

JAKOB ROSENHAIN

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Jakob Rosenhain was a German Jew and was a prominent and well-respected musician of his time. He was a gifted pianist and an able but not an original composer despite and received criticism particularly from Schumann.

A word that has described Rosenhain's music is conservative. It may not be stunningly great but is very attractive and should not be ignored and, furthermore, it is highly commended. There is a vast amount of other music that is inconsequential and trite but yet is very well known, some of whom are famous names.

He was born in Mannheim on 2 December 1813, the same year as Wagner. At the age of eleven, he gave his first public recital. He studied with Jacob Schmitt in Mannheim and with Schnyder von Wartensee in Frankfurt. He also studied with Kalliwoda.



1834 saw his first opera *Der Basuch im Irrenhause* given in Frankfurt in 1834 and it was a great success. His second opera, *Liswenna* of 1836 did not fare well even when he reworked it as *Le Demon de la Nuit* in 1851. His third opera *Volage et Jaloux* was given in Baden in 1836 but failed.

In 1837, he moved to Paris after a visit to London beginning his concert career. He mixed with Parisian society for over thirty years and was responsible for musical evenings of chamber music often attended by Berlioz, Cherubini and Rossini. In Paris with J B Cramer he compiled piano tutors and educational music.

Among Rosenhain's works are four operas, three symphonies, other orchestral works, piano music including three sonatas, chamber works including four piano trios and three known String Quartets, two works for piano and orchestra, a *Concertino in A minor Op 30* and the *Piano Concerto in D minor Op 73*. Schumann had been impressed with Rosenhain's *Piano Trio Op 2* of 1836 and the *Characteristic Dance Studies Op 17* of 1839 and it was hoped he would promote the concerto. But Schumann believed that Paris had been a bad influence on Rosenhain.

Much of his piano is merely salon music, a popular genre in those days. By contrast, his *String Quartet no 3* is a very fine, attractive and enchanting work.

The *Piano Concerto* begins with an *Allegro non troppo* with an orchestral introduction which is effective. The piano repeats most of this in D minor before moving to the relative major of F. There are some modulations and chromatic digressions including a gorgeous entrance to G minor. An A Flat section is headed *quasi recitativo e rubato* with some exquisite orchestral solos. The pianissimo F sharp minor passage is a revelation and the exposition is in reverse. There is no cadenza. The slow movement is an *Andante* in B flat which maintains the rhythms of the opening movement thus making the work organic. The middle section is in D minor harking back to the quasi recitativo section. The finale is marked *Presto spiritoso* and is virtuosic and ends in D major.

The *Symphony no 1 Op 40* was given in Leipzig conducted by Mendelssohn who was a personal friend and the *Symphony no 2 Op 43* was given under the same circumstances in 1846. Rosenhain knew Hiller and was a friend of Moscheles with whom he stayed for a while.

The Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 took Rosenhain to Baden where he had a villa.

He died on 21 March 1894. He was 80.

[PDF Piano Sonata](#)

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Since writing this John Kersey has brought out two CDs of Rosenhain's piano music and Hyperion have issued the Piano Concerto played by Howard Shelley.