TOCCATA CLASSICS

Hans WINTERBERG

PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

IMPRESSIONIST PIANO SUITE
MEMORIES OF BOHEMIA
PIANO SONATA NO. 1
SUITE FOR PIANO
TOCCATA

Brigitte Helbig

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

HANS WINTERBERG: PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

by Michael Haas

Hitler's war on European culture did not end with his downfall in 1945. Perhaps few individuals exemplify the complexity of this fact more intriguingly than the Jewish, Prague-born composer Hans Winterberg, or Hanuš Winterberg, as he was known in Czech. He too was a 'Theresienstadt composer', but one who survived only because his arrival at the ghetto in January 1945 followed the notorious deportation to Auschwitz in October 1944 that resulted in the murders of Pavel Haas, Gideon Klein, Hans Krása and Viktor Ullmann. To survive before his incarceration in Theresienstadt meant living on the knife-edge in what the Nazis called a 'privileged marriage' with a non-Jewish wife and a half-Jewish daughter. As anyone acquainted with the diaries of Viktor Klemperer will know, it wasn't a status that could be indefinitely maintained. After his liberation from Theresienstadt in May 1945, his return to his flat in Prague in June 1945 and his arrival in Germany in 1947, he found himself again among the very people who only two years previously had been engaged in policies that, if successful, would have resulted in the murder of every Jew in Europe.

To understand how Winterberg's story unfolds, it's important to know that in 1901, the year he was born, Prague was an Austrian city in the Habsburg kingdom of Bohemia. Austria was itself an enormous, multilingual, multi-ethnic country, with its German-speaking citizens concentrated in the Danubian provinces around the Imperial capital Vienna, and the Eastern Alps, as well as the border regions of Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia. Most 'Austrians' before 1918 were Czechs, Ukrainians, Poles, Slovenians, Italians, Croatians and even Russians. To Bismarck, Austria was not a Germanic nation and was therefore excluded from his grand unification scheme. When in September 1919, the Treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye reduced Greater Austria from its central-European sprawl to its German-speaking

core representing what is present-day Austria, minus South Tyrol and the German-speaking regions of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, much of its multi-ethnicity remained in the neighbouring, freshly created Republic of Czechoslovakia.

Slavic Czechs had been accorded second-rate citizen status while under German-speaking Habsburg rule in Vienna. With the founding of an independent Czechoslovakia, its German-speaking minority found the proverbial shoe on the other foot. At 23 per cent of the total population, German-speakers were the largest linguistic minority in Czechoslovakia, with most Czech Jews also being German-speakers. In 1930, so as to gain a handle on the ethnic and linguistic make-up of the new Republic, a census was taken in which all Czech citizens were asked to identify themselves as 'nationally' (by 'národnost') Czech, Polish, Ukrainian, Hungarian or German. This census was important because in 1945 it was used as the basis for expelling all Czechs who had ticked the box marked 'German', even if they had been Czech nationalists and fought against the Nazis. In March 1938 the Munich Accord signed by Chamberlain and Hitler made concessions to German Czechs living in the Czech province of the Sudetenland, in the northern Sudetes Mountains, that facilitated Hitler's absorption of all of Bohemia and Moravia a year later. The view of non-German Czechs was that they had been betrayed by their German fellow-citizens. As most Czech Jews were German-speakers, many were interned in Theresienstadt as Jews by the Nazis and, after the war, remained interned as Germans by the Czechs before acquiring visas to live in Israel, America or Canada. No Czech Jew could countenance deportation to Germany. Winterberg, however, was a victim of historic circumstances and, having arrived in Germany, discovered that it provided him with a fragile cover and identity that would allow his creative life to continue. Yet even this assumption must remain supposition. In answer to a questionnaire in 1956, he states that, had it not been for Hitler, he would have achieved far more recognition in his Czech homeland than he subsequently managed in Germany.[1]

[1] Questionnaire sent to Winterberg by Heinrich Simbriger on 10 January 1956; copies held by Peter Kreitmeir and the Sudeten German Music Institute, Regensburg.

In fact, Winterberg's family had lived in Prague for over 300 years. When the Winterberg household filled in the census of 1930, it noted itself as both 'Czech nationals and Czech speakers'. Winterberg went on to study at the 'German Academy of Music and Performing Arts' in Prague with Fidelio Finke and Alexander Zemlinsky. After graduation he worked as a répétiteur in Brno and other Czech cities, returning to Prague in 1939 to study at the Prague National Conservatoire with the Czech nationalist and microtone composer Alois Hába. His much younger fellow pupil was Gideon Klein.

In May 1930, he married the non-Jewish, German-Czech pianist and composer Maria Maschat. Their daughter, Ruth, was born in 1935. From 1940 onwards, the Nazis created an environment which made what they called 'mixed-race marriages' untenable. Winterberg would not have been able to work and would have been afraid to leave the house for fear of the frequent round-up raids meant to clear the streets of any Jews who ventured into public spaces. His mother, Olga, was murdered in 1942 in Maly Trostenets, an extermination camp outside Minsk. Winterberg's life in the years following the Nazi proclamation of the 'Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia' in March 1939 is still clouded by unanswered questions. In 1941, Maria Maschat took German citizenship, perhaps offered to her because she was born in the Sudetenland, which had been folded into the German Reich after the Munich Accord. From 1942, the couple no longer lived together, though whether because of Hans Winterberg's secondment as 'slave labourer' for the Nazi war effort or because of genuine marital incompatibility is still unclear. Regardless of the circumstances, the couple divorced in December 1944. They were not alone. At this point, many so-called 'mixed-race marriages' were ending in divorce, if only to ensure the safety of one partner and any offspring. In January 1945, Winterberg handed his musical manuscripts to his ex-wife and other friends, before being deported to Theresienstadt. He was released upon liberation of the camp in May 1945 and his Czech citizenship was immediately restored. He returned to his apartment in Prague. The couple appear to have continued living separately, and in December 1945 Maria and Ruth left Prague for Bavaria.

In August 1945, decisions taken at the Potsdam Conference agreed on the removal of all German-speakers from the consolidated bloc of countries buffering the Soviet Union, including East Prussia (now part of Russia and Poland), the Baltic countries

and Czechoslovakia, where a series of acts resulting in immediate expropriation and expulsion became known as the 'Beneš Decrees'. Winterberg maintained that he had given his musical manuscripts to friends for safekeeping in various European countries before his deportation to Theresienstadt. His need to recover these manuscripts was the reason he gave when applying for a Czech passport in 1946. If he had given manuscripts to his wife in December 1944, there was a period of six months between his return to Prague in June 1945 and their departure to Germany when he could have had them returned. In any case, he received his passport in 1947 and set off to be re-united with his now ex-wife and daughter in Ammersee, outside of Munich. We cannot know if he planned to return to Prague. Although Munich lay in ruins, whereas Prague remained relatively unscathed, he may have already taken the decision not to return to Czechoslovakia. His family had been murdered, and as a German-speaking Czech, in spite of declarations to the contrary in the 1930 census, he may have decided he would be better off in a German-speaking country. Perhaps the Communist coup in February 1948 convinced him to remain, though there is no documentation that supports this supposition. It is known, though, that soon afterwards Maria Maschat, engaged as a répétiteur at Bavarian Radio, found work for Winterberg there and at the Richard Strauss Conservatoire. Their daughter, Ruth, severely traumatised by the dramatic events in her life, was placed in a children's home.

The price of remaining in Germany, however, was living among Bavaria's large community of displaced German Czechs. Many of them, of course, had never supported Hitler, but a good number from the northern Czech province of the Sudetenland had indeed supported the Munich Accord. Officially, only Czechs from the Sudetenland were Sudeten Germans, though following the huge influx of German-speaking Czechs, the term was broadened to include all German-speaking displaced persons from Czechoslovakia. Winterberg, for better or worse, was still a Czech citizen, travelling legally in Germany on a Czech passport. It was clear that in order to remain and find work, he had to become German. In the chaos of the first years following the war, it was perhaps easier to re-invent oneself without too many questions being asked. In any case, subsequent documentation referring to Winterberg indicates that he remained interned in Theresienstadt until his 'deportation' in 1947,

after declaring himself a 'German national' to the Czech authorities upon liberation of the ghetto.[2] It is now known that this version of events is not true. What is not known is the provenance of the fabrication.

Vanishing among the Czech-German diaspora in Bavaria would have been an easy ploy and gone unnoticed if Winterberg's music had not caught the attention of the controllers at Bavarian Radio and the ear of the conductor (and fellow pupil of Fidelio Finke) Fritz Rieger, at that point conductor of the Munich Philharmonic. Until Winterberg's death in 1991, when his (unpublished) scores became inaccessible, Bavarian Radio would perform and record many hours of his compositions: in addition to a good deal of chamber music, those broadcasts included three of his four piano concertos, his two symphonies, a large number of other orchestral works and his ballet *Die Ballade von Pandora*. Bavarian Radio not only recorded Winterberg as generously as any other composer of his generation but they also used their best-known soloists along with top orchestras in Munich. That many members of the Sudeten German musical diaspora may not have been happy with these developments hardly needs mentioning. They had long suspected Winterberg of not being 'one of them' – and indeed he wasn't – since his music with its polyrhythms and jagged melodic energy was unashamedly Czech. When cornered by one of the founding spirits of the Sudeten German Music Institute, Heinrich Simbriger, he refused to admit or deny his 'národnost'.[3] Simbriger, writing to Sir Cecil Parrott, the British ambassador to Prague from 1960 to 1966, who was then writing a book on Czech music, stated that Winterberg was definitely talented, but his music should be classified in his view as 'perhaps late Romantic', a statement that makes sense only in the context of the extreme avant-garde then active in West Germany. Simbriger then goes on to express his deep disapproval of Winterberg's character.[4] Perhaps what nagged at Winterberg's Sudeten German colleagues such as Simbriger was

[2] Letter from Dr Heinrich Simbriger to Sir Cecil Parrott, dated 5 January 1975, as well as a memorandum of the Bavarian Ministry for the Interior with responsibility for refugees, dated 6 October 1952. Copies provided by Peter Kreitmeir; the Simbriger correspondence is held by the Sudeten German Music Institute, Regensburg.

[3] Letter to Heinrich Simbriger, dated 6 June 1955.

[4] Letter to Sir Cecil Parrott, dated 5 January 1975.

the fact that his music was not characteristic of German composers of his generation, despite Winterberg's stated admiration for both Schoenberg and Hindemith.[5]

Winterberg would go on to marry another three times. His second and third marriages were fleeting, to much younger students. His fourth marriage, in 1968, was to Luise-Maria Pfeifer, a budding actress 25 years his junior, and originally from the Sudetenland. Upon their marriage in 1968, Winterberg adopted her 22-year-old son. His natural father had been a member of the SS. It would appear that it was Winterberg's infatuation to Luise-Maria that inspired him to write his piano trio *Sudeten Suite*, a pastoral work, the first movement of which stands in strong contrast to the rest of his output. With Luise-Maria, he withdrew from the diaspora of Czech-Germans and lived in the remote Bavarian enclave of Bad Tölz. A birthday tape made by Luise-Maria in 1977 reveals her concern that Winterberg had not cut his daughter and first wife out of his life. Without obvious success, she tries to persuade him to do so.

Winterberg died in 1991, with Luise-Maria's death following only two weeks later. The adopted son, to whom Winterberg was never close, inherited the musical estate and in 1999 handed it over to the Sudeten German Music Institute. In 2002, he agreed to sell it for a nominal sum on condition that everything should remain embargoed until 1 January 2031. Until this date, the Sudeten German Music Institute was to deny holding the estate, and all inquiries regarding family members were to be refused. In addition, under no circumstances was it ever to be revealed that Winterberg was a Jew. Upon lifting the embargo in 2031, he was to be referred to only as a 'Sudeten German Composer'. It was a cruel embargo to impose on a composer who had enjoyed considerable recognition, if only among listeners of Bavarian Radio. It was also mendacious, since Winterberg, like Franz Werfel and Franz Kafka, was a Jew from Prague and never a Sudeten German. The contract with the Sudeten German Music Institute was questionable on two points, the first and most obvious being its blatant anti-Semitism. The second, however, was Christoph Winterberg's sale to the Sudeten German Music Institute without any reference to Winterberg's surviving blood relatives, his daughter, Ruth, and her son, Peter Kreitmeir,

[5] Questionnaire of 10 January 1956.

born in 1955. Indeed, it was the unexpected intervention of Kreitmeir that resulted in the lifting of the embargo in 2015, after making contact with his adoptive uncle. The contract with the Sudeten German Institute was annulled and all rights were accorded to Kreitmeir, thereby starting the slow process of restoring, and indeed rediscovering, the music of Hans/Hanuš Winterberg.

Winterberg's piano works, as represented in this second volume, offer a palette of techniques, moods, styles and structures as wide as in Volume One,[6] while also presenting a more personal side of the composer. Such diversity underlines once more his sympathy for the instrument and his alertness to the exploitation of its unique qualities, even in works that initially may come across as naïve, such as his surprising landscape-impressions of Bohemia in his *Erinnerungen an Böhmen* ('Memories of Bohemia').

Pianism is often thought of as glittering arpeggios and passage-playing or pounding octaves, and yet the resonance of the instrument offers far more opportunities for exploiting colours and evoking moods. Winterberg often catapults the listener from one sense to the next, making enormous technical demands on the performer. 'Impressionism', a description Winterberg uses himself, comes in many guises and Czech Impressionism evokes rather than re-creates in the manner of its better-known French counterpart. It is earthier and gives more than sound impressions of shimmering light on the surface of water. Winterberg conjures up smells and energies in the air.

In contrast, the Toccata (1926) and Sonata (1936) are works that tend towards German 'Neue Sachlichkeit ('New Objectivity'). Where differences between the works of Austro-German 'New Objectivity' composers – such as Paul Hindemith and Ernst Toch, for example – and those of Hans Winterberg can be heard, it is in Winterberg's constant shifting of time-signatures and rhythmic patterns. 'New Objectivity' composers tended to 'objectify' music by keeping a machine-like consistency to the general pulse and removing emotional fat from melodic elements. Winterberg, by contrast, in the Toccata and Sonata, comes to the melodic via the confluence of rhythmic interaction.

[6] Released on Toccata Classics TOCC 0531.

Both works date from before the Nazi occupation of Prague and before he began his studies with Alois Hába in 1939.

Winterberg's Toccata 1, which, intriguingly, he spells 'Toccatta' on his beautifully written final copy of the work (before listing it more traditionally as 'Toccata (1926)' in a table of works he compiled later), stands in some contrast to better-known works of the period, such as Prokofiev's from 1912 (premiered in 1916) or Debussy's Toccata from his *Pour le piano* (1901). Even Hindemith's *Toccata for Mechanical Piano*, from the same year as Winterberg's work, or Ernst Toch's *Quasi Toccata* from 1928, share an unrelenting keyboard mastery that Winterberg requires only intermittently. As with Prokofiev's, the drive comes from the chromaticism, but, unlike these other works, Winterberg's Toccata begins almost with a question mark rather than emphatic, rapid repetition. In spite of remaining in $\frac{6}{8}$ for its duration, Winterberg cannot resist changing moods, even interweaving demanding octave passages with others that are slow and reflective, as if to demonstrate that keyboard technique is more than unrelenting finger dexterity. Thus the work is less rhythmically insistent than equivalent twentieth-century toccatas and almost suggests something that is not an anti-toccata but an alternative toccata – perhaps explaining his peculiar spelling of 'Toccatta'.

The first movement, *Agitato* 2, of the 1936 Sonata shifts between two beats and three beats in the bar, and between polyrhythmic patterns with passages of disjointed dotted rhythms. Indeed, the opening of the Sonata is bold, with an ascending cross-rhythm between right and left hands. It quickly changes direction into a dotted passage that builds and builds until dissolving mysteriously into triplets, essentially serving as a second subject. This sense of building with strong cross- and dotted rhythms followed by a release in triplets holds throughout the movement. There's a brief recapitulation that, like the exposition, builds and then releases, though this time not in triplets but in an unwinding of energy, with regular quavers in the bass and dotted patterns in the treble. The movement almost comes to a halt with a hollow *col legno* effect in the piano, when a new rhythmic pattern accompanies a theme stated in octaves in the treble, again building to the point when insistent syncopations and dotted patterns compress in triplets again before release, and new subjects emerge from fresh rhythmic configurations. Ideas

are insistently repeated in a manner that anticipates minimalism but, like quicksilver, changes before monotony has a chance to set in. The whole mood of the movement is minor and chromatic, dissonance is the result of clashes between rhythms and the movement ends with a sense of unresolved questioning, as if anticipating that the next movement will follow, *attacca*.

But the central *Adagio* [3] proceeds without *attacca*; indeed, it stands alone, stark and hollow, which makes perfect architectural sense in terms of the three-movement structure of the Sonata. It is not intended as an answer to the lack of resolution at the end of the previous movement but travels down its own uneasy path. The opening of the movement is followed by a passage of triplets that sound like water dripping from a low ceiling: insistent, uncomfortable, even threatening. The music builds, explodes and opens the way for a passage marked *poco leggiero*, where, again, restraint and calm build back into a sense of anxiety before fading into a stressful lack of resolution.

The third movement, *Molto vivace* [4], is by far the most complex, thematically coloured with ample use of fourths and tritones. It opens with nervous semiquavers in $\frac{6}{8}$, changing into three beats and then two beats to the bar. This last movement is built on rhythmic patterns which, as in the first, are the devices used to create thematic ideas. Indeed, the third movement is a synthesis of different rhythmic constructions, building up, changing and contrasting before insistence and repetition disengage the listener. It is based on rhythms, patterns and arresting complexity. Somehow, it fits together into an organic whole, despite wildly differing subjects that bear little relationship to one another. Whatever follows one sequence is meant to contrast, not serve as classical thematic development. The entire work is pianistic but technically demanding, full of double stops and lightning-quick changes. Like all of Winterberg's music, it deplores boredom, and the listener is never allowed to anticipate what might come next. Though the Sonata was composed three years before the Nazi occupation and a year after the birth of Winterberg's daughter, its general character is fearful, almost anticipating the darker years that followed.

It would seem that, after Winterberg met his fourth wife, Luise-Maria Pfeifer, in or around the mid-1960s, a change in his piano style took place. Though no date of

composition of his *Impressionistische Klavier-Suite* ('Impressionist Piano Suite') has been established, the work is clearly dedicated 'Für Luise-Maria'. The opening movement, *Prestissimo leggiero molto* [5], is a classic ABA structure, with the top note marked *tenuto* so as to form a melody from the opening downward arpeggiated figures. Is Winterberg trying to out-French the French with his impression of waterfalls expressed in arpeggiated sequences? That might well be his purpose, although the middle section offers a contrasting dance-like melody before returning to the opening and coda.

The second movement [6] is a barcarole marked *Con moto moderato (alla gondoliera).* Though not as atypical of his style as the opening movement, it is unusually reflective, and its melodies are spared the usual Winterberg truncation and crossed rhythms, allowing them to breathe through their natural phrases. Where one hears the more traditional Winterberg contrasts, it is in the juxtaposition of major and minor, often sounding at the same time in parallel.

The third movement [7] is simply entitled *Vivacissimo* and returns to the pianism of arpeggiated melodies, though this time the arpeggios are ascending rather than descending. It is a joyous work, brimming with energy. The opening is followed by a melody in triplets set against four equal quavers in the left hand, a cross-rhythm typical of the more traditional Winterberg. It then explodes into a passage of chords in $\frac{3}{4}$ that sounds remarkably like the pealing of church bells before slowly reducing the texture to a single, long-held B flat. The time-signature reverts to $\frac{2}{4}$, issuing in a lyrical second part of different character marked *Andantino con moto moderato, quasi poco rubato,* followed by a reprise and coda.

The *Suite für Klavier* (1956) is remarkably similar to the *Impressionistische Klavier-Suite.* It dates from before he met Luise-Maria, which may be why the work feels more typical of Winterberg in its compression of material. Like the *Impressionistische Klavier-Suite*, it opens [8] with its melodic material arpeggiated, sounding like faux Debussy, until the second section brings more recognisable cross-rhythms, and the increasing energy finally culminates in a flurry of twelve repeated bars that bring the movement to an abrupt conclusion.

If this suite is to be made up of dance numbers, the second movement 9 can be described only as a curious sarabande marked 'Gemächlich' ('Leisurely'), that starts uncertainly on tiptoe, as the principal melodic material is 'filled in' with hollow-sounding *staccato* off-beat octaves in the bass, with a further third added an octave higher in the right hand. The movement feels comical, almost grotesque. The thematic material builds to a climax before returning to its tiptoe motif.

The third movement is marked 'Lebhaft' ('Lively') 10. In a questionnaire from the same year as the *Suite*, Winterberg explained that, having lived in Prague until he was 46 years old, it would be strange if his music didn't contain 'Slavic influence'.[7] There's a slight defensiveness in his tone, since the question was asked by Heinrich Simbriger, who seemed determined to catch Winterberg out as an undercover Czech. Winterberg goes on to explain that Hindemith remains a point of reference to him and that, latterly, the intervals of the fourth and fifth have become fundamentally significant in his work. It is an accurate description of the third movement: Hindemithian, with Slavic polyrhythms and abundant changes of time and mood.

The last movement, marked 'Lebhaft, energisch' ('Lively, energetic') 11, is a nervous dance, with strong beats made stronger by thumping a semiquaver upbeat into a quaver downbeat, giving the whole work a sense of rustic grotesquerie. As with the previous movement, moods and pulse change rapidly. The end is dramatic, full of massive, pounding chords where, at the start, there had only been single notes.

The work as a whole is virtuosic, with complex changes, and yet each section holds together. As with everything by Winterberg, the sense of architectural balance is nearly perfect, with even the most diverse elements subsumed in a satisfying structure.

Winterberg's four pieces entitled *Erinnerungen an Böhmen* ('Memories of Bohemia') are puzzling works, in that they are both atypical of their composer and yet in some aspects remain unmistakably Winterbergian. The score bears no date, which, like the *Impressionistische Klavier-Suite* for Luise-Maria, suggests the music was not meant for wider circulation. Dates are missing in the sketches and in the final copies, nor does he

[7] Questionnaire of 10 January 1956.

include them in the worklist he drew up later. Unlike the other works in this album, and atypical of his music in general, he gives these four 'Bohemian Impressions' key-signatures. The first, 'Baumblüte im Elbetal' ('Tree Blossoms in the Elbe Valley') 12, is in A major, marked *Andantino* and starts simply with a melody in the right hand made up of semiquaver upbeats leading into double-dotted crotchet downbeats. It sounds like someone humming a tune during a gentle hike. The subject moves into the left hand with babbling semiquavers in the right, suggesting a walk along the river. The middle section, in A minor, becomes denser and rhythmically more complex. There follows a brief transition in triplets before a modified return to the opening, ending with the piano beautifully suggesting the sky seen through foliage, with glinting sunlight as an accented high E natural. The 'Impressionism' is typically Winterbergian. Like the French, he can evoke light and images, but mostly he evokes an experience and recalls impressions, rather than musically re-creating them.

The second piece, 'Ein Sommertag am Hirschberger See'[8] ('A Summer's Day on the Hirschberger Lake') 13, is in C major, although, typically, it goes through chromatic transitions. The marking is *Allegro moderato*. In general, it, too, is a work that suggests a fondly remembered experience: a boat being rowed across a broad lake, the wind and choppy water climaxing in downward arpeggios and settling again in gentle triplets. Winterberg may derive his melodic material from his use and juxtapositions of polyrhythms, but he could also write tunes – as was proven by a number of hit-songs he wrote under the pseudonym of 'Jan Iweer'. This piece climaxes with hints of just such a 'Schlager' before a gentle ending with a low C octave in the left hand.

The third piece, 'Prag im Herbst' ('Prague in Autumn') 14, is in D minor and marked *Largo misterioso*. It opens with a sole *tenuto* D repeated in the right hand, unmistakable as a tolling bell in $\frac{2}{4}$. The tolling gathers harmonic substance, sounding almost Mussorgsky-like as it climaxes. The bell, ostinato-like, continues to be heard through the textures, though, as the harmonies become less dense, its pitch goes down to an A flat in the bass, introducing a new transitional episode ending in the relative major with a low octave F.

[8] Today the lake, which lies some 50 km to the north-east of Prague, is known as Máchovo Jezero ('Lake Mácha'), after the poet Karel Hynek Mácha (1810–36).

The final movement, 'Winterwanderung' ('A Winter's Hike'), is marked *Allegro* and is in G major [15]. Its $\frac{6}{8}$ time-signature suggests snow falling in repeated three-note quavers in the left hand. The work is a kaleidoscope of references and suggestions: a clumsy, *buffo* tumble is followed by a pastiche of Romanticism offering Chopinesque arpeggios in the bass and rich chords in the treble. This first section appears to be coming to a conclusion when the time-signature changes to $\frac{9}{8}$, followed by a short transition into E flat and, with arpeggios continuing in the left hand, bursts into a raucous version of 'Silent Night', bringing the work to a joyous end.

Since they bear no date, one is left to speculate as to why he wrote these rather conventional works that he then rebuilds in his own unconventional, Winterbergian manner. Was it for his fourth wife, Luise-Maria, herself from the Sudetenland? Was it perhaps for his daughter, Ruth? The works require more than a child's pianism, but they could be intended for children to hear. Was it an attempt to win credibility with the ever-suspicious community of 'Sudeten Germans'? This last suggestion seems the least likely, as I would then have expected the score to be dated. The *Impressionistische Klavier-Suite* and this suite were most probably composed for Luise-Maria, in his final and longest-lasting marriage, a union that appears to have been happy; indeed, as I mentioned, Luise-Maria, although 25 years younger, survived him by only two weeks. Both sets of short pieces thus seem to offer a brief look into Winterberg's private life. Like so many works written by composers in exile, these 'Bohemian Impressions' offer an inner return to a lost homeland.

Michael Haas is Senior Researcher at the Exilarte Zentrum at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna. He is the author of Forbidden Music: The Jewish Composers Banned by the Nazis *(Yale University Press, Yale and London, 2013), as well as having been the initiator and producer of the 'Entartete Musik' series of recordings released by Decca. He was also formerly Music Curator at the Jewish Museum in Vienna. His blog can be found at https://forbiddenmusic.org/.*

Brigitte Helbig began to study the piano in Munich, at the age of four. In addition to numerous prizes at Jugend Musiziert competitions, she received the Cultural Promotion Award of the city of Landsberg am Lech in 2010. From 2011 to 2018 she studied at the Munich Academy of Music with Sylvia Hewig-Tröscher and Markus Bellheim. She also expanded her studies with periods abroad: in Paris, at the Conservatoire Nationale Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris with Florent Boffard and with Johannes Marian at the Universität der Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna. Courses with Amit Dolberg, Peter Feuchtwanger, Pavel Gililov, Nicolas Hodges, Franz Massinger, Ian Pace, Majella Stockhausen and Michael Wessel brought further important stimuli. The composers with whom she has worked include Mark Andre, Michael Jarrell, Thomas Larcher and Steve Reich. With the groups Ensemble Platypus, Ensemble Wiener Collage, Ensemble BlauerReiter, ensemble hartmann21 and Risonanze Erranti, she has played concerts in Germany and Austria, as well as at such festivals as Musica Viva in Munich and Crossroads in Salzburg. In addition to her performances of important works for solo piano and chamber music from the twentieth and 21st centuries by such figures as Boulez, Dusapin, Furrer and Stockhausen, Brigitte Helbig also enjoys a lively exchange with composers of her own generation and has given many works their first performances. Since 2017, she has partnered the flautist Iva Kovač in a duo, working with young composers to enrich the repertoire for flute and piano.

Photograph: Astrid Ackermann

TOCCATA CLASSICS

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Tel: +44/0 207 821 5020 E-mail: info@toccataclassics.com

HANS WINTERBERG Piano Music, Volume Two

1	**Toccata** (1926)	**4:28**
	Piano Sonata No. 1 (1936)*	**20:04**
2	I *Agitato*	6:04
3	II *Adagio*	5:14
4	III *Molto vivace*	8:46
	Impressionistische Klavier-Suite (date unknown)	**10:49**
5	I *Prestissimo leggiero molto*	2:34
6	II *Con moto moderato (alla gondoliera)*	3:17
7	III *Vivacissimo*	4:58
	Suite for Piano (1956)	**10:14**
8	I Sehr schnelle Sechzehntel	1:23
9	II Mässige Achtel (Gemächlich)	3:03
10	III Lebhaft	2.42
11	IV Lebhaft, energisch	3:06
	Erinnerungen an Böhmen ('Memories of Bohemia'; date unknown)	**14:24**
12	I Baumblüte im Elbetal	3:13
13	II Ein Sommertag am Hirschberger See	3:28
14	III Prag im Herbst	4:59
15	IV Winterwanderung	2.44

Brigitte Helbig, piano

TT **60:02**

ALL EXCEPT * FIRST RECORDINGS