



Carl Gottlieb REISSIGER

COMPLETE PIANO TRIOS, VOLUME ONE

PIANO TRIO NO. 1 IN D MINOR, OP. 25

PIANO TRIO NO. 4 IN F SHARP MINOR, OP. 56

Trio Anima Mundi

CARL GOTTLIEB REISSIGER: PIANO TRIOS, VOLUME ONE

by William Melton

It was in Belzig, in the province of Brandenburg, that Carl Gottlieb Reissiger was born, on 31 January 1798. His mother was the curate's daughter Sophia Friedericka Gottliebe, *née* Friedrich, and his father was Christian Gottlieb Reissiger, a second-generation church cantor and former student of Daniel Gottlob Türk. The couple produced ten children, only half of whom survived into adulthood. The oldest of these was Carl, who suffered an early fall that broke his left leg, leaving him bow-legged for life.¹ Carl and his younger brother Friedrich August² received music lessons at home, a biographer noting that 'Carl was taught to play the piano and violin by his father from early childhood. He proved talented enough that he was able to perform on the piano in public at the age of ten. On Sundays he was also allowed to accompany the congregation on the organ.'³

In 1818, Carl entered the famous Thomaner choir school of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig. There he received training from Cantor Johann Gottfried Schicht, whose post had then been occupied by Johann Sebastian Bach five generations earlier. Carl blossomed into solo singing duties and composed his first motets. In 1818, at parental urging, he began theological study at the University of Leipzig, but quickly found the subject onerous and stopped attending lectures. In their stead he played with the orchestra of the Leipzig Theatre (later the Gewandhausorchester) as a second violinist and violist while furthering his composition studies with Cantor Schicht. He travelled to Vienna

¹ Reissiger's cervical nerve also received a severe shock that went unnoticed at the time, but would become a recurring affliction later in his career.

² F. A. Reissiger (1809–83) made his career in Norway, where he was an organist and military Kapellmeister, as well as the composer of well-regarded Lieder.

³ Kurt Kreiser, *Carl Gottlieb Reissiger. Sein Leben nebst einigen Beiträgen zur Geschichte des Konzertwesens in Dresden*, Pässler, Dresden, 1918, p. 4.

in 1821, where he studied with Antonio Salieri. Afterwards he went to Munich, where he took instruction from Peter von Winter and produced his first large-scale works, among them operas, a Mass and incidental music for plays. 'It is the pleasant duty of the undersigned,' wrote Winter in a recommendation for Reissiger on his departure,



*Belzig, Brandenburg; the spire of the Marienkirche,
where Christian Gottlieb Reissiger was cantor, on the left*

to bear witness to Mr C. G. Reissiger, composer from Leipzig, that during his stay in Munich he devoted himself to composition with diligence and perseverance in the lessons which he received from me for the complete training of his talents and knowledge. He showed evidence of thoroughness in counterpoint and a deep grasp of music that was extremely rare in his years, his compositions in the strict and gallant style reveal a rich, lively imagination, as well as depths of spirit, and are marked by their own unique characteristics.⁴

On Reissiger's return to Berlin, a stint of private teaching was interrupted by another journey, sponsored by the Prussian Ministry of Culture, which included stays in Belgium, France and Italy during 1824–25. After lengthy sojourns in Paris and Rome (the latter under the tutelage of Giuseppe Baini), he returned to Berlin, where he found himself in demand as a pedagogue.

In the busy year of 1826, after Reissiger took up a post at the Royal Church Music Institute in Berlin (established by Carl Friedrich Zelter), the directorship of a new Music Conservatoire in The Hague was offered to him, and before the year had ended, the post of music director in Dresden was left vacant at Heinrich Marschner's departure. Reissiger was already known in Dresden for the 1824 premiere of his opera *Didone abbandonata* under the baton of Carl Maria von Weber, who 'valued Reissiger's early operas highly'.⁵ The review in Dresden's *Abendzeitung* had found Pietro Metastasio's libretto wanting, but was appreciative of the young composer, who

extracted everything that he could have from the dull text. The first act must be praised in particular for its high degree of craftsmanship, refined style and skilful development. Hackneyed conventions of the day are rarely employed, and all is kept appropriate to a serious opera; the various characters emerge strongly, and this strength is varied with tenderness to create a very commendable whole.⁶

⁴ 'Beurteilung Carl Gottlieb Reißigers durch Peter von Winter', MS Mscr. Dresd. App. 125, in *Die Kunst leidet keinen Stillstand. Carl Gottlieb Reißiger zum 200. Geburtstag*, Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, 1998, p. 19.

⁵ Christoph Dohr, 'Reissiger, [...] 1. Carl, Karl, Gottlieb', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Ludwig Finscher (ed.), Personenteil, Vol. 13, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2005, p. 1541.

⁶ Quoted in anon., 'Dresden. Kunst-Nachricht', *Wiener allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, No. 14, 3 April 1824, p. 55.

So it was that the 28-year-old Reissiger was named a music director of the Dresden Court Opera over a clutch of better-known candidates, who included established conductor-composers like Johann Nepomuk Hummel and Conradin Kreutzer. Dresden was an exceptionally well-funded opera house for the time, and since 1817 had employed five players of each woodwind instrument as well as six horns. The establishment was managed by its Intendant, Wolf August von Lüttichau, with Francesco Morlacchi directing the Italian productions. After the death of Weber in London on 5 June 1826, Reissiger ‘demonstrated so much talent as a conductor that the King of Saxony named him Weber’s successor in 1827’,⁷ and director of the German opera programme.

When Marschner departed, the kinder, more obliging Reissiger arrived. To Dresden he brought with him – and this is his special merit – a pleasing blossoming of Classical music, especially of Mozart, whose *Le nozze di Figaro*, *La clemenza di Tito*, *Idomeneo* and *Così fan tutte* first made their appearance on the Dresden court stage under his direction, in German.⁸

Reissiger’s first years in the post were crowded with musical and personal milestones. He composed a *Missa solemnis* for his introduction to the Dresden public in 1827, and a year later wed Marie Stobwasser, in a union that would produce four children. His melodrama *Yelva* (1827) enjoyed widespread popularity, and the successful premiere of his opera *Die Felsenmühle* (‘The Cliff Mill’) in 1830 ‘caused a sensation on almost all major European opera stages.’⁹ Highpoints of Reissiger’s production of Latin church music for the Saxon Court were a Requiem in D minor and the oratorio *David*. ‘This oratorio’, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* declared,

has once again shown quite distinctly the adeptness that Reissiger possesses in formal handling and ease of composition [...]. Whoever knows the Masses from his assured middle epoch will feel all possible respect for the skill of a composer in whom the most

⁷ Hermann Mendel, ‘Reissiger, Karl Gottlieb’, *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon*, Vol. 8, Oppenheim, Berlin, 1869, p. 293.

⁸ Otto Schmid, ‘Die Geschichte des Dresdener Hof-Orchesters’, *Die Musik*, Vol. 1, No. 24, 2 September issue, 1902, p. 2111.

⁹ Eugen Brixel, ‘Der vergessene Romantiker. Zum 200. Geburtstag von Carl Gottlieb Reissiger am 31. Jänner’, *Österreichische Blasmusik*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1998, p. 12.

competent musical education is united with very significant specific talent. And Reissiger's oratorio *David* is a worthy addition to the true excellence that he achieved with his best Masses.¹⁰

Oddly, these successes were overshadowed by a much more modest piece, the fifth number of Reissiger's *Danses brillantes*, Op. 26 (Peters, 1824), subtitled 'Weber's Last Musical Thought'. This modest waltz was often attributed to Weber himself, and was published as such by Schott in 1829. With varied French, German and English titles ('Dernière pensée musicale de Carl Maria von Weber', 'Webers Letzter Gedanke' and 'Weber's Last Waltz'), the work would be reissued throughout the nineteenth century in Leipzig, Paris, London and New York.¹¹

Hector Berlioz conducted two concerts in Dresden in 1843, and was hugely impressed with the entire organisation: its conductors, staff and the fine orchestral principals (mentioning by name the violinist Karol Lipiński, the cellist Friedrich Dotzauer, the horn-player Joseph-Rudolph Lewy and the Devonian harpist Elias Parish Alvars, whom the French composer compared to Franz Liszt). Berlioz wrote to his friend, the violinist Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst: 'Now let us speak about Dresden. I was engaged for two concerts, and there I discovered choir, orchestra, military band and a famous tenor [Josef Tichatschek]. Since my entry into Germany, I had not yet met

¹⁰ 7., 'Dresdner Briefe: II. Concerte, das neue Oratorium und die Tempi Reissiger's, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 19, No. 36, 23 April 1852, p. 195. Reissiger's sacred music remains woefully under-published, though Verlag Dohr has issued a number of works, including the first edition of *David, Oratorium in zwei Teilen nach Worten der Heiligen Schrift für Soli, Chor und Orchester*, ed. Thea Labes, Verlag Dohr, Cologne-Bergheim, 2002.

¹¹ The 'Dernière pensée musicale de Weber' would become the subject of variations and arrangements by Adolphe Adam (later transcribed by Niccolò Paganini, whose work was in turn transcribed by Ferdinand Beyer), Ferdinand Burgmüller, Ferdinando Carulli, Luigi Concone, Carl Czerny, Henri Herz, Ferdinand Hummel and many lesser composers for piano, but also for violin, violin quartet, clarinet, horn, cornet, harp, guitar, zither, harmonium, concertina and brass band. The huge popularity of the work crossed artistic genres: it made its way into Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* of 1839, where an unnamed narrator describes Roderick Usher's descent into gloom: 'I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. [...] His long, improvised dirges [played on guitar] will ring forever in my ears. Among other things, I bear painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber' ('The Fall of the House of Usher', *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, Vol. 1, Lea and Blanchard, Philadelphia, 1840, p. 86). A cultural watermark was reached with the silent film *Von Weber's Last Waltz* (USA, 1912), to which a live theatre organist would play the waltz to accompany fluctuations in a young couple's onscreen courtship.

such assembled riches.¹² Additional leading players included the cellist Friedrich August Kummer, the flute virtuosi Anton Bernhard Fürstenau and Carl August Grenser, the clarinetist Johann Gottlieb Kotte and the horn-player August Haase.

With Richard Wagner's emergence on the Dresden musical scene, the working atmosphere at the theatre was bound to change.

When Richard Wagner submitted his *Rienzi* to the Dresden General Directorate from Paris in December 1840, it was the first court conductor Karl Gottlieb Reissiger who expressed his satisfaction with the score to the composer, 'as flattering as he was bland', and did not allow himself to be put off from carefully rehearsing the musical work, which was then unique in terms of difficulty and expansiveness. The premiere of *Rienzi* owed its extraordinary success in no small part to Reissiger's understanding, spirited and above all loving direction. Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*, which had been rejected by Munich and Leipzig, was also staged in Dresden as a result of Reissiger's encouragement and had, if not an unprecedented success, at least a very acceptable one, especially in that the composer, who until then had been wandering about unsteadily and fleetingly, tormented by food worries, was employed with a considerable salary as Royal Kapellmeister in Dresden alongside Reissiger.¹³

In spite of these and other successes (Wagner, smitten by the sound of the Dresden orchestra, took to calling it 'the magic harp'), a letter to Wagner's sister Cäcile Avenarius in May of 1842 betrayed a mounting resentment of his co-Kapellmeister:

Reissiger constantly falls on my neck and kisses me when he gets hold of me. Practically everything confirms that he really means well and has the best of intentions. Unfortunately, the man has become such a lazy philistine that it would be terrible to leave the artistic realisation of my opera to his guidance alone.¹⁴

Relations between the two men deteriorated when 'Reissiger declined to set Wagner's libretto *Die hohe Braut*, after which Wagner portrayed him, apparently quite falsely, as

¹² *Mémoires de Hector Berlioz, 1803–1865*, Michel Lévy Frères, Paris, 1870, p. 271.

¹³ Adolph Kohut, 'Richard Wagner und Karl Reissiger', *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 14 January 1910, p. 33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

a philistine opponent of his progressive artistic views. Wagner was probably entirely responsible for this deterioration in the relationship between the two musicians.¹⁵ In any case, Wagner's increasing dissatisfaction with working under his royal patron grew during the decade, famously resulting in his siding with the revolutionaries in 1848. In response, he circulated two papers addressing opera and politics that also contained two self-serving demands: the elimination of aristocratic authority except for the King (as the first among equals), and Wagner's own promotion to sole Kapellmeister of the opera (with Reissiger sidelined to the direction of church music). Whatever Reissiger's frustrations at dealing with Wagner's intrigues, he continued to defend his co-conductor, at least in public. He advised Intendant von Lüttichau to grant Wagner's plea for extended time off to avoid the unpleasantness that his recent writings had engendered. 'What is known,' Johannes Reichelt concluded, long after the events in question, 'is that Wagner fled Dresden in 1849 when he feared punishment by the courts for his publicly expressed political views,'¹⁶ which would lead to a twelve-year exile from German lands.

With Wagner's departure, Reissiger was appointed first Hofkapellmeister in 1851. Under his continued leadership, the Dresden opera unquestionably flourished. 'His talent as a conductor is quite extraordinary. Reissiger is definitely one of the best conductors we presently have in Europe, and he has proved this amply at the many music festivals he has been entrusted with conducting.'¹⁷ A true orchestral trainer, on the podium he radiated capability, encouraging contributions from his musicians, singing along with important inner voices of choruses, or 'when a tenor suddenly noticed that he had mislaid the notes for his recitative and froze at the critical moment, Reissiger deftly began to sing the recitative himself, something that his fine voice enabled him to do very

¹⁵ John Rutter and Manfred Fensterer, 'Reissiger, Carl Gottlieb', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, Vol. 21, Macmillan, London, 2001, p. 170. A similar dynamic arose in Munich when Wagner was awarded a generous stipend by King Ludwig II and moved to that city in October 1864. The talented orchestra trainer Franz Paul Lachner had been a Kapellmeister at the Munich Opera since 1832 and had more recently produced Wagner's *Lohengrin* to considerable success, eliciting praise from Franz Liszt. Yet Wagner was convinced that Lachner was an enemy barring his way, and the venerable music director was soon retired in favour of Wagner's (then) lieutenant, Hans von Bülow.

¹⁶ Johannes Reichelt, 'Richard Wagner und sein Kollege Reissiger', *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 40, 1913, p. 507.

¹⁷ William Neumann, *Karl Gottlieb Reissiger: Eine Biographie*, Ernst Balde, Kassel, 1854, p. 14.

well. The royal orchestra was his first responsibility, but hardly his only interest: 'He also proved to be a loyal protector of the Tonkünstlerverein and the Conservatoire from the very beginning, just as he was the first director of the Dresdner Liedertafel, which had been established in 1839'.¹⁸ Even amateurs with more ambition than experience were not turned away.¹⁹ Ferdinand Simon Gassner published this tribute to Reissiger in 1849:

His prowess as a conductor, his astonishing skill in score-reading and -playing, and his thoughtfulness and precision in accompaniment are recognised, and have earned him a formidable reputation in his surroundings. He has [...] drawn a circle of friends and admirers around him, which – we have to say – grows daily as art lovers from near and far gather to warm themselves from his bright, spiritual fire.²⁰

Reissiger maintained a rich correspondence with Robert Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn, Louis Spohr, Franz Paul Lachner, Heinrich Marschner, Friedrich von Flotow, Joachim Raff (to whom Reissiger habitually signed his letters 'Papa'), the poet Ludwig Rellstab and a slew of influential contemporary publishers that included Simrock, Hofmeister, Fischer, Meser, Schott, Kistner, Peters, Leede, Schubert and Bote & Bock (the letters are presently housed in the MS collection of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, in Dresden). Reissiger had also accumulated a large collection of honorary memberships and awards from potentates and musical societies across Europe. Students were naturally attracted to him, among them the pianists Anton Krause and the young Clara Wieck (Schumann), the organists Karl August Fischer, Jan Albert van Eijken, Josef Seiler and Gustav Merkel (organist to the Dresden court and director

¹⁸ Hans von Brescius, 'Karl Gottlieb Reißiger. Zu seinem 100. Geburtstag, 31. Jänner 1898', *Dresdner Anzeiger*, Vol. 168, No. 30, 31 January 1898, p. 9.

¹⁹ 'Reissiger', wrote the young singer Heino Hugo of his arrival in Dresden from the provinces in 1846, 'received me very kindly, but poured one bucket of cold water after another over me, so to speak, in order to dissuade me from the idea of working in the arts. [...] I kept silent, but am sure that I looked dissatisfied. Thankfully, Reissiger was perceptive enough to see that his practical truth-telling was having little effect, and that my fire to succeed was too strong to be extinguished by mere talk. He then took the sensible course of introducing me to an old Italian who had sung on the stage and now gave lessons. This worthy did not try to put me off, but let me sing, and then beckoned me from the corner of the room to approach him, finally asking when I would like to begin lessons' (Heino Hugo, 'Reissiger, Meyerbeer, Liszt. Aus den Erinnerungen eines Musikers', *Die Gegenwart*, Vol. 27, No. 38, 24 September 1898, pp. 181–82).

²⁰ 'Reissiger, Carl Gottlieb', *Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst*, Köhler, Stuttgart, 1849, p. 718.



The first Dresden Court opera house, built by Gottfried Semper in 1841

of the Singakademie), the tenor Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, who created the role of Tristan, the future music-directors Hermann Berens (Örebro, Sweden) and Theodor Eisfeld (Wiesbaden and the New York Philharmonic Society), and the composers Theodor Hentschel, Edmund Kretschmer, Henry Hugh Pearson and Julius Seide (later chair of the Musical Association of Victoria, Australia), Prince Heinrich IV of Reuss/Köstritz and Ernest II, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, a fellow freemason.²¹ Informed articles from Reissiger's pen, ranging from the life and work of Heinrich Schütz to evaluations of the newest valved horns and trumpets, appeared in the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*.

²¹ Reissiger had been a member of the lodges *Balduin zur Linde* in Leipzig and *Zu den drei Schwertern* and *Asträa zur grünenden Raute* in Dresden. Ernest's brother, Prince Albert, became the consort of Queen Victoria.

Arguably at the zenith of his career, in August, 1858, Reissiger suffered a stroke. 'After recovering', Eduard Bernsdorf recorded,

he was able to return to his duties that winter. When the wedding celebrations at the Saxon court in the spring of 1859 were over, he went to Carlsbad for a cure, which took an unusual toll on his physical strength. Nevertheless, he recovered to such an extent that, on the advice of the doctors, he was able to resume his duties at the Court Catholic Church on 17 August. On 5 November he was still conducting liturgical music; on 7 November at noon, however, he experienced another stroke, from which he gently and painlessly passed away.²²

Among the mourners at the burial in the *Trinitätsfriedhof* was Reissiger's friend Julius Rietz of Leipzig, who would become the next first Kapellmeister in Dresden.

The following year, the Ash Wednesday Concert of the orchestra was dedicated to the master's memory. Other than Beethoven's *Eroica*, only works by Reissiger were performed. In further tributes, the Dreyssig'sche Singakademie performed Mozart's *Requiem*, the Schumann'sche Singakademie performed Reissiger's own *Requiem*, several motets and a chorus from his oratorio *David*, and the Allgemeiner Dresdener Sängverein also commemorated the artist who had left his mark on a major chapter of the musical history of 19th century Dresden.²³

The first page of the *Süddeutsche Musik-Zeitung* was given over to Reissiger's obituary:

Since November of 1826, Reissiger has occupied the most prestigious musical position in Dresden, and during these many years of activity he proved himself to be an extremely fruitful composer and a particularly skilful conductor. [...] In his extensive sphere of activity, he was held in high esteem due to his efficiency and dedication to his duties, and earned great popularity due to his humane, honest and amiable character. The artistic

²² 'Reissiger, Carl Gottlieb', *Neues Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst*, Vol. 3, ed. Eduard Bernsdorf and Julius Schladebach, Johann André, Offenbach, 1861, p. 312. Reissiger, Franz Liszt, Heinrich Marschner and Ludwig Spohr all contributed to this three-volume work.

²³ Jörg Heyne, 'Die Ära Reissiger am Hoftheater in Dresden', *Die Dresdner Oper im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Michael Heinemann and Hans John, Laaber-Verlag, Laaber, 1995, p. 175.

establishment under his direction, the royal court orchestra in particular, has enjoyed a lofty standing in the cultural world thanks to Reissiger's endeavours.²⁴

Reissiger's personal benevolence evoked this portrait from Moritz Fürstenau in the *Illustrierte Zeitung*:

With an imposing personality, from Reissiger's eyes all the richness of his soul and his true humanity shone forth. One immediately recognised in him the creator of so many melodies both mellow and cheerful, so many pious and thoughtful songs. His inexhaustible sense of humour made him the most pleasant companion. He often sang incomparable comic songs in his beautiful bass voice for a small circle of acquaintances and friends. He was a true father to the orchestra members; with very few exceptions, they had all been engaged by him and revered him as their highly respected leader, the humane superior, the paternal friend.²⁵

In contrast, Richard Wagner (whose time in Dresden evoked the description 'a pike in a carp pond'²⁶) posted a sarcastic line to his sister dismissing 'My blessed colleague from Dresden conducting days, the composer of "Weber's Last Thought"'.²⁷ Wagner's dismissive appraisals, it was noted, 'which were passed on without hesitation by [the biographer Carl Friedrich] Glasenapp and others, created an unjustified bias against Reissiger the man and artist.'²⁸ Margaret E. Menninger surmised that Reissiger 'was a designated foil for Wagner's unfulfilled ambitions in Dresden.'²⁹

'Reissiger', Alfred Remy wrote, 'was a prolific composer (over 200 opus numbers), writing with great facility, but utterly devoid of originality.'³⁰ Otto Schmid correctly

²⁴ 'Karl Gottlieb Reissiger', *Süddeutsche Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 8, No. 47, 21 November, 1859, p. 185.

²⁵ 'Karl Gottlieb Reissiger', *Illustrierte Zeitung*, Vol. 33, No. 857, 3 December 1859, p. 365.

²⁶ Kreiser, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

²⁷ Kohut, 'Richard Wagner und Karl Gottlieb Reissiger', *loc. cit.*, p. 33.

²⁸ Folker Göthel, 'Reißiger, Karl Gottlieb', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume, Vol. 11, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1963, p. 209.

²⁹ 'Reissiger, Carl Gottlieb', *The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia*, ed. Nicholas Vazsonyi, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 469.

³⁰ 'Reissiger, Karl Gottlieb', *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, revised and enlarged by Alfred Remy, Schirmer, New York, 1919, p. 754.

observed in 1900 that 'Reissiger was an almost forgotten figure',³¹ and Adolph Kohut regretted that 'Reissiger, the once highly respected and celebrated composer and conductor, [...] is nearly forgotten today, though his song and orchestral compositions are still performed occasionally in concert halls.'³² Reissiger's *œuvre* spanned most genres, with numerous solo-piano pieces and solo songs, secular male-voice choruses, a modest quantity of orchestral music and eight operas. His most popular genres proved to be his abundant sacred music for chorus, led by twelve Latin Masses, which 'placed him high in the esteem of his compatriots',³³ and a substantial amount of invariably melodic chamber music (including pieces that featured his fine Dresden wind-players). John Rutter commented:

As a part-time but prolific composer, Reissiger confined himself mainly to producing works in the fashionable forms of his day or else for use in Dresden. [He] embodied the dying tradition of the Kapellmeister-composer, and despite sound craftsmanship (Schumann described the construction of his piano trios as 'exemplary') his music has been forgotten, perhaps because of lack of individuality.³⁴

Colin Mason found that

Reissiger is the darling of the amateur chamber-music player in the elementary stage of his development. He plays the trios, loves them, and then tires of their over-sweetness. Reissiger uses the agreeable device of unison writing for strings far too often. Yet it must be allowed that his melodies have considerable charm, and that a composer whose music has given pleasure to tens of thousands has deserved well of the musical world.³⁵

Wilhelm Altmann delved deeper into Reissiger's style.

³¹ 'Eine Erinnerung an C. G. Reissiger. Eine Musikantengeschichte', *Blätter für Haus- und Kirchenmusik*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1 March 1900, p. 44.

³² 'Karl Gottlieb Reissiger. Zu seinem 50. Todestag am 7. November 1909', Vol. 31, No. 4, 1910, p. 75.

³³ John Ella, *Musical Sketches, Abroad and at Home*, William Reeves, London, 1878, p. 240.

³⁴ John Rutter, 'Reissiger, Karl Gottlieb', *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, Macmillan, London, Vol. 15, 1980, pp. 729–30.

³⁵ *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, ed. Walter Willson Cobbett, Oxford University Press, London, 1963, p. 288.

The music of this composer has long ago disappeared from the concert-room, but his piano trios, at least, have not quite lost their place in the home. They once had a great vogue, so much so that Reissiger could hardly keep up with the demand that arose for this type of composition (he wrote in all twenty-seven) in Dresden drawing-rooms. It is obvious that he had to pay more attention to attractive melodic material than to good contrapuntal writing; at the same time, his output of over two hundred compositions is not to be despised. He had many a pleasing inspiration, and at times surprises us with really dramatic passages which recall his fondness for operatic writing.³⁶

The 27 piano trios composed between 1824 and 1859, a number of which also exist in arrangements for piano four-hands, became Reissiger's signature works. Robert Schumann treated them graciously in his 1836 survey of piano trios:

if one wants to learn to compose confidently and authentically in the trio style, take Reissiger's latest trios as a model. When I think of this composer in general, the words 'lovely, naive, beautiful' – in fact, all the attributes of those lesser graces that Reissiger has chosen as his favourites – are strung together like a chain of flowers. [...] he keeps us interested until the end, though this may be more due to the charm of his presentation than to the weight of his thoughts. That such a personality will make many friends is natural, and we are far from criticising those who enjoy such genial music.³⁷

Soon after the composer's death, Eduard Bernsdorf wrote: 'Of Reissiger's instrumental works, it was primarily the trios for piano, violin and violoncello that were very popular, especially among amateurs. [...] although most of them are hardly profound in content, they commend themselves for their smoothness of form, clean structure and flowing melodies.'³⁸ Two decades later, Hermann Mendel recalled that 'particularly his trios for piano, violin and violoncello were still extremely popular and widely performed twenty years ago.'³⁹ The pianist-pedagogue Carl Friedrich Weitzmann wrote: 'Special

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Robert Schumann, 'Trio's (Fortsetzung); *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 5, No. 13, 12 August 1836, p. 52.

³⁸ 'Reissiger, Carl Gottlieb', *Neues Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst*, Vol. 3, André, Offenbach, 1861, p. 313.

³⁹ 'Reissiger, Karl Gottlieb', *op. cit.*, p. 294.

favourites for a time were his Trios for pianoforte, violin and violoncello, of which he published 22 [*sic*], and which belong to the better class of entertaining musical literature. We recommend the following: the two Trios, Op. 164 and Op. 175, “*faciles et brillants*”, Berlin, Schlesinger, and the larger Trios, Op. 25 in D minor, Op. 77 in E flat, Op. 85 in E, Op. 125 in A minor and Op. 192 in D, the last in full score, all published by Peters in Leipzig.⁴⁰

Modern usage generally presents the piano after the instruments with which it plays in chamber combinations, but, as these quotations from Reissiger’s contemporaries make clear, his trios were considered very much works for piano with violin and cello. The title pages, too, emphatically put the piano in first position – but not only because the piano dominates the texture. The convention then was to place the piano first, and the works now known as Beethoven’s and Schumann’s ‘violin sonatas’ (for example) were initially published as ‘sonatas for piano and violin’; as late as 1915, the first edition of Ravel’s Trio was given as for ‘piano, violin et violoncelle’.

Reissiger’s biographer, Kurt Kreiser, put the trios into biographical perspective:

Reissiger, who trained himself on the classics, was far too solid a musician to be satisfied with occasional pieces, for example. Thus we also have chamber music from him in which we find solid, contrapuntal motif work in the development sections with healthy, if not exactly passionate, thematic invention. Romantic influences are not excluded, despite the Classical texture, and triplets, sextuplets, syncopations, etc. are frequently encountered. We can perhaps place Reissiger, the chamber composer, alongside [Georges] Onslow (1784–1852), who was quite famous at the time. He was a proficient Beethoven epigone in the more highly ‘constructed’ movements, and today his works are still popular practice material at conservatoires.⁴¹

The pianist and scholar Artur Eccarius-Sieber concluded that the ‘27 trios may present little that is original, but offer all the more in beauty of sound and formal completeness. [...] The trios in D minor, Op. 25, and [F sharp] minor, Op. 56, [...] are particularly

⁴⁰ Carl Friedrich Weitzmann, *A History of Pianoforte-Playing and Pianoforte-Literature*, Schirmer, New York, 1894, pp. 141–42.

⁴¹ Kreiser, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

Table

Reissiger's 27 Piano Trios

<i>No.</i>	<i>Key</i>	<i>Op. no.</i>	<i>Publisher and date</i>
1	D minor	25	Peters, Leipzig, 1824
2	B flat major	33	Simrock, Bonn/Farrenc, Paris, 1825
3	D major	40	Hofmeister, Leipzig, 1826
4	F sharp minor	56	Probst, Leipzig/Kistner, Leipzig, 1829/Pleyel, Paris
5	D major	75	Simrock, Bonn/Farrenc, Paris, 1832
6	E flat major	77	Peters, Leipzig, 1832
7	E major	85	Peters, Leipzig, 1833
8	F major	97	Peters, Leipzig, 1834
9	F minor	103	Peters, Leipzig, 1835
10	D minor	115	Peters, Leipzig, 1836
11	A minor	125	Peters, Leipzig, 1838
12	F major	137	Peters, Leipzig, 1838
13	E minor	150	Peters, Leipzig, 1840
14	D minor	158	Peters, Leipzig, 1841
15	A minor	167	Peters, Leipzig, 1842
16	G minor	170	Peters, Leipzig, 1842
17	F major	183	Peters, Leipzig, 1845
18	B minor	188	Peters, Leipzig, 1848
19	D major	192	Peters, Leipzig, 1849
20	D major	196	Peters, Leipzig, 1850
21	G major	201	Peters, Leipzig, 1853
22	D major	205	Peters, Leipzig, 1853
23	D minor	213	Siegel, Leipzig, 1859
24	G major	164	Schlesinger, Berlin, 1841
25	D minor	175	Schlesinger, Berlin, 1843
26	G minor	181	Schlesinger, Berlin, 1845
27	G major	186	Schlesinger, Berlin, 1847

NB: Nos. 1–4 were styled 'Grand Trio', and Nos. 24–27 'Trio facile et brillant', numbered 1 to 4.

suitable for nurturing a joy of ensemble play, and in addition will reward listeners with unqualified enjoyment.⁴²

The Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 25, was composed in c. 1824, published about two years later by Peters of Leipzig and dedicated to the Berlin pianist Madame Auguste Nowack, who would also receive three dedications from the composer Wilhelm Taubert. The first movement opens with a slow *forte* introduction, *Moderato* [1] in D minor and $\frac{12}{8}$. Bar 17 begins the sonata-form exposition with a brisk *Allegro passionato*, again in D minor but now in $\frac{3}{4}$. The melodic profile of the main theme, already present in fragmented form in the introduction, is first voiced in the cello, *con espressione*, then answered in the violin. The strings repeat the theme together before an A major interlude leads to ever shorter reprises in C major and A flat major. A more tranquil secondary theme appears in the violin, *piano* and in F major, the mediant key. It is answered by the cello before taken up in duet form, with the piano accompaniment thickening into triplet quavers which power the theme to *forte* and a repeat of the exposition. Afterwards, a short, chromatic melody in the strings which appeared briefly in the exposition now launches the development section. A journey from F major to G flat major, A minor, E minor and A major begins in homophonic fashion, but also features a short *fugato* on the main theme. Cello and then violin deliver the recapitulation in D minor before the piano dominates a *con espressione* statement in D major, which leads to the secondary theme, now in that same key. Twelve bars of harmonic flux precede eight bars of the dominant, A major, before a last rendition of the main theme finishes with upward-lunging *forte* arpeggios and a final, fermata-held D major chord.

The second movement, *Andante quasi allegretto* [2], is presented in B flat major and $\frac{3}{4}$, in song form (ABA), though a variation principle is also at work. The attractive melody begins in cello, then violin, and recalls the opening of the cavatina 'Casta diva' from Bellini's *Norma* (which is notated in F major and 12/8), though the opera was not heard until 1831, five years after Reissiger's composition of this theme. The piano accompaniment transitions to triplet quavers at a longer-breathed contrasting theme in

⁴² 'Meisterwerke der Kammermusik und ihre Pflege. Ueberblick über die Literatur des Klavier-Trios', *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, Vol. 31, No. 11, 1910, p. 224.

the dominant, F major, and the opening returns in B flat major and diverse rhythmical settings before a piano-led coda tapers to a *ppp ritard.* ending.

The *Capriccio (Allegro molto)* [3] offers bustling quavers in $\frac{3}{4}$, *forte* and peppered with accents and *sforzandi*, its D major outer sections surrounding an A minor interior. The linked Trio in B minor/F sharp major slows the pace, employing longer note-values and *espressivo legato* phrasing before the *da capo* repeat. After a short *marcato* introduction that halts at a fermata, the Finale (*Allegro non troppo*) [4] continues with its distinct theme unabated in D minor. The B section in F major combines songful string melodies *con espressivo* with agile crotchet triplets in the piano. The movement incorporates aspects of loosely knit sonata form: a developmental middle section processes fragments of main and secondary themes (in *fugato*, as well) over fluid sections in E flat major, F minor, A flat major, C minor and B flat major, with the return of themes varied with semiquaver textures, chromaticism and new keys. A *forte* recommencement at *Più mosso* precedes a coda in which fragments of both themes are emphasised, before finishing with triumphant *fortissimo* cadences in D major.

The Piano Trio No. 4 in F sharp minor, Op. 56, was published in 1829 by both Kistner of Leipzig and Pleyel of Paris. The work was dedicated to the Danish-German diplomat Wolf Friedrich Carl, Count of Baudissin. An *Allegro moderato* [5] in F sharp minor begins the first, sonata-form, movement with melancholy strings at the octave, a phrase answered by chordal piano. Afterwards the three instruments blend contrapuntally, and quaver triplets and fragments of the opening lead to the secondary *con espresso* material, which begins in the solo piano in A (the relative major key). The theme is reprised in the strings in A minor, with the texture dominated by sequences of semiquavers, *fortissimo*, before a slowing to triplet quavers and *pianissimo* cadences precedes a repeat of the exposition. Afterwards the development begins with the main theme, first in the cello in F minor, *piano*, then quavers accelerate into sextuplets and a turbulent *fortissimo* culmination in F minor diminishes to *legato piano*. C minor, A flat major and D major precede a C sharp major seventh and fermata-held pause before the recapitulation of the opening F sharp minor and the reprise of the secondary theme. The latter is now in G flat major (the enharmonic parallel major of F sharp), and fragments of the themes

come to an end in a *fortissimo fermata* on the tone F sharp, spread across octaves in all instruments.

The second movement, *Andante non troppo* [6] starts in A major, in $\frac{3}{4}$ and ABA form, with a soothing beginning in the cello, *piano*. After the violin enters in the ninth bar, a third reprise of the opening is made. A short chordal introduction brings the secondary theme in solo piano, in a rhapsodic, *con espressivo* melody in F sharp minor (the relative minor of A major). The next section remains in F sharp minor; the subsequent return of A major is then cemented with the theme from the opening. Three bars of rising A major quaver-triplet chords see the movement to its end, in *pianissimo, dim.* and *ritard.* A Scherzo (*Prestissimo*) [7] follows in G major and $\frac{3}{4}$, the solo piano contributing *staccato* crotchets in the right hand over a *legato* bass. A passage in D major with chromatic wrinkles leads to an A major ending before a repeat of the whole. The next region begins *fugato* in B flat major, gaining further chromaticism before eight bars of octave pedal point on A function as a dominant to the D major end of the segment. The trio section remains in D major, the violin contributing the *legato piano* melody before being joined by the cello. The second part makes a harmonic ramble from D to A major before ending in G major with the direction *Scherzo Da Capo*. The Rondo (*Allegro con grazia*) [8] sprawls across twenty pages of $\frac{2}{4}$ score. This finale begins with the *con grazia* A theme in A major, the melody first in the violin, and later, in solo piano. The theme is inverted in mirror fashion for B in E major/minor (dominant) before a second round of A returns. This rondo is in seven parts, and the fourth of these is a diverse C region that sprawls from B major with long B pedal point to E flat major, E major (and a striving, *con espressivo*, melody), F sharp major, and passages of chromatic wandering before it lands in E minor. A varied reprise of the opening here lends the rondo its ABACABA structure, as D major, then an unsettled region, and lastly E major serve as bases for the reprised sections. These harmonic choices mean that the fundamental keys of A major/minor and D major must again be established before the work is ended, and the last page is overwhelmingly in A major through its *fortissimo fermata* finish.

William Melton is the author of *Humperdinck: A Life of the Composer of Hänsel und Gretel* (Toccatà Press, London, 2020) and *The Wagner Tuba: A History* (edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008) and was a contributor to *The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia* (2013). He undertook postgraduate studies in music history at the University of California at Los Angeles before a four-decade career as a horn-player with the *Sinfonie Orchester Aachen* (Aix-la-Chapelle). Further writings include articles on lesser-known Romantics including Felix Draeseke, Friedrich Gernsheim, Henri Kling and Friedrich Klose, and he has researched and edited the scores of the 'Forgotten Romantics' series for the publisher edition ebenos.

The internationally acclaimed **Trio Anima Mundi** (TAM) has stood out as a beacon on the Australian chamber-music scene since its establishment in 2008. Celebrated for its innovative approach and 'Piano Trio Archaeology', TAM unearths and performs forgotten gems alongside iconic piano-trio masterpieces and contemporary compositions. Praised as a 'trio of vitality, charm and aplomb' (*The Age*), TAM is renowned for its 'superb ensemble playing' (*Limelight*), with recordings of its performances frequently broadcast to global audiences. TAM is a sought-after presence at festivals and master-classes, appearing in renowned gatherings such as the Castlemaine State Festival, Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields Festival, Melbourne Chamber Music Feast, Montsalvat Chamber Music Series, Ballan Feast and 3MBS Marathons. TAM is currently serving as Ensemble-in-Residence at the International Academy of Musical Arts (www.iamusica.org) in Melbourne.

TAM's debut recording, *Romantic Piano Trios* (Divine Art DDA25102) received a prestigious MusicWeb International 'Recording of the Year' recognition in 2013. Critics hailed it as a 'top recommendation' (*Fanfare*) and praised it as being 'beautifully recorded in well-balanced sound, with consistently affectionate performances' (*Gramophone*), declaring it 'the CD of the year and, perhaps, many years to come' (Wright Music, UK). The second TAM recording, *English Piano Trios* (Divine Art DDA25158), released in January 2020, was hailed an 'Audiophile Essential' by *Hi-Res Audio* (Germany), claimed 'Recording of the Month' from MusicWeb International, and was a featured Classical Album on Apple Music. One critic noted being 'continually amazed at the brilliant interpretation of this music' (MusicWeb International).

TAM's ongoing projects include The Reissiger Project, this groundbreaking survey of the 27 piano trios of Carl Reissiger for Toccatà Classics.



Dr **Kenji Fujimura**, piano, is a multi-award-winning musician, renowned for his ability to present an eclectic range of repertoire with ‘understanding, sympathy and technical prowess’ (MusicWeb International). A musical polymath, he has won the Australian National Piano Award, the distinction of ‘Recording of the Year’ from MusicWeb International and ‘Chamber Music Recording of the Year’ from *Limelight* and, as composer, the William Lincer Foundation Prize (USA) and Singapore Asian Composers Festival Award. His compositions are distributed by Universal Edition in Vienna.

As well as being a Founder Member of the Trio Anima Mundi, he is a highly respected pedagogue with three decades of tertiary teaching experience, counting among his current

roles those of teacher/supervisor/examiner for the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, examiner for the Australian Music Examinations Board and Patron of the Association of Eisteddfod Societies of Australia, and he also maintains an exclusive private teaching studio. Many of his former students have successful careers in the performing arts and music education globally. His plans include the premiere of three new composition commissions, jury duty for the Melbourne International Piano and Strings Festival Competition and Sparta International Film Festival (USA), and a book chapter on Debussy for Cambridge University Press.

He was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in London in 2015 for his 'significant contribution to the music profession'.

www.kenjimusic.com

Rochelle Ughetti, violin, is a seasoned and passionate chamber musician and has been a member of the Trio Anima Mundi since 2009. She has performed as soloist with several ensembles, including the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, the Ragadolls Salon Orchestra and Speak Percussion and has worked with the London Chamber Players, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria and regularly as a member of the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra. She has also participated in the intensive programme 'Encuentro de Musica y Academia de Santander' in Spain.

She has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Harold Craxton chamber-music prize and the Marjorie Hayward prize at the Royal Academy of Music, where she completed her postgraduate studies as a scholarship holder. At the Victorian College of the Arts she was awarded the Mensa Award, the C. D. Hume violin scholarship, the Classical Concerto Competition prize and the Performance Related Studies Award. She was also the winner of the String section of the Hephzibah Menuhin award. She plays on a seventeenth-century violin by Giofredo Cappa.

Hailed as a cellist with 'exceptional talent and innate musicality, one with superb technique and interpretation', the Singaporean **Noella Yan** has been recognised for her 'expressive sound' (*The Straits Times*). A passionate advocate of new music, she has premiered works by many composers, among them Jeff Myer and Andre Myers, and performed as a member of Ad Hoc Collective. She co-curated a series of concerts across Australasia, the venues including the Parliament House in Canberra, and collaborated with dancers and visual artists in the USA and Singapore to raise awareness of social and environmental issues. In 2014, she premiered Bernard Tan's Cello Concerto, marking her return to performances in Singapore and Vietnam. She has

performed with numerous orchestras and given many concerts globally, playing in Buckingham Palace and the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, the Kennedy Centre of Performing Arts in Washington, DC, the Xinghai Concert Hall in Guangzhou, Beethoven-Haus in Bonn and Suginami Hall in Tokyo.

She maintains an active schedule as an educator and adjudicator: she directs a cross-cultural Fusion Ensemble at Lauriston Girls' School in Melbourne and is a faculty member of the International Academy of Musical Arts. Deeply passionate about using music to effect change, she founded ARTIF – 'Art It Forward', a non-profit outreach effort that seeks to bring creativity through the arts to underserved communities; it currently has a project running in Tachileik, in eastern Myanmar.

Recorded on 28 March 2021 (No. 1) and 20 May 2022 (No. 4) in the Auditorium,
Australia Piano World, Melbourne, Australia

Piano: Sauter 275 Concert Grand

Engineer: Haig Burnell

Producers: Haig Burnell, Kenji Fujimura, Rochelle Ughetti and Noella Yan



The first volume of The Reissiger Project was made possible with the assistance of many supporters.

They include: Australia Cultural Fund, Reissiger Foundation (Germany), Creative Partnerships Australia, International Academy of Musical Arts, The Reissiger Project first campaign donors (Graeme Allen, Calvin Bowman, Greg Coldicutt, Lynette Dong, John and Anne Duncan, Richard Gubbins, Kazue and Yutaka Fujimura, Yelien He, Helen Jordan, Masae Judd, Jerry Koliha, W & D Macmillan, Ronald McCoy, Janet McDonald, Joan Morgan, Rosalie Richards, Jenny Wallace Smith, Robert Stove, David and Elizabeth Thompson, Alison Witcombe, Stephanie Yan, Michele Yeo, as well as many anonymous donors. The Sauter 275 Concert Grand piano used in this recording was generously provided by Australia Piano World.

'We are delighted that, thanks to the intensive work of Trio Anima Mundi on the piano trios, the wonderful romantic music of Carl Gottlieb Reissiger, who was born in our town of Bad Belzig and worked in Dresden, is now travelling around the world.'

—Board of Directors and Board of Trustees of the Carl Gottlieb Reissiger Foundation

Booklet text: William Melton

Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)

Typesetting and layout: ALN Design, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

© Toccata Classics, London, 2024

© Toccata Classics, London, 2024

Toccata Classics CDs are available in the shops and can also be ordered from our distributors around the world, a list of whom can be found at www.toccataclassics.com. If we have no representation in your country, please contact:

Toccata Classics, 16 Dalkeith Court, Vincent Street, London SW1P 4HH, UK

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