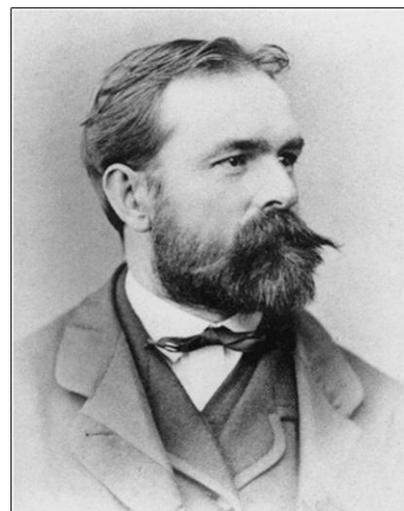


## JOSEPH RHEINBERGER

David C F Wright PhD

Joseph Rheinberger has for a very long time been only known for his organ music. Certainly his contribution to the organ repertoire is of great importance. The high quality of his twenty organ sonatas and shorter organ pieces has ensured that his music is presented in organ recitals and his sonatas have been recorded several times over the last three decades.

But the musical public probably think of Rheinberger as a stuffy Victorian organist and a pedagogue and not as a composer who wrote prolifically and effortlessly in many genres and whose organ music form a small but significant part of his work. Even in terms of the organ, Rheinberger was never stuffy and it is a pity that these works are so often presented on overblown Victorian organs when the music is, in fact, to be heard at its best advantage on much smaller, clearer instruments of the kind the composer would have known in many Munich churches where he performed and where his delicate part writing can come out properly.



It is also deplorable that many people deplore organ music as it is ecclesiastical. and the same is said for sacred works

All of this has stood against him in the eyes of posterity and it is sad to think of a composer so richly gifted and with so much to offer to discerning music lovers of our own time should be so woefully neglected and misunderstood. Worse than this, he never enjoyed more than a parochial reputation even in his own lifetime. An arch-conservative at a time of traumatic innovation, he won the esteem of like-minded musicians of the day, but never the universal acceptance he deserved. His retiring nature and lack of ambition for self advancement contributed to his neglect. Perhaps it was his own fault.

Joseph Gabriel Rheinberger, the greatest composer ever to emerge from the tiny principality of Liechtenstein, hemmed in between Switzerland on one side and Bavarian and the Austrian Tyrol on the other, was born in Vaduz on 17 March, 1839. His father was treasurer to Aloys II, Prince of Liechtenstein. Joseph was an infant prodigy of extraordinary precocity, holding a post of organist at Vaduz Parish Church at the tender age of seven and making a sensation with the composition of a Mass in three parts with organ accompaniment at the age of eight. Yet his parents were not musical and somewhat alarmed at their son's musical gifts. His interest had been kindled by his elder sister's piano lessons, considered a right and proper subject upon which young ladies should receive tuition at the time and by the age of five he himself was receiving instruction from Sebastian Pohly, a retired schoolmaster from Schandens, and absorbing the techniques not only of piano and organ but also of theory and counterpoint. From that moment, there was no stopping him. His extraordinary self-confidence has been well illustrated in Harvey Grace's important contribution on the composer published in Grove IV but ruthlessly and unnecessarily abridged in Grove V. Grace also edited Novello's edition of the organ sonatas. The performance of the early Mass led the Bishop of Chur to invite the boy to the cathedral in order to demonstrate his gifts, asking him to accompany on the organ a Salve Regina to be sung by the Bishop and the clergy. No sooner had the performance begun than the child stopped playing and admonished the Bishop for singing out of tune ! His acute critical sense, even at so early an age, was demonstrated on another occasion when he nearly smoked out the congregation at Vaduz by throwing copies of some masses by his predecessor Buhler on the stove in the church because he disapproved of them. Truly an enfant terrible.

Rheinberger's real chance came about at the age of ten when turning the music for the leader of an amateur string quartet named Schrammel. During the tuning, the boy remarked that the A string sounded a semitone higher than his piano at home. The discovery of this acute sense of pitch encouraged Schrammel to persuade his father to allow the boy to undertake serious tuition from the choirmaster at Feldkirch, sometimes miles distant, as a resident pupil. The boy went to Feldkirch to study with Philipp Schmutzer (1821-1876) for two years, yet retaining his position as organist at Vaduz and walking back home every weekend to fulfil his duties there. In 1850, when still only eleven years of age, he entered the Royal Conservatory at Munich as a student and remained there for the next four years, graduating with distinction in 1854.

It was in Munich that Rheinberger was to settle for the rest of his life. Taking on piano pupils to support himself, he studied composition with Franz Lachner, the friend of Schubert and a prolific composer of conservative bent who fundamentally influenced Rheinberger's own style. Five years later, he succeeded his own piano teacher, Emil Leonard, at the conservatory as professor and the following year became professor of composition as well. In 1865, the Conservatory was reorganised and Rheinberger was appointed coach to the court theatre where he astonished everybody by sight-reading and transposing Wagner's Flying Dutchman simultaneously. During this time he was also much occupied as organist at the church of St. Cajetan and later at St. Michel's, and took up choral conducting, becoming director of the Munich Choral Society. In 1867, on the formation of the Royal Music School under the direction of Hans von Bülow, it is hardly surprising to find Rheinberger appointed as professor of organ and composition, the title of Royal Professor being conferred upon him shortly afterwards. His colleagues included Peter Cornelius and Franz Wullner. In 1877 Rheinberger succeeded the latter as director of the court church music resigning his post as conductor of the Munich Choral Society. Had ambition moved him, he could have accepted the post of director of the Hoch-Conservatorium at Frankfurt, but his loyalty to the Bavarian Court prompted King Ludwig II to bestow on him the order of knighthood of St. Michael. Other honours, too, came his way including the knighthood of Gregory the Great, conferred on him by Pope Leo XIII, to whom he had dedicated an eight part Mass, while the University of Munich bestowed on him an honorary doctorate on the occasion of his 60th birthday.



In 1867 Rheinberger married Franziska von Hoffnaass, a widow eight years his senior and a prominent poetess, singer and painter with social connections. She was an immense help to him not only in supplying texts for his many vocal compositions, but also in handling his extensive correspondence in foreign languages, in copying his compositions and acting as an astute critic of his works. Her open rejection of Wagner both as a man and musician was not without consequence. Rheinberger as director of the Royal Court Theatre between 1864–7 had enjoyed Wagner's esteem. From then onward he aligned himself with the more

reactionary elements which rejected Wagnerian aesthetics and "the music of the future" and he turned away from opera although during his tenure at the Court theatre he had already made his mark with two notable dramatic works — *Die sieben Raben* and *Turmers Tochterlein*.

Hans von Bülow proclaimed Rheinberger to be an ideal composition teacher "unequaled anywhere in or near Germany", and some six hundred composition students flocked to Munich from all over the world to study with him during the last forty years of his life, most notable among them being Humperdinck, Wolf-Ferrari, Furtwängler and Chadwick, not to mention the physicist Max Planck. But his high reputation as a teacher has tended to overshadow his achievement as a composer. His compositions — and we may include his organ works among them — combine the then current

traditions of Munich church music with that of the Viennese classics of an earlier age. Their clarity and classic structure and lack of emotional content mitigated against popularity at a time when not to worship at the shrine of Bayreuth was tantamount to mutiny. In 1892 his wife died and ill-health forced him more and more to retire from public life. There were no children. He suffered from a lung complaint brought on by a mountaineering expedition. In his last years he became increasingly aware that his compositions had become outdated and unwanted. When he died on 25 November 1901, his remains were carried back to his native Liechtenstein and buried in the cemetery at Vaduz not far distant from the house where he was born sixty two years earlier.



Works by Rheinberger have become known such as the Romantic Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 184, the attractive Piano Concerto in A flat, Opus 94. There is also a Symphonic Sonata and two Organ Concertos as well as an early Symphony named Wallstein, op. 10, after Schiller. There is also a 53 minute Florentine Symphony, Op. 87. Two of his Masses have been singled out for special praise, the Mass in C for soloists, chorus and orchestra, Op. 169 and the Mass in F minor, Op. 159 for four voices and organ. His enchanting Christmas cantata *Der Stern von Bethlehem*, op. 164, to a text by his wife was recorded by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra under Robert Heger with no less soloists than Rita Streich and Dietrich Fischer-Deskau. The Cello Sonata in C, Op. 92 was also recorded as were these other items more than two decades ago. Happily today there are many other recordings available including most of his chamber music, masses and concertos not to mention the organ works. The Nonet in E flat, Op. 139 also had an “early” recording together with a Nonet by Lachner and a piece by Cannabich.

The piano sonatas are notable. The first in C op 47 is entitled *Sinfonica completa* in 1866 and published in 1871. The second in D flat Op 99 dates 1876 and the third in E flat Op 135 and the fourth is known as the Romantic Sonata. Op 184. These works have their own brand of virtuosity.

The combination of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon, violin, viola, cello and double bass is extremely rare and the number of significant works written for it can almost be counted on the fingers of one hand. The serenade-like quality of this combination is at all times most attractive and it is very surprising that composers have not been tempted to write for this medium. The first and most familiar example is Spohr’s Nonet in F, Op. 31 which dates from 1813 which seems to have stood in splendid isolation until Franz Lachner’s Nonet in F minor appeared in 1875. Rheinberger’s Nonet dates from nine years later and is a gay, charming and tuneful piece, yet expertly crafted with a perfect understanding of the capabilities of the instruments in the scoring.

The stuffy organist and pedagogue of popular imagination wrote shortly before his death, “There is no justification for music without melodiousness and beauty of sound... music never ought to sound brooding, for, basically, it is the outpouring of joy and even in pain knows no pessimism”.

[PDF Piano Sonata no 1 Op 47](#)

[PDF String Quartet no 1](#)

[PDF Organ Sonata no 16](#)

Sonata for organ No.1 in C, Op.27  
Sonata No.2 in Ab, for organ, Op.65

Sonata for organ No.3 in G, Op.88  
Sonata for organ No.4 in A, Op.98  
Sonata for organ No.5 in F#, Op.111  
Sonata for organ No.6 in Eb, Op.119  
Sonata for organ No.7 in F, Op.127  
Sonata for organ No.8 in E-, Op.132  
Trios (10) for organ, No.1, Andante, Op.49, No.1  
Trios (10) for organ, No.2, Moderato, Op.49, No.2  
Trios (10) for organ, No.3, Adagio, Op.49, No.3  
Trios (10) for organ, No.4, Allegretto, quasi Andantino, Op.49, no 4  
Sonata for organ No.9 in Bb, Op.142  
Trios (10) for organ, No.6, Alla breve, Op.49, No.6  
Trios (10) for organ, No.7, Andantino amabile, Op.49, No.7  
Trios (10) for organ, No.8, Adagio non troppo, Op.49, No.8  
Trios (10) for organ, No.9, Moderato, Op.49, No.9  
Trios (10) for organ, No.10, Andante molot, Op.49, No.10  
Sonata for organ No.10 in B, Op.146  
Trios (12) for solo organ, Op.189  
Organ Sonata No.11 in D-, Op.148 ('Cantilène')  
Organ Sonta no 12 in D flat Op152  
Organ Sonata no 13 in E flat Op 161  
Sonata for organ No.14 in C, Op.165  
Sonata for organ No.15 in D, Op.168  
Sonata for organ No.16 in G#-, Op.175  
Sonata for organ No.17 in B, Op.181  
Prelude and Fugue for organ in D- / D major,  
Monologues (12) for organ, Op.162  
Sonata for organ No.18 in A, Op.188  
Sonata for organ No.19 in G  
Prelude and Fugue for organ in C- / C major,  
Sonata for organ No.20 in F, Op.196  
Improvisation on Themes From the Magic Flute for piano, Op.51  
Piano Sonata No.1 in C ("Sinfonica"), Op.47  
Piano Sonata No.2 in Db, Op.99  
Piano Sonata No.3 in Eb, Op.135  
6 Tonstucke in fugirter Form, Op.68  
Fantasy for piano four hands in Eb-, Op.79  
Piano Sonata No.4 in F#-, Op.184  
Toccatina for piano in G-, Op.19  
Toccatina for piano in C-, Op.115 2  
Prelude and Fugue "zum Konzertvortrag" for organ, Op.33  
Etude and Fugato for organ, Op.42  
Three little concert pieces (Drei kleine Konzertstücke), for piano, Op.5  
Jagd-Szene (Hunting Scene), for piano, WoO 1  
Four piano pieces (Vier Klavierstücke), Op.1  
Waldmärchen, for piano, Op.8  
Toccatina for piano in E-, Op.104  
Two piano recital pieces (Zwei Klaviervorträge), Op.45  
Three piano recital pieces (Drei Klaviervorträge), Op.53  
24 Preludes in the form of etudes (Präludien in Etüdenform), for piano, Op.14  
Five tone poems for piano, Op.11  
Six pieces for piano in fugue form, Op.39  
Six pieces for piano in fugue form, Op.68

Hoch geht die See, fantasy piece for piano, Op.23  
 Capriccio giocoso for piano, Op.43  
 Three pieces for piano, Op.78  
 Twelve recital studies for piano, Op.183  
 Three studies for piano, Op.6  
 Two characteristic pieces for piano, Op.7  
 Aus Italien (From Italy), for piano, Op.29  
 Six characteristic pieces for piano, Op.67  
 Etude for piano in D- (from "Zwölf Charakterstücke für's "neue" Clavier",  
 Etude for piano in G#-, WoO 28  
 Five recital pieces for piano, Op.9  
 Zum Abschied (Farewell), for piano, Op.59  
 Three recital pieces for piano, Op.66  
 Twelve characteristic pieces in canon form, Op.180  
 Theme and variations for piano, Op.61  
 Toccata for piano, Op.12 1 track  
 Three recital pieces for piano, Op.101  
 Aus den Ferientagen (Holiday Memories), four studies for piano four hands, Op.72  
 Tarantella for piano four hands in B, Op.13  
 Great Sonata, for piano, 4 hands (or orchestra) in C-, Op.122  
 Duo in A-, for two pianos, Op.15  
 12 Miscellanies for organ, Op.174  
 Vocal Works  
 Mass for 8 voices in Eb, Op.109 'Cantus Missae'  
 Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen (Psalm 84), Op.35  
 Motets, Op.133  
 Requiem in D-, Op.194

#### Choral Works

Easter Hymn (Osterhymne) for 8 part double choir, Op.134  
 4 Motets, Op.133, for voice  
 Mass in Eb, for 8 voices, Op.109 'Cantus Missae'  
 3 Sacred songs, Op.69  
 Salve Regina, for chorus  
 Prope est Dominus, for chorus  
 Missa in G (St Crucis), Op.151  
 Advent-Motetten, 9 works for chorus, Op.176  
 Christus factus est, motet, Op.107, No.5, for vocal ensemble  
 5 Motetten, for 4 part mixed chorus a cappella, Op.40  
 3 Latin Hymns, for chorus and organ, Op.96  
 5 Hymns, for chorus and organ, Op.140  
 Missa brevis in F, for 4 part mixed chorus a cappella, Op.117  
 Waldblumen, for a cappella chorus, Op.124  
 Der Stern von Bethlehem, cantata, for soloists, chorus, orchestra and organ, Op.164  
 Abendlied, for chorus, Op.69, No.3  
 Stabat Mater in G, for chorus, string orchestra and organ, Op.138  
 Ave Maria, for chorus  
 Mass in A-, for chorus and organ, Op.197  
 5 Hymns, for chorus and organ, Op.107  
 5 Motets, for chorus and organ, Op.163  
 Omnes de Saba, for choir  
 Mass, for voices and organ or wind instruments in Bb, Op.172

Passiongesang, for 4 part mixed chorus and organ, Op.46  
Mass in F-, for SATB chorus and organ, Op.159  
Mass in Eb, for 3 part female chorus and organ, Op.155  
All meine Gedandken, for chorus, Op.2, No.1  
Verlust, for chorus, Op.63, No.6  
Die Liebe ist ein Rosenstrauch, for chorus, Op.80, No.3  
Frühling ohn' Ende, for chorus, Op.52, No.1  
Nordwind, for chorus, Op.63, No.4  
Früh morgens, for SSA chorus, Op.64, No.1  
Mittagsruhe, for SSA chorus, Op.64, No.3  
Heimfahrt, for SSA chorus, Op.64, No.5  
Dennoch singt die Nachtigall, for chorus, Op.170, No.5  
Der Strom, for chorus, Op.108, No.1  
Die Quelle, for chorus, Op.170, No.3  
Rhapsodie, for chorus, Op.186, No.5  
Waldesgruß, for chorus, Op.2, No.5  
Die Wasserfee, for chorus, Op.21  
Diebstahl, for chorus, Op.75, No.2  
Lockung, for chorus, Op.25  
Im Märzen, for TTBB chorus, Op.85, No.4  
Drei Wanderer, for TTBB chorus, WoO 11  
Abendruhe, for TTBB chorus, Op.160, No.4  
Gute Nacht, for SSAA chorus, Op.131, No.6  
Im Erdenraum, for SSAA chorus, Op.131, No.4  
St. Nepomuks Vorabend, for SSA chorus, WoO 63  
Die Nacht, for chorus, strings and piano, Op.56  
Rorate Coeli, for chorus 1 track  
Das Tal des Espingo, ballad for 4 soloists, male chorus and orchestra, Op.50  
Hymnus and die Tonkunst, for chorus and orchestra, Op.179  
Messe in F, Op.190, for chorus  
Missa in A, for women's chorus and organ, Op.126  
Waldblumen, for chorus, Op.124  
6 Gesänge, for chorus, Op.131  
Rorate coeli, for chorus  
Mass in F, for 4 voices and organ, Op.190  
Mass for female choir and organ in G-, Op.187 ('Sincere in memoriam')  
Präludium, for chorus  
Laudate Dominum, for chorus  
Neujahrsgebet, for chorus, Op.85, No.1  
Requiem No.2 in Eb, for chorus, Op.84  
Meditabor, for chorus, Op.133 No.2  
6 Zweistimmige Hymnen, for chorus, Op.118  
Salve Regina, for chorus, WoO54 No.2  
Ave Maria, for chorus, WoO7 No.1  
Vom Goldenen Horn, "Türkisches Liederspiel", Op.182  
Liebesgarten, Op.80  
In Sturm und Frieden, Op.170  
6 Hymns, for 2 sopranos and organ, Op.118  
4 Hymns, for voice and piano, Op.54  
6 Marian Hymns, for 1-3 voices and piano, Op.171  
4 Elegiac Songs, for voice and organ, Op.128  
Sehet, welche Liebe, for voice & organ (Sechs religiöse Gesänge No.1), Op.157, No.1  
Ich bin des Herrn, for voice & organ (Sechs religiöse Gesänge No.2), Op.157, No.2

Wenn alle untreu Werden, for voice & organ (Sechs religiöse Gesänge No.3), Op.157, No.3  
6 Religious Songs, for chorus, Op.157  
Aus dem Sangerleben, Op.85  
Johannisnacht, Op.91  
Vom Rhein, Op.90  
In der Zechstube, Op.74  
5 Deutsche Gesänge, Op.48  
7 Charakteristische Gesänge, Op.185  
Westfalen in Op.130  
Aus deutschen Gauen, Op.125  
Friede, WoO 39  
Seebilder, Op.116  
Fahrende Schuler, Op.100  
Aus frankischen Landen, Op.141  
Aus verborgnem Tal, song cycle for baritone & piano, Op.136  
Am Seegestade, song cycle for tenor & piano, Op.158  
Puer Natus in Bethlehem, for 2 voices and organ, Op.118, No.6

#### Chamber works

Piano trio no 1 Op 34  
Piano trio No.2 in A, Op.112  
Piano trio no 3 Op121  
Piano trio no 4 Op 193  
Piano quartet Op 38  
Piano Qunitet Op 114  
Violin Sonata no 1 Op 73  
Violin Sonata no 2 op 105  
String Quartet no 1 Op89  
String Quartet no2 op 147  
Cello Sonata Op 92  
Horn Sonata Op 178  
6 Pieces, for violin and organ, Op.150  
Rhapsodie, for oboe and organ  
Sonata for violin, cello and organ in C-, Op.149  
Suite for Violin and Organ in C, Op.166  
Sonata for clarinet and piano in Eb, Op.105a  
Abendlied, for violin (or cello) and organ, Op.150, No.2

#### Orchestral Works

Concertos  
Organ Concerto No.1 in F, Op.137  
Organ Concerto No.2 in G-, Op.177  
Wallenstein, symphonic tone poem,  
Demetrius, overture for orchestra, Op.110  
Akademische Overture, for orchestra, Op.195  
Zähmung der Widerspenstigen, Op.18  
Symphony no 1 Op 10 Wallenstein  
Florentine Symphony Op 87  
Stage Works  
Die sieben Raben, opera, Op.20

## Various Works

Humoresque for piano, Op.28

Piano studies for one hand and for two hands, Op.113

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