

## FRANZ REIZENSTEIN

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Franz Theodor Reizenstein was a very fine composer, concert pianist and teacher.

He was born into a Jewish family in Nuremberg on 7 June 1911 and was a child prodigy. His family were affluent, his father being Dr Albert Reizenstein (1871-1925). There was always music in the house and well-known musicians would visit. Young Franz began composing at an early age with piano pieces and at the age of 17 wrote a string quartet. He had the advantage of studying with Paul Hindemith at the Berlin Hochschule of Music and with Leonid Kreutzer for piano. Like Hindemith, Reizenstein had a hatred for Nazism and he emigrated to the UK in 1934 where he continued his studies at the Royal College of Music with Ralph Vaughan Williams and piano with Solomon.

Franz Reizenstein worked with many famous violinists such as Max Rostal, Szymon Goldberg and Erich Greunberg. He formed a piano trio with Maria Lidka and Christopher Bunting and was an excellent chamber music player. Later, he became a professor at the Royal Manchester College of Music and was invited to be the guest professor at Boston University. He adopted British nationality and was admired in the UK. His music was always tonal and when William Glock was at the BBC many of Reizenstein's works were broadcast. His music was 'clean' in the Hindemith tradition. His studies with Vaughan Williams also took on a modal feel in his own music.

Arthur Benjamin admired him greatly.

Reizenstein was an amazing teacher. One of his many distinguished pupils was the South African, Sybil Michelow who later became one of our finest contraltos.

He formed a Piano Quintet to perform his own engaging Piano Quintet in D which may be the finest British work in this genre. William Pleeth said that his Cello Concerto was a wonderful work showing his understanding of the instrument. The conductor, Josef Kripps, admired his oratorio *Voices of the Night* and his other oratorio, *Genesis*, was premiered at The Three Choirs' Festival and was a great success. He also composed a Violin Concerto, two Piano Concertos, a Concerto for String Orchestra, the popular *Serenade in F* and the *Overture : Cyrano de Bergerac*. Most of his music was published by Lengnick.

It would be a pity if he was only remembered for his *Hoffnung* commission, *Concerto Popolare* for piano and orchestra, the concerto to end all concertos in which *Tschaikovsky 1* is 'confused' with the Grieg. It is very witty as are his *Variations on the Lambeth Waltz* in which certain composers are the subject of *patische*. Reizenstein was never a stuffy person. In fact, he arranged some pieces from Lehar's *Merry Widow* and a musical by Ivor Novello. He also wrote a cadenza for Mozart's *Flute Concerto in D*.

His piano music is worthy of more attention. There are two sonatas, twelve Preludes and Fugues and other smaller pieces which are not slight. There are two operas *Men from the Sea* (1949) and *Anna Kraus* (1952). There are solo sonatas for violin, viola and cello respectively, a Clarinet Quintet and a String Quartet. Of his film scores, the Hammer production of *The Mummy* (1959) is best known.

Reizenstein was a most congenial man and good company. His last years were blighted with illness and he was plagued with diabetes. He died in London on 15 October 1968.



