections of the Fugue was actually intended as a composed *accelerando* (with a simultaneous *crescendo*), which leads gradually from one speed to another. This occurs without any change of metronome values, as was the case in the previously discussed fugues in op. 46 and 59. Instead, Reger changes the timeflow from quarternotes and eighthnotes into eighthnote triplets, followed by groups of four sixteenthnotes in the first fugue, thus proceeding step by step into the 12/8-rhythm in the second fugue (which begins *ppp* and develops to *ffff*), with its characteristic pattern of eight- and sixteenthnotes, similar to the fugue theme in Reger's Mozart Variations op. 132, which was written in 1914. This "composed *accelerando*" does not of course appear in the usual abridged version, where the first fugue presents only the first expositions in quarter and eighthnotes, and from there goes directly into the second fugue, which therefore appears as a real contrast instead of an originally planned logical release of an increased rhythmic tension. Likewise, some thematical answers in the second fugue were difficult to explain logically until another missing section (a few bars) had been discovered.

Without any question, the complete version has a more convincing architectonic form than the abridged one. Rather than to respect Reger's "last will"—i.e. by accepting the corrupted version—one should consider Elsa Reger's (the composer's wife) concerned remark in two letters to her friends Fritz and Gretel Stein about Straube's negative attitude to Reger's *Requiem* (without opus number; unfinished).⁵⁸ In her introductory summaries of the collaboration between Reger and Straube, the Reger scholar Susanne Popp has pointed out the gradually increasing critical attitude from Straube's side.⁵⁹

What reason do we have to believe that the abridged version of op. 135 b is the result of Straube's influence, and not directly of Reger's own consideration? Apparently, all changes are made in Reger's own handwriting; the crucial omission of 30 bars between the two fugues (i.e. the section where the written *accelerando* occurs) is, so to speak, authorized by Reger's own handwriting in the new bar, which serves as a new pivot between the fugues. A facsimile reproduction in Popp/Str., p. 259, shows exactly how the operation was made, and how the already printed proofs had been cut and glued together after the elimination of the 30 bars in question. So far, nothing points directly towards Straube's participation, which has instead to be considered from more circumstantial evidence.

We know, from the published correspondance, that Reger had brought the proofs of a printed version of op. 135 b to a meeting with Straube on 11 April 1916; on the following day he sent a message (from his home in Jena) that "all changes had been

⁵⁸ 16 December 1914: "Straube hat ihm bewiesen, dass er dem Stoff nicht gewachsen ist u. nun kann er es nicht fertig schreiben . . . Wie oft—5–6 Male weiss ich allein, hat Straube Werke von Max verworfen, die dann gross und herrlich waren u. ihren Weg gingen. Straubes Einfluss ist nicht gut auf Max." 19 December 1914: "Lieber Fritz, Max ist so unsagbar leicht zu beeinflussen u. steht z. Z. wieder ganz unter St. Bann . . . das vergisst Max aber stets wieder u. hört in *erster* Linie auf St." Cf. Popp/Str., p. 245–246.

⁵⁹ Popp/Str., p. 9 et seq; 19 et seq; 128 et seq; 213 et seq.

made", as a result of their discussion.⁶⁰ To what extent Reger had made more changes than only the cuts at that time is difficult to say; at least some of the minor revisions are actually similar to those which Straube used to make in "his" edited versions. They may look like unimportant nuances, but nevertheless reflect Straube's opinion in a rather typical way. The original tempo in the Phantasy becomes *Quasi vivace* instead of the original *Vivace*. Where Reger originally wrote *meno vivace*, with eighthnote 96 (at the point where the two fugue themes occur together for the last time), the first printed version has instead *Moderato molto*, with eighthnote 66; together with other details, such a slower tempo (and the impact of hesitation by using the word *quasi*) is typical for Straube's broad and broadening tempi. We may remember here that he preferred to make cuts in Reger's op. 127 (see above), so that the work would not be too long for the audience because of his slow tempo, by which the duration was extended by ten minutes!

From a general performance point of view, the whole issue of cuts in a composed work is not unique in this special context. Both in operas, symphonies or chamber music, as well as in Handel oratorios or Bach Passions, such cuts were often made by conductors and musicians (even if this habit does not seem to be so strong any more). One of Reger's students, the well-known conductor Fritz Busch, discussed with Gustav Mahler's widow the cuts which he had made in Mahler's second symphony to make the work more stringent and less "talkative".⁶¹ Of course, the composer was dead and could not voice his opinion, but on the other hand, Mahler was known for his own revisions of the classic symphony repertoire.

The difference between such "performers' cuts" and those which were manipulated into Reger's works before they were published, is that the musician who reads the new revised version, which is regarded as definitive, has nothing to choose between when making up his mind. Especially in op. 135 b, Straube seems to have played the role of a censor—and even more questionable are other cases to which Elsa Reger refers (see above p. 55 footnote 44), like the unfinished Latin Requiem.

Yet another interesting fact emerges from the documents in Popp/Str., namely the total absence of any comment from the composer's side about Straube's alternative editions—of which at least one was published during Reger's lifetime—or alternative performance practices in general. On the front page of the three pieces from op. 59 (*Kyrie–Gloria–Benedictus*) one reads that they are edited by Straube in agreement with the composer. But nowhere does Reger acknowledge that edition and neither does he make any other comment. His only letter with such a content is dated 4 May 1904, where he says how happy and proud he feels that Straube had dedicated the first *Alte Meister*-volume to him. But, of course, we do not know what was discussed verbally between Reger and Straube.

One important side of this issue must not be forgotten. When Reger—or any composer—sold a work to a publisher, this publisher got full control over the piece. This means that Reger had practically no legal right to object, if he ever had such an

⁶⁰ Popp/Str. p. 258; cf. also p. 250 (message dated 30 April 1915).

⁶¹ Grete Busch: Fritz Busch, Dirigent. Frankfurt a. M., 1970, p. 274.

intention. The Straube editions were therefore a matter between him and the publisher, not between him and Reger. With Straube's reputation, the publisher obviously trusted his expertise, even if it would have been an infringement of the composer's artistic integrity; perhaps Straube even convinced the publisher that the already printed version had to be revised in a way to make the music more attractive, at least from Straube's pedagogical point of view. We have already seen a few comparisons of what could be considered as different temperaments with regard to interpretation, namely Reger's spontaneous vehemence, and Straube's more moderated opinion.⁶² But it does not explain the case of op. 135 b; neither do we know if Straube had a mandate from the original publisher of that work, i.e. Simrock, to suggest the many cuts in the work. Could this have been the reason why all changes were made with Reger's own handwriting, so that they would give the impression of the composer's own decision? It is interesting that the op. 135 b never occurs in a Straube edition, even since the copyright had been transferred to Peters. It seems as if Straube had already made what he regarded as the necessary revisions in the first printed version. If this was not the case, the work could just as well have been edited by him during the 1930s, as with op. 27 (which originally also had another publisher).

The complicated artistical relationship between Reger and Straube must, however, be put into a wider context. It is not only a question about a performer's opinion of a certain work, or a certain style. Whatever question or objection we may raise regarding "infringements" or "distortions", it must be discussed from the viewpoint of general performance practice, and especially from Reger's own attitude to other composers' music. Reger was not only a composer and certainly not only a composer of organ works. He was a performing musician and a conductor and he made numerous arrangements, editions and transcriptions of many composers' work (cf. above, p. 49 et seq.). In his book *Max Reger als Bearbeiter Bachs*, Johannes Lorenzen has collected numerous statements by Reger himself—and by many other musicians, scholars or amateurs—regarding performance practice (not only in Bach's music). Of special interest is his quotation from Reger's correspondence in 1913 with Duke Georg II in Meiningen when arrangements were being made for a music festival with the Meiningen Court Orchestra. The duke, having followed Reger's many revisions in the classical repertoire to be performed, asked with some concern what implications such revisions and changes would have if applied on a larger scale: "... would they lead to strange consequences? ... I understand that you want to present the old masters' work in a higher potency, but how would you react yourself if an important composer would render your own works in such a higher potency ...". Reger answers: "... I have only added such dynamic signs, *marcato*, *espressivo*, *agitato*, etc. etc. in the orchestra parts, i.e. such things which the composers themselves too seldom do ... Of course, I do not change *anything* in

⁶² Another example is the Toccata and Fugue in a minor, op. 80:11–12, also with regard to Straube's change of rhythm (once in the Toccata and once in the Fugue), from 4/4 into 5/4.

the music itself, only such minor cases when a modern instrument, with a wider range, would be able to render a certain motive more clearly ... Personally, I would be most grateful if an important composer would like to present *my* works more effectively; my own minor revisions are always most carefully considered. The composer's style must under all circumstances remain intact! ..."⁶³ The composers under discussion were mainly Beethoven and Brahms. But in the earlier letter from Reger to Duke Georg II (7 January 1912), we read about Reger's concern about the sound in Brahms' music: "... We must make numerous changes so that Brahms' real intentions become clear ... he wrote like an old-timer for the horns, but his harmony points in a more modern direction, and here we have a clear discrepancy between sound and idea."⁶⁴ It is interesting that the conductor Fritz Steinbach—a personal friend of both Brahms and Reger—was very critical of Reger's manipulations with Brahms' scores.⁶⁵ He actually seems to be as critical of Reger as Stockmeier was with respect to Straube's changes in Reger's music.⁶⁶

Considering all these facts, comments and viewpoints, it seems clear that the whole question of Karl Straube as an interpreter of Reger's music cannot be dealt with as an isolated issue without relation to the general performance practice situation in our century. Obviously, there are numerous instances where blatant discrepancies between Reger's original and Straube's editing make one wonder about matters of authenticity. And at least in a few cases, Straube played more the role of a critical censor;⁶⁷ his attitude to Reger's Latin *Requiem* is very similar to Arnold Schoenberg's vis-à-vis Anton Webern: in many instances, works by Webern which were either already finished, or still in the process of being finished, became withdrawn on the recommendation of the dominating Schoenberg (this also frequently occurred when Webern had already become established as a composer and for some time had no longer been a real student of Schoenberg).⁶⁸ As we know from both the preface to the 1904 *Alte Meister*, and from various letters and other writings until his last days, Straube was primarily interested in "practice", and not in "history". Like most romantic musicians, he created *his* personal versions of any repertoire; in 1904, he made old masters sound modern—since the 1920s, he made a modern composer like Reger sound in accordance with the new opinions regarding neo-baroque music. As Straube himself has stated, he felt more like an intuitive musician than as a scholar, and he also claimed his right to revise, more or less

⁶³ Lorenzen, op. cit. p. 215. The complete correspondence is published in "Max Reger: Briefwechsel mit Herzog Georg II ..." (see above). One may in this context refer to an often quoted remark by Edgar Varèse: "Composers who do not indicate dynamics in their scores do not know how their music will sound ..."

⁶⁴ For a summary of the discussion, cf. Lorenzen, op. cit. p. 214.

⁶⁵ Lorenzen, op. cit. p. 214.

⁶⁶ Stockmeier, op. cit.

⁶⁷ See Popp/Str., p. 128 and 213.

⁶⁸ Cf. Hans Moldenhauer, *Anton von Webern*, London 1978, passim. The most obvious example is how Schoenberg rejected Webern's only known libretto to a stage play for four actors, *Tot* (1913); cf. Moldenhauer, op. cit., p. 199 et seq. See also Alma Mahler-Werfel, *Mein Leben*. Frankfurt a. M. 1963, p. 66.

drastically, his earlier opinion about how to perform any repertoire. In this regard, his attitude is very typical of many musicians of his time. The American composer and pianist Abram Chasins, who worked in Philadelphia for many years in close contact with Leopold Stokowski, made the following statement on Stokowski's performance practice which could just as well apply to Straube's (we only have to replace the word "orchestra" with "organ"—but must at the same time not forget that Stokowski had begun his music career as a highly accomplished organist and throughout his life regarded an orchestra more or less as an organ):

"He allowed himself to react emotionally and intuitively to the music as it went along and then attempted to bring out his personal feelings in the performance. There was no set Stokowski interpretation for any composition. The orchestra was always ready for him to mold a work not only at rehearsals but at the concerts, or rather at each concert at which it was played."⁶⁹

According to some inquiries made by Wolfgang Stockmeier among Straube students while doing his research for the article mentioned above (1973), Straube used to change his performance of each individual work now and then; this happened, as it seems, throughout his career; he acted and reacted like that great romantic conductor Artur Nikisch, who had also been extremely important for Stokowski's development.

But although Stockmeier did not find too many concrete details regarding Straube's performance practices over the years, we can follow some trends in the writings of some of his students. One very interesting document is a book by Hermann Keller (student of Reger and Straube), *Reger und die Orgel*.⁷⁰ The preface is written as a warm personal letter to Straube; it is also emphasized how Straube had been almost a pioneer by his efforts to make important old repertoire known to the public through practical editions and performances. The book was obviously written just before Straube gradually changed his aesthetic ideal, and Keller gives some important information (in Chapter nine) about the interpretation of Reger's organ music with regard to tempo and dynamics. Many of the remarks directly reflect Straube's opinions, as they were documented in his editions before 1920s, i.e. when the symphonic organ was still his main ideal instrument. Of special interest is Keller's recommendations how to practice pedal technique, including both the "pedals" themselves, and the different crescendo/diminuendo devices (to operate the swellbox and the register crescendo *Walze*). Keller recommends that such practice is done without manual playing until the performer has gained full control over the dynamic development. This suggestion may also reflect Straube's own method of practicing and teaching (at least before 1920). It is also closer to Reger's own written scores than such recommendations given later by Straube and many of his later students, who became influenced by his new baroque-inspired ideals.⁷¹ In

⁶⁹ A. Chasins, *Leopold Stokowski*. London 1979, p. 138.

⁷⁰ München 1923 (Otto Halbreiter Musikverlag).

⁷¹ A presentation of Straube's baroque-inspired aesthetics is given in Artur Kalkoff's book *Das Orgelschaffen Max Regers im Lichte der deutschen Orgelerneuerungsbewegung*, Kassel 1950 (originally a

an article in MdMRI, Hans Geffert gives further comments on the topic, including quotations from Keller's book.⁷² But at the same time, Keller's talk about practicing dynamics as an individual matter implies that the whole question of dynamics in Reger's organ music cannot be discussed unless the issue of tempi is taken into consideration. It means simply that both tempo (tempo fluctuations) and dynamics are recognized as important parameters with their own values. They belong to the composer's authentic basic design of his compositions and are not merely additions to the score. Together with pitches and rhythms, phrasing and articulations (all meticulously indicated by Reger himself in his manuscripts), they are integrated in the total structure. Once again the question arises why Straube found it necessary to publish his revisions, more or less as binding statements, even if we can explain his rationale from general performance practice habits during his lifetime.

As a matter of fact, Straube's revised editions, as well as his suggestions as a teacher, give the impression of laboratory reports with analyses of clinical experiments, i.e. in this case of an individual performer's personal style and his attitude to a composition. As stated earlier, no recording seems ever to have been made by Straube of any of Reger's organ works.⁷³ This might be just as well, because it is by no means certain that one single Straube recording would have told us anything but how he played at that very moment; because of his seemingly ever-changing performance practice, such a recording would have served just as an "audio snapshot". On the other hand, such an acoustical snapshot could have added some information to what we got from the revised editions which were published between 1912 and 1938, which in any case remain as interesting documents in the story of 20th century performance practice. In all fairness, it must also be said that Straube's many tempo changes represent an ideal which was and is common to many musicians, not only organists. Any rubato, ritardando, or broader tempo could certainly be documented from many performances; the result would perhaps be even more surprising in the metronome markings than many of Straube's. In some way, he has become a culprit because he wanted to reveal in detail what was more or less a common practice.

The question remains, however, whether Straube really understood Reger's language, which is often closer to the early Webern, Schoenberg and Scriabin than to Bach. Both Schoenberg and Webern were greatly interested in Reger's music and also used some of his works in their teaching.⁷⁴ There is a clear affinity between the

doctoral thesis at the Jena University, 1944). The main characteristic of this new ideal is that the previous successive crescendo/diminuendo has been replaced by "terrace" structures. As a sequel to this, one may regard Helmut Walcha's outrageous attacks on Reger's organ music around 1952 (published in the periodical *Musik und Kirche*); Walcha had strong connections to Straube and the Thomas church in Leipzig before he became an organist in Frankfurt a. M.

⁷² *Zur Dynamik der Regerschen Orgelwerke* (MdMRI vol. 17, November 1968, p. 1–6).

⁷³ In 1922, 1926 and 1928 he recorded music of Bach and Buxtehude on rolls for the Welte-Philharmonie player organ (Welte 1162, 1222, 1820, 1822–25). For this information I thank Dr Peter Hagmann (at the University Library in Basel, Switzerland; letter to me of 21 January 1987).

⁷⁴ Cf. Moldenhauer, op. cit., p. 386, 542 et passim. Also R. Brinkmann: "Max Reger und die neue Musik" (in "Max Reger ... Ein Symposium", p. 83 et seq.)

expressive harmonies, dynamics and tempo fluctuations in their music and Reger's. Not only in his piano music is Reger often quite close to Scriabin, but also in his very important—but rarely performed—*Gesang der Verklärten* for choir and orchestra op. 71, which reminds the listener of certain sections in Scriabin's choir and orchestra work *Prometheus* op. 60 (which was actually written a few years later than Reger's work). It is perhaps symptomatic that Straube was rather critical towards *Gesang der Verklärten*.⁷⁵ To our knowledge, Reger never performed (or even knew?) Webern's, Schoenberg's or Scriabin's music, neither as a pianist or chamber musician, nor as a conductor. None of these composers may even have corresponded to Straube's aesthetic ideals either, perhaps even less after 1920, when his interest became increasingly focused on Bach's music and the surging revival of organs from the baroque era. This may be one explanation why he did not record Reger's music at his sessions with the Welte company in the mid-twenties (as an organist), or with Polydor shortly thereafter (as a conductor of the Thomas Choir). But at the same time, he explains how close Reger's music is to the baroque ideal; this is stated explicitly in the preface to the 1938 version of *Ein feste Burg* (Peters 4440). Such a sweeping remark applies, however, more to the earlier among Reger's organ works (op. 7, 16, 27, 29 and 30) than to the later; a new direction is indicated from the First Sonata op. 33.

In a letter to his—and Reger's—friend Fritz Stein, dated 29 November 1946, Straube mentions that he has been asked by the musicologist and theologian Oskar Söhngen to prepare a practical edition of Reger's complete organ works, based on the sound of a baroque organ, type Schnitger or Silbermann. But Straube gives two reasons why he hesitates to undertake such a task. One relates to the length of the German performance rights protection (50 years after a composer's death): Reger's music would not be free from his publishers until 1966. Straube's second main reason may to-day seem almost prophetic: "We do not know if in the year 1986 the German Organ Movement will be seen as just a *Historismus*, and if the last word at that time would be that we must return to the values of the romantic organ. And what would then happen to my practical Reger edition?"⁷⁶ A few days earlier, Straube had written to Söhngen about the planned Reger edition.⁷⁷ He was worried about the abundance of dynamic and agogic indications in almost every Reger score (but he also hid the fact that he added even more himself in his published revisions!). He mentions not only the organ works but also the d minor String Quartet op. 74; the Sinfonietta op. 90; the G major Serenade op. 95; the Hiller Variations op. 100, and the Violin Concerto op. 101. In his opinion, Reger was working against his own intentions; he continues by relating how the composer himself had smoothened the written contrasts between *ffff* and *pppp* when he performed his Violin Sonata op. 72 together with Henri Marteau at a Musicians' Conference in Frankfurt in 1904. But by comparing Straube's complaint with his own meddling in many Reger scores—

⁷⁵ Cf. Popp/Str., p. 128.

⁷⁶ BeT, p. 214–216.

⁷⁷ BeT, p. 211–213.

by which the composer's clear and logical structures often became distorted—one gets the feeling that Straube's own attitude is the main problem, not Reger's music. Both the comments in the 1938 edition of *Ein feste Burg*, and the quoted letters from 1946, leave the reader with mixed feelings about Straube's reputation as the most knowledgeable and most authentic representative for Reger's music. Without any doubt, he was the first important organist to promote Reger's music. It was certainly quite a challenge to him, and he established a certain tradition. But, as already stated, he often wanted to play the role of mentor, eager to correct and discipline what he felt should be amended or revised. Straube was no composer—he seems actually to have been the first Thomas Cantor in Leipzig who did not write music even for the service. From a psychological point of view one can understand why he tried to make himself almost a co-composer; the extremely productive Reger obviously gave him enough material to discuss, elaborate and revise. When he complains over the many expression marks in Reger's scores, he could just as well have made a similar comment to Scriabin's or Webern's music (if he had been given an opportunity). Instead of recognizing the truly new and contemporary elements in Reger's music (which as a matter of fact are just continuing a tradition from Beethoven or Schumann, exactly as occurs in Webern's music), Straube makes every effort to modify and suppress them. Quite frankly, many of Straube's students may actually have got quite a biased opinion about Reger as a follower of Bach (and baroque music) instead of having his music examined from a more general 20th century music perspective. At least we know that Reger saw himself, especially during his years in Munich in the beginning of the century, as a revolutionary leftist on the artistic front, with an outspoken attitude against reactionary trends.⁷⁸ Such statements may perhaps contradict Reger's well settled social position in the establishment during his later years, but they certainly represented his artistic credo and ideology right from the very beginning. We could even here see one possible reason for Straube's growing scepticism towards certain trends in Reger's music: a maverick had to be tamed. This could also be explained as a consequence of Straube's own responsibilities in Leipzig, a city where classical traditions were upheld since the days of Felix Mendelssohn. But in the perspective of an approaching twenty-first century, Straube's role must now be evaluated because of its epistemological and musicological merits, and as an expression of his personal philosophy, rather than to be taken as a trustworthy evidence of 100 % authentical Reger performance practice. It must be regarded from a historical point of view, rather than from a binding strictly "practical" approach (i.e. contemporary-modern, as Straube saw it himself). This is of course quite contrary to his own opinion about various editions since the beginning of the century.

However, the problems and questions around Straube's edition technique and performance practice must not be seen in a too narrow perspective, or from a limited organists' horizon. Not even Straube's controversial Reger editions do actually

⁷⁸ Cf. Lorenzen, op. cit., p. 36–37, with reference to letters from Reger 1900 and 1902.

represent such a criminal attitude for which he has been accused by some recent Reger scholars (see f.i. Stockmeier's already quoted article). Rather do Straube's revisions of Reger's organ works fit quite well into a general pattern of published revisions and performance practice some generations ago. In a doctoral thesis, Liszt's "*Grand [sic!] Etudes after Paganini*": a Historical and Analytical Study,⁷⁹ Ian Henry Altman deals at length with alternative editions of this music. Especially significant are the extremely revised ones which were done by Ferruccio Busoni, quite in the spirit of such artistic freedom which was normal during the romantic era. In Chapter IV of his thesis, Altman discusses various performance practices as they have been documented on phonograms by pianists like Josef Hoffmann, Josef Lhévinne, Mieczyslaw Munz and Vladimir Horowitz (the latter is described as the last of the romantic artists). In a 1966 performance of Liszt's *Vallée d'Obermann*, released on Columbia M2L 357, Horowitz rewrites whole sections of the piece. "Unfortunately", Altman remarks, "few of these types of changes were ever notated for study. I know only one major pianist who published any of his text changes. Ferruccio Busoni published editions of several works by Liszt which showed how he approached these compositions" (Altman, p. 255).

Compared with this, Straube's interpretative Reger editions appear even to be surprisingly harmless: at least, he did not rewrite sections of the works (instead he apparently deleted what he did not like, as in op. 127 and 135 b). It is possible, that Straube saw his artistical relationship to Reger as a parallel to the well known collaboration between Brahms and Joachim some decades earlier—with the difference, though, that Joachim was a composer, and Straube was not.⁸⁰ One may by the way also remember the fact, that Straube played the role of a critical advisor to other composers than Reger. In a letter to the well established and highly esteemed composer Arnold Mendelssohn (1855–1933), Straube makes suggestions how to make one of his major motets more decorative and pompous for a planned performance; the letter was written on 6 March 1925, when the composer was 70 years old and could look back at a long successful activity as a teacher—among his students were Paul Hindemith and Günter Raphael.⁸¹ But in any case, Reger's and Straube's personalities and aesthetical opinions differed in an increasing degree during their encounters and exchanges of information over the years. This may possibly not imply, that Reger objected to editions and performances which did not represent a kind of *Urtext* style. Rather, he may have seen other possibilities to interpret his own works than how Straube did. Reger's attitude to Brahms' and other composer's music, as documented above, does certainly not reflect an attempt to follow every detail in their scores. As an orchestra conductor, Reger developed his way of sonic

design, which may have had certain consequences for his artistical integrity—therefore, Straube's almost patriarchal advice could almost become a disturbing factor (although Reger was perhaps not aware of this himself, as we may see from the quoted letters from his wife). We do not have to dramatize the situation; it is actually typical for many relationships between any composer and his interpreters. But in a case like this where we can follow a growing tension between different opinions, one gets almost the impression of a powerfield, which develops between two poles. And from such vibrations, we could at least get another approach to an intriguing chapter in the complicated and fascinating story of 20th Century Performance Practice . . .

⁷⁹ D.M.A., Univ. of Cincinnati 1984; publ. University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan 1985 (8420855).

⁸⁰ In this context one should remember Joachim's (and Brahms's!) extremely critical attitude towards Schumann's Violin Concerto. As a matter of fact, this work was excluded from their planned Schumann edition, and did not become known to the public until around 1930, surrounded by almost mysterious events. One could draw a parallel from this case to Reger's Requiem (see above).

⁸¹ Published in BeT, p. 60.