

Max Reger



Valse D'amour

Miniatures for Piano

Luigi Palombi



Max Reger (Brand, 1873-Leipzig, 1916)

Valse d'amour

Miniatures for Piano

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|---|--------------|
| 01 Allegretto con grazia <i>from Improvisationen Op. 18</i> (1896) | 01:01 |
| <i>From Six Morceaux pour le Piano Op. 24</i> (1899) | 12:19 |
| 02 Menuet | 05:41 |
| 03 Rêverie Fantastique | 06:38 |
| 04 Mazurka <i>from Aquarellen Op. 25</i> (1897 - 1898) | 03:03 |
| 05 Grande valse de concert pour piano * | 02:56 |
| <i>From Bunte Blätter Op. 36</i> (1899) | 09:36 |
| 06 Capriccietto | 01:20 |
| 07 Reigen | 01:42 |
| 08 Elegie | 02:18 |
| 09 Valse - Impromptu | 01:18 |
| 10 Rêverie | 02:58 |
| 11 Sehr bewegt und ausdrucksvoll <i>from Silhouetten Op. 53</i> (1900) | 03:58 |
| 12 Maria - Wiegenlied Op. 76 (1911, trascr. by M. Reger) | 02:44 |
| <i>From Zehn Kompositionen Op. 79</i> (1900 - 1904) | 02:34 |
| 13 Caprice | 00:55 |
| 14 Melodie | 01:39 |

<i>From</i> Aus Meinem Tagebuch Op. 82 (1904 - 1912)	04:58
15 Vol. I No. 8 Andantino	03:17
16 Vol. IV No. 7 Humoresque	01:41
17 Romanze <i>from</i> Vier Spezialstudien für die linke Hand allein (1901)	05:46
18 Valse d'amour <i>from</i> Eine Balletsuite Op. 130 (1913, trascr. by M. Reger) *	03:13
19 Marsch der Stiftsdamen (1914)	00:39
<i>From</i> Träume am Kamin Op. 143 (1916)	11:19
20 II Con moto	02:46
21 IV Allegretto grazioso	02:07
22 IX Larghetto	03:53
23 X Vivace [Humoresque]	02:33
24 Fughette über das Deutschlandlied (1916)	01:09
Running Time	65:27

* WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

Luigi Palombi, piano (Yamaha C3 Silent)

MAX REGER TAGEBUCH

After receiving his first musical training from his mother (for the piano) and father (for the violin and cello), Max Reger (Brand, Bavaria, 1873 - Leipzig, 1916) continued his studies with Adalbert Lindner and was later in direct contact with the famous German musicologist and teacher Hugo Riemann. Looking at his music path, we realise the sort of education he must have received: the study and imitation of the classics was the foundation on which his work developed. Riemann himself, examining some of his pupil's compositions, stated that he could have become "a second Bach, had he not paid excessive attention to detail". Under the influence of these opinions, Reger, wrote: "if Bach had not existed, I would not have existed either". From Bach, Reger derived not only the moral and artistic attitude of someone who laboriously and humbly sets out to do his job, meant, firstly, as moral duty, but also his complex contrapuntal writing and, more in general, composing technique. Since at the end of the 1800s the works of the Eisenach musician were still far from being popular, Reger must have seemed to his contemporaries an antiquated conservative, and his work anachronistic. Indeed, it was so. Reger was not understood by his times, nor was his ideal of safeguarding tradition in its continuity and uniformity, an objective that led the composer to being inspired not only by Bach but equally by Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms and Wagner. Hence, also, the almost inevitable accusation of eclecticism.

The opinions of contemporary composers on Reger went from one extreme to the other. Was he "one of the great masters, whose works must be studied in depth to understand his brilliance, style and technique", as Arnold Schonberg thought, or "a disgusting person, like his music", as Igor Stravinsky mercilessly defined him? Even today, Max Reger's works are largely unknown to concert goers. For insiders, Reger's piano world stands on two pillars, the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Bach* Op. 81, and *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Telemann* Op. 134, two hypertrophic works that intimidate both performers and listeners. To all that we must add the harsh self-criticism made of the compositions written between 1898 and 1901, which Reger labelled as "outright imbecility".

In this programme we have tried to disprove Reger's words, drawing up a sort of private diary, therefore deliberately personal, in which the masterful construction of Bach's counterpoint and Brahms's variation technique are set against the album page, the introspection, the ironic touch, the draft. We can therefore listen without prejudice to the vaguely Schumann-like accents of the first of his *Improvisationen* Op. 18 (1896), whereas in the *Six Morceaux pour le piano* Op. 24 (1899), dedicated to the Argentinian pianist Teresa Carreño, whom Reger held in high esteem, we find echoes of Brahms (in the *Menuet*) and Chopin (in the passionate *Rêverie Fantastique*, as well as in the *Mazurka* of the *Aquarellen* Op. 25 from 1897-98).

Most of Reger's early output undoubtedly looks at the salon world and entertainment

music; one ironic example of it is the *Grande Valse de Concert*, in which a bombastic introduction turns into a technically very simple and square waltz. Schumann's shadow appears again in the five pieces drawn from the *Bunte Blätter* Op. 36 (1899), while the third of the seven *Silhouetten* Op. 79 (1900) impresses for its ethereal, rarefied writing, marking at last an independent manifestation of Reger's personality; something confirmed by the fact that the composer himself considered these seven pieces as his best achievement. From this moment on, Reger's language would live of a continuous contrast between the ideal of classicality of form and late-romantic tension, becoming the explicit awareness of a crisis. When we listen to the Strauss-like elan of the *Caprice* from the *Zehn Kompositionen* Op. 79 (1900-1904), we are reminded of the famous words pronounced by Richard Strauss after listening to the *Four Tone Poems after Arnold Böcklin* Op. 128: "Another step, dear Reger, and you will be here with us". No less memorable was Reger's reply: "My dear Strauss, I will never take that step!".

Counterbalancing the "great Reger" of the variation cycles, the four *Aus meinem Tagebuch* books (1904-1912) use, in miniature, a language that is at times rhapsodic at times rambling, and incessant in its chromaticism and continuous modulations. The *Humoresque*, instead, is all played on the white keys, and it became the favourite piece of the last booklet's dedicatee, Princess Marie Elisabeth of Saxe-Meiningen, who found it delightfully amusing,

as she wrote in a letter of 1912. Unusually light, joie-de-vivre traits characterise, instead, the author's transcription of his *Valse d'amour*, drawn from *Eine Ballettsuite* Op. 130 (1913). The short, lulling *Maria-Wiegenlied* is probably Reger's most well-known and popular page; from the original score for voice and piano, the composer drew several versions.

"These new pieces will be easy, let it be understood! [...] After all, I would like also less talented pianists to have the possibility to approach 'Reger'". Thus did the composer write in a letter to the publisher Simrock dated June 1915, announcing the collection *Träume am Kamin* Op. 143, which would be published in April 1916. The twelve short pieces are like a summary of Reger's career and style; the models of a lifetime appear stripped to the bone in a language that is like a self-confession, amidst suspensions and expressionistic presages, crepuscular tones and neo-classical nostalgia (for example in the gavotte rhythm of No. 4), in addition to unexpected Debussy-like digressions (No. 10); and it was indeed in this last stylistic approach that Arnold Schonberg recognised the signs of that "musical prose" that would become the distinctive trait of the Second Vienna School. Echoes of World War One, then, emerge in the two short pieces *March der Stiftsdamen* (1914) and *Fughetten über das Deutschlandlied* (1916), the only concession to contrapuntal Reger included in our programme.

Danilo Prefumo – Luigi Palombi
(Translated by Daniela Pilarz)

Luigi Palombi holds diplomas in Piano and Compositions earned at the Milan Conservatory under the guidance of Mariagrazia Grauso and Sonia Bo. He has performed in prestigious venues: Teatro dal Verme (Milan), Pinacoteca di Brera (Milan), Teatro Filodrammatici (Milan), Teatro dell'Elfo (Milan), Castelvecchio (Verona), Scenario Pubblico (Catania); and for music events such as La Società dei Concerti (Milan), Società del Quartetto (Milan), Società Umanitaria (Milan), Festival MiTo Settembre Musica (Milan), Festival Umberto Giordano (Baveno). His intellectual curiosity has led him to explore music in all its expressions, from the chamber field, with the instrumental ensemble Secret Theatre, at the 24th Fadjr International Music Festival of 2008 in Iran; to the orchestral one, with the Jazz Discovery Ensemble. He contributed the music for the theatrical shows "Et incarnatus est: W. A. Mozart - Tema con divagazioni" and "Parole Mute" (Enriquez Prize 2009). As a soloist, he played for artists such Ennio Morricone and Nicola Piovani. He composed the soundtrack of the Human-4d version of the film "In guerra" by director Davide Sibaldi. In 2015 the Dynamic label published a CD in which he interprets Duke Ellington's piano works. In March 2017 the music magazine Amadeus published, in downloadable CD, his solo recital "Sogno di un valzer-una società in ballo". In 2018 the Dynamic label released "Cinema", a CD featuring original piano soundtracks; this was followed, in 2021, by "Fake Bach", also for Dynamic, recorded at RSI (Radio Svizzera

Italiana). 2022 marked the Dynamic release of "Igor Stravinsky - Piano Conversations", recorded at RSI. In December 2023, the music magazine Classic Voice published Palombi's double CD dedicated to the piano transcriptions of Ludwig van Beethoven's 9th Symphony (by Franz Liszt), and of Dmitri Shostakovich's 7th Symphony (by Levon Atovmian, in world première recording).

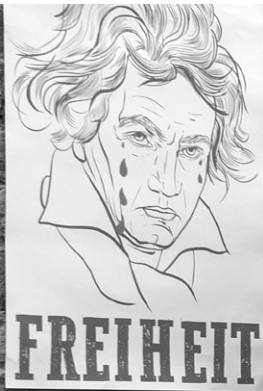




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Grateful thanks to:
Danilo Prefumo, Claudio Ricordi, Davide Ferro,
Lucia Palombi, Mariagrazia Grauso, and my parents

CDS8037

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