



LINN

Organ Reflections

Mozart Franck Reger

ARIEL LANYI



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BIOGRAPHY



Organ Reflections

Mozart Franck Reger

ARIEL LANYI piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

1. Andante in F major, K. 616 6:07

César Franck (1822–1890)

Prélude, Aria et Final

2. Prélude: Allegro moderato e maestoso 8:22
3. Aria: Lento 6:13
4. Final: Allegro molto ed agitato 7:23

Max Reger (1873–1916)

Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Bach, Op. 81

5. Theme: Andante 1:13
6. Variation 1: L'istesso tempo 1:09
7. Variation 2: Sempre espressivo ed assai legato 1:10
8. Variation 3: Grave assai 2:57
9. Variation 4: Vivace 1:00
10. Variation 5: Vivace 1:25
11. Variation 6: Allegro moderato 1:26
12. Variation 7: Adagio 1:37
13. Variation 8: Vivace 1:12

- 14. Variation 9: Grave e sempre molto espressivo 3:18
- 15. Variation 10: Poco vivace 1:00
- 16. Variation 11: Allegro agitato 1:08
- 17. Variation 12: Andante sostenuto 2:15
- 18. Variation 13: Vivace 0:51
- 19. Variation 14: Con moto 1:45
- 20. Fugue: Sostenuto 8:52

Mozart

- 21. **Adagio in C major, K. 356** 2:52

Total Running Time 63:41

Organ Reflections

When thinking of the organ, the first composer we associate with the so-called 'King of Instruments' is Bach, but we also link the output of composers such as Liszt, Brahms and Messiaen to the organ, and recognize the sound world of the much larger instrument in some of their piano works. However, it was Mozart who called the organ the King of Instruments. The organ was and remains a towering presence in the musical world. Even composers such as Mozart, whom we do not associate with it, played it extensively. Its grandeur has remained ingrained in the imaginations of pianists, even in the present age when there is little overlap between players of the two instruments – as opposed to the era when keyboardists played all keyboard instruments great and small, from the organ to the tiny clavichord, and works written for one keyboard instrument were often played on others.

The three composers featured in this album – Mozart, César Franck and Max Reger – were, among other things, virtuoso organists, and their featured works reveal the indelible connection between the rich sound world of the organ and the boundless possibilities of the piano.

Mozart's Andante in F major, K. 616, was originally intended neither for the pipe organ nor for the fortepiano, but for a musical clock, a machine attached to a small self-playing organ. It was written in 1791, the last year of the composer's life, as part of a commission of three works for mechanical organ, which also included the great F minor Fantasia. But unlike the dramatic and volcanic Fantasia, the Andante is serene, humorous and elegant. As is often the case with Mozart's later works, there is great harmonic variety, and we hear combinations of daring chromatic passages with resolutions that suggest an almost coy simplicity. As a result of its unusual conception, the Andante has found its way into the repertoire of both the organ and the piano.

César Franck, like his exact contemporary and fellow renowned organist, Anton Bruckner, was a 'late bloomer' among composers. The body of his works that has made it into the canon of 'standard repertoire' spans the last twelve years of his life – from 1878, the year he wrote the Piano Quintet in F minor, to 1890, when he wrote his final masterpiece, the three organ Chorales. The Prélude, Aria et Final was written in 1886, at the same time as the famous Symphony in D minor. It is unique among Franck's works in that it exudes grace and affirmation throughout, something uncommon for a composer so profoundly in touch with the emotions of despair, fear and tumult. The influence of the organ on the pianistic writing of this work is impossible to miss. In the prelude, the left hand of the pianist must almost split in two – evoking simultaneously both the manual and the pedals of the organ. The same organ pedals are unmistakably heard in the line of octaves accompanying the triumphant return of the prelude towards the end of the finale.

Although this work is little known, it is of great significance in Franck's output. Whereas the aforementioned F minor quintet represents the epitome of terror and tragedy (with all three movements in a minor key, and its ending a final conflagration at the end of an infernal dance), the Prélude, Aria et Final acts as a counterpoise thereto of light, acceptance and forgiveness. All three movements are in a major key, and the finale ends with the themes of the prelude and the aria played together in perfect symbiosis, before folding gracefully into silence.

Although Max Reger is regarded nowadays with a high degree of suspicion and skepticism, he was a formidable musical presence in his day, as a composer, organist and pianist. Stefan Zweig, in his memoir *Die Welt von Gestern* (The World of Yesterday), recounted the delight he felt at Reger setting a few of his poems to music, describing him as 'the greatest living composer after Richard Strauss', and mentioned his pianistic qualities alongside those of Eugen d'Albert and Ferruccio

Busoni, widely regarded as the preeminent pianists of the pre-World War I era. Edwin Fischer reportedly praised his pianism, saying that he ‘did not play the piano like an organist’.

And yet, performers and audiences alike tend to look askance at Reger’s music. His mastery of counterpoint was such that it seems as though he could write fugues with the same ease that Picasso could draw sketches, and as a result, some of his polyphonic writing does indeed sound automatic and perfunctory. But in the Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Bach, Op. 81, Reger reaches expressive heights and depths that make the work into one of the finest of the late-Romantic period. Its theme is ‘Sein Allmacht zu ergründen’ (To Fathom His Omnipotence), an aria from Bach’s Cantata BWV 128, *Auf Christi Himmelfahrt allein* (On Christ’s Ascension Into Heaven Alone). Over fourteen variations, Reger transforms Bach’s theme in every possible manner, interspersing variations close to the theme in tonality and material with variations that act as diversions, in foreign keys, and with only tenuous connections to the original theme. After the explosive ending of the last variation, all the different threads come together in a monumental fugue, in which Reger travels through various tonal and emotional worlds before reintroducing the theme of the fugue in what must be one of the most towering and grand endings ever written for the piano. In this work, Reger transcends the dimensions of the piano and reaches for the colossal proportions of the organ and its vast sound, as the music thunders across all registers of the piano.

... And after all of this, what can be more apt than to look back at the score of the miscellaneous keyboard works of Mozart, and as an afterthought, open the peaceful Adagio in C major?

ARIEL LANYI piano

In March 2023, Ariel Lanyi was honoured to receive the Prix Serdang, a Swiss prize awarded by the distinguished Austrian pianist Rudolf Buchbinder. The prize is endowed with CHF 50,000 and is not a competition, but a recognition of a young pianist's achievements and an investment in their future.

Prior to this, Ariel won 3rd prize at the 2021 Leeds International Piano Competition, performing Brahms Concerto No. 2 with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Andrew Manze in the finals. In the same year, he was a winner of the Young Classical Artists Trust International Auditions.

Current highlights include returns to Wigmore Hall and to the Miami International Piano Festival, as well as debut appearances at the Vancouver Recital Society, Nottingham International Piano Series, Alte Oper Frankfurt and Merkin Hall in New York.

On the concerto platform Ariel has appeared with various orchestras, including the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, Israel Philharmonic, Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Sinfonia Viva and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Recent highlights have included recitals at Wigmore Hall, Fundación Juan March in Madrid, Homburg Meisterkonzerte series in Germany, Grafenegg Festival in Austria, Bravo! Vail and Marlboro festivals in the USA, Kissinger Sommer and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern festivals in Germany, Perth Concert Hall (broadcast by BBC Radio 3), and in festivals across the UK including Chipping Campden, Brighton and Bath.

In 2021 Linn Records released his digital recording of music by Schubert to critical acclaim.

Born in Jerusalem and based in London, Ariel studied at the Royal Academy of Music, where he was recently made an associate. Other awards include 1st Prize at the Concours International de Piano Animato in Paris and 1st Prize at the Dudley International Piano Competition, as well as a finalist award at the Rubinstein Competition.

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Piano

Steinway D (Ayriel Studios, North Yorkshire)



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