



Thursday Evening, March 17, 2016, at 8:00
Isaac Stern Auditorium/Ronald O. Perelman Stage
Conductor's Notes Q&A with Leon Botstein at 7:00



presents

Giant in the Shadows

LEON BOTSTEIN, *Conductor*

ADOLF BUSCH Three Études for Orchestra, Op. 55
For Intonation: Lento ed espressivo
For Precision: Vivace (ma non troppo presto)
For Change of Tempo and Meter: Comodo e scherzando

MAX REGER Piano Concerto in F minor, Op. 114
Allegro moderato
Largo con gran espressione
Allegretto con spirito

PETER SERKIN, *Piano*

Intermission

MAX REGER *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of J.A. Hiller, Op. 100*
Theme: Andante grazioso
Variation 1: Più andante
Variation 2: Allegretto con grazia
Variation 3: Vivace
Variation 4: Poco vivace
Variation 5: Andante sostenuto
Variation 6: Tempo di Minuetto
Variation 7: Presto
Variation 8: Andante con moto
Variation 9: Allegro con spirito
Variation 10: Allegro appassionato
Variation 11: Andante con moto
Fugue: Allegro moderato

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This evening's concert will run approximately two hours and 30 minutes including one 20-minute intermission.

American Symphony Orchestra welcomes the many organizations who participate in our Community Access Program, which provides free and low-cost tickets to underserved groups in New York's five boroughs. For information on how you can support this program, please call (212) 868-9276.

FROM THE **Music Director**

The Crucial Missing Link: Max Reger by Leon Botstein

The untimely death of Max Reger a century ago in 1916, during World War I when he was only 43, explains in part his unique place in music history. His is a name always cited respectfully in accounts of music history that begin with Brahms and end with Schoenberg. Indeed, in the span of two decades, from the mid-1890s until his death, Reger produced an astonishingly large number of compositions. With these widely performed and discussed works, Reger rose to striking prominence in German musical life. He was regarded by many as the best hope for the future of music in Germany, the next in line after his famous and somewhat older contemporaries, Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler.

Reger's music was also controversial. There were those who found it too advanced and demanding on listeners. He was hard to categorize and label. On the one hand, Reger's ambition was in orchestral, chamber, vocal, and choral music. His lack of interest in music for the theater suggested that he was a worthy successor to Brahms, worthy of bringing new life into a classical-romantic tradition. At the same time, however, Reger's music was marked consistently by an advanced

novel harmonic language, a brilliant use of chromaticism that could easily be heard as an extension of Wagnerian practice. Although he shied away from the narrative drama audible in Mahler's symphonies or more explicitly in Strauss' orchestral music, Reger's sound world was comparably lush and luxuriant. Reger applied sonority densely to his musical canvas in an unmistakably distinct manner, one that bears a family resemblance not only to the *fin-de-siècle* music of Mahler and Strauss, but also to his contemporaries Franz Schreker and Alexander Zemlinsky.

Reger's favorite keyboard instrument (he was primarily a pianist) was the organ, an instrument also dear to the heart of his protégé, Adolf Busch. But unlike Bruckner, who transferred the monumental scale of the sound of the late 19th-century organ to his orchestrations and underscored the organ's unique and wide range of distinct contrasting choirs, Reger was inspired by how the organ can blend contrasting sounds, registers, and pitches and can generate long meandering lines and diverse streams of sound, which is why it has persistently been an ideal vehicle for improvisation.

Reger quickly found his voice and fashioned a musical aesthetic in which fantasy and narrative spontaneity—a musical



legacy of the early romanticism of Schumann and Liszt—are integrated synthetically with the imaginative extension of the classical, formal logic we associate with Viennese classicism—Mozart and Beethoven, for example—and later, Mendelssohn and Brahms. This idiosyncratic achievement marks Reger’s music, defines its originality, and renders it immediately recognizable.

Reger’s special modernism, born out of a synthesis of disparate influences and cast in traditional genres, also earned him a good deal of criticism. Like the music of Strauss from the 1890s and most of Mahler’s works, Reger’s music was often pilloried. This led the composer—who was intense, witty, hard-drinking, and also deeply empathetic—famously to write to one critic that he was reading the critic’s review while seated “in the smallest room” in his house, and he wanted to assure the critic that the review would soon be “behind him.”

The number of Reger’s works and the consistency of their quality are astonishing. However, the intersection of his death and the political and social transformation wreaked by World War I profoundly influenced Reger’s posthumous reputation. There were those who never lost faith in the power of his music and fought against its gradual slide into obscurity. Many modernists in the 1920s, including Alban Berg and Arnold Schoenberg, expressed admiration for Reger’s work. His music vindicated their notion that the over-cited so-called “Brahms-Wagner” conflict between apparent conservatives (Brahmsians) and futurists (Wagnerians), which dated from the mid-19th century, was a thing of the past. Reger demonstrated how Brahms could be an inspiration for progressive contemporary composers and how classical procedures of thematic development and variation, the

non-theatrical approach to instrumental composition that foregrounded music’s autonomous formal power, were vital sources of an authentic and rigorous contemporary music. Berg’s use of formal structures in *Wozzeck* (1914–22), for example, owes a debt to Reger’s conviction that classical practices such as variation and imitative counterpoint were not obsolete.

Another composer who emerged in the 1920s and sustained a lifelong admiration of Reger was Paul Hindemith. Like Schoenberg, Hindemith construed his mission—particularly in his later years—as extending a line of musical composition that was directly connected to the great tradition of musical history (particularly the German musical heritage) but in neither a reactionary nor a nostalgic manner. It was by explicit design that Hindemith’s 1958 “Pittsburgh” Symphony was premiered on a program that included Reger’s *Hiller Variations*.

Indeed, Reger was a staunch German political nationalist (and like Schoenberg, a cultural chauvinist). This in part explains his choice of a theme by Johann Adam Hiller (1728–1804), one of the first conductors of the Leipzig Gewandhaus and a well-known and highly regarded composer who is perhaps most often cited for his advocacy of a specifically German form of musical theater: the Singspiel, a combination of music and spoken theater, of which Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* is probably the best known example in today’s repertory.

Among the most ardent Reger champions since 1916 have been the several generations of fabulous musicians connected to the family of Adolf Busch. Busch, one of the greatest violinists and finest musicians of his generation, was devoted to Reger and his memory. He was Arturo Toscanini’s favorite violin

soloist. He also founded what became a legendary quartet and helped establish refined and superb chamber music as a centerpiece of modern concert life. All of today's many fine chamber music groups, concert series, and festivals in the United States owe a debt to Busch, who was instrumental in founding Marlboro. Rudolf Serkin, Busch's son-in-law, continued to perform Reger's music after World War II in solo recitals and occasionally with George Szell (a Reger pupil). And now the mantle of advocacy for Max Reger has passed to Rudolf Serkin's son, Peter, my esteemed colleague at Bard College.

Adolf Busch, like many of the great performers of his generation, not only relished playing new music but also was himself a composer. The work on this program comes from Busch's later years, after he had fled to the United States. Busch's emigration (and that of his brother, the great conductor Fritz) was a rare act of conscience. The Busch family was not Jewish. His opposition to the Nazis and Hitler was in no sense involuntary. In fact, he sacrificed fame and material comfort and resisted the persistent overtures of the Third Reich from the very start of the regime in 1933. Our admiration for Busch's character deepens over time as we come to realize how extraordinary such refusal to collaborate with evil is among artists. Busch showed a decency and moral clarity that we would like to call "common" when it is, in fact, rare.

The work on this concert program not only illuminates Busch's craft, but his good nature. The three études are defined by a commonplace but also affectionate sense of superiority on the part of chamber musicians and soloists towards the pitfalls inherent in basic orchestral practice. They are written to highlight the challenges of orchestral intonation created by the scale and variety of instruments involved, the difficulties in achieving precision in ensemble, and getting orchestras to alter tempo and negotiate shifting meters.

The ASO has had a long tradition of programming Reger. The list of works it has performed includes his *Variation and Fugue on a Theme by Mozart*, Op. 132 (1914); *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Beethoven*, Op. 86 (1904); *Four Tone Poems after Arnold Böcklin*, Op. 128 (1913); and *Psalm 100*, Op. 106 (1909); as well as orchestral songs and shorter works. We believe Reger to be a great original voice from the turn of the last century, a composer whose works deserve to be returned to our concert stages, both in orchestral and chamber concerts. With a ravishing harmonic language, stunning orchestral color, and an entirely non-pedantic appropriation of musical logic, Reger communicates the beauty, drama, and emotional power of music with intensity quite in contrast with the confessional theatricality of Mahler and the ironic distance and bittersweet nostalgia of Strauss.

THE Program

by Byron Adams

Adolf Busch

Born August 8, 1891, in Siegen, Germany

Died June 9, 1952, in Guilford, Vermont

Three Études for Orchestra, Op. 55

Composed in 1940

Premiered November 16, 1940, in New York City by the NBC Symphony

Orchestra conducted by William Steinberg

Performance Time: Approximately 23 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 2 oboes, 1 English Horn, 2 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 5 French horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion (triangle, snare drum, cymbals), 22 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, and 6 double basses

In 1933 Thomas Mann characterized Adolf Busch as “an extraordinarily appealing person, strongly opposed to the Hitler nonsense, in exile from Germany, and yet ‘the German violinist,’ very comforting, a kindred spirit.” Indeed, Busch despised the Nazis so profoundly that he issued a resolute public statement in April of 1933 that declared, “Because of the impression made on me by the actions of my Christian compatriots against German Jews...I find it necessary to break off my concert tour in Germany.” In 1937, when the Nazi government tried to induce Busch to return, he said, “If you hang Hitler in the middle, with Goering on the left and Goebbels on the right, I’ll return to Germany.” Busch was unquestionably the leading German violinist at the time, but when he immigrated to America he never recaptured the fame that he enjoyed in the 1920s and ’30s. Busch left a lasting legacy in the New World: he co-founded Vermont’s Marlboro Music School and Festival with his son-in-law Rudolf Serkin.

Busch was born into a musical family: his father was a noted luthier and his brother was a distinguished conductor. Busch began his studies at the Cologne Conservatory in 1902 and he met Max Reger seven years later. He liked Reger both personally and professionally: he characterized the composer as a “humorous, generous, impulsive man who cannot bear restraint or hear of anyone being oppressed.” Reger also praised Busch highly, telling the violinist’s wife, Frieda, that her husband was “taking the place of Joachim.” Since Reger was a superb pianist, he and Busch concertized together often.

During his heyday, Busch played some 200 concerts a year—an incredibly demanding schedule—and yet also found the time to become a prolific composer who created a large body of chamber music. Unsurprisingly, Reger’s music deeply influenced Busch’s own rich and polyphonic style. Written decades after the older composer’s death, Busch’s

Three Études for Orchestra, Op. 55, still show traces of Reger's influence; this score was premiered during an NBC radio broadcast on November 16, 1940, with William Steinberg conducting the orchestra.

Max Reger

Born March 19, 1873, in Brand, Germany
Died May 11, 1916, in Leipzig

Piano Concerto in F minor, Op. 114

Composed in 1910

Premiered December 15, 1910, in Leipzig at the Leipzig Gewandhaus conducted by Arthur Nikisch with pianist Frieda Kwast-Hodapp
Performance Time: Approximately 44 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 5 French horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, 22 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, 6 double basses, and piano soloist

Few major composers have been quite as misunderstood or neglected in the repertoire as Max Reger. This may partially be due to Reger's bumptious and mildly scatological sense of humor: anecdotes—true and apocryphal—about his witty ripostes to vituperative critics and feckless performers are still retold to this day. While these stories about Reger's sense of humor do contain a grain of truth, all too often these traits are used to dismiss the composer as a jester whose music was heavy and unredeemably contrapuntal.

Reger was prone to extremes of mood and at times his hectic high spirits and the deep depression combined, as in the composition and reception of his massive, tragic Piano Concerto in F minor, Op. 114. The concerto was composed for the fearless pianist Frieda Kwast-Hodapp (1880–1949), who had delighted Reger with her brilliant performance of his finger-twisting *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of J.S. Bach*, Op. 81 at a three-day festival devoted to his music in May of 1910. Exhilarated by her performance as a

signal tribute to his work, Reger returned home and immediately began work on a piano concerto. He completed the heroic first movement by the end of June. Reger played the slow movement to his friend Karl Straube in mid-July; the finale was completed and scored in just seven days. The autograph score, which was destroyed when the offices of Reger's publisher were bombed in 1943, is said to have included a characteristically heavy-handed dedication: "This beastly stuff belongs to Frau Kwast. The Chief Pig, Max Reger."

Sadly, The Chief Pig was deeply hurt by the vicious critical reception of his new concerto after its premiere in Leipzig on December 15, 1910, with Kwast-Hodapp at the piano with the Gewandhaus Orchestra conducted by Arthur Nikisch. One critic called it the "latest miscarriage of the Reger muse." In 1912 a despondent and defensive Reger wrote to a patron: "My Piano Concerto is going to be misunderstood for years.... The musical language is too austere.... The public will need some time to get used to it."

Variations and Fugue on a Theme of J.A. Hiller, Op. 100

Composed in 1907

Premiered on October 15, 1907, in Cologne, Germany, conducted by Reger

Performance Time: Approximately 41 minutes

Instruments for this performance: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 3 bassoons, 5 French horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, 1 harp, 22 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, and 6 double basses

Like the *fin-de-siècle* itself, Max Reger was Janus-like; his music looked backward to Bach and Brahms as well as forward to successors such as Berg and Schoenberg. In the early 1920s Reger's scores were those that were most often programmed on Schoenberg's Verein für Privataufführungen in Wein und Prag. Schoenberg admired him for obvious reasons. Reger proudly espoused both innovation and tradition; like Schoenberg, he was convinced that Brahms was a "progressive." Reger also rejected the reactionary aesthetics of his erstwhile teacher, the strict music theorist Hugo Reimann. Berg, too, defended Reger's achievements: "Reger favors a rather free construction, which, as he says, is reminiscent of prose.... This is the reason for his music's relative lack of popularity...neither of the other attributes of his thematic writing (motivic development of multi-voiced phrases), nor his harmony, nor his contrapuntal writing, are likely to keep his musical language from being understood."

However, one could argue that his early studies with Riemann were crucially important to his later technique. Reger's contrapuntal mastery and exquisite voice leading, learned from Riemann, keep

the iridescent harmonic vocabulary and rapid modulations flowing forward. The structural poise evinced by Reger's orchestral works in variation form, such as the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of J.A. Hiller*, Op. 100 refute the charges of "formlessness" that have been leveled against his music as well as Berg's off-hand remark concerning its "free construction." In fact, the *Hiller Variations* are cunningly paced and contrasted with unerring skill, with the design of each variation contributing to the overall form. The ravishing second variation is an example of Reger's lyricism at its most affecting, while the energetic variations look forward to Hindemith's dynamism.

Reger's skill as an orchestrator has never been sufficiently appreciated. In the *Hiller Variations*, the orchestral timbres move effortlessly from delicacy to grandiloquence. This score, along with Reger's other sets of variations, constitutes a bridge between the developmental techniques found in Brahms' *Variations on a Theme of Haydn*, Op. 56 (1873) and Schoenberg's *Variations for Orchestra*, Op. 31(1928).

Byron Adams is a professor of musicology at the University of California, Riverside.

THE Artists

LEON BOTSTEIN, *Conductor*

RIC KALLAHER



Leon Botstein has been music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra since 1992. He is also music director of The Orchestra Now, an innovative training orchestra composed of top musicians from around the world. He is artistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, which take place at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, where he has been president since 1975. He is also conductor laureate of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, where he served as music director from 2003–11.

Mr. Botstein's recent engagements include the Royal Philharmonic, Wiesbaden, UNAM Mexico, and the Simon Bolivar Orchestra in Caracas. He has appeared with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Russian National Orchestra, Taipei Symphony, and the Sinfónica Juvenil de Caracas in Venezuela and Japan, the first non-Venezuelan conductor invited by El Sistema to conduct on a tour. Upcoming engagements include the

Aspen Festival and the Magna Grecia Festival in Italy. He can be heard on numerous recordings with the London Symphony (including a Grammy-nominated recording of Popov's First Symphony), the London Philharmonic, NDR-Hamburg, and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. Many of his live performances with the American Symphony Orchestra are available online. His recording with the ASO of Paul Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner* was named one of the top recordings of 2015 by numerous trade publications.

Mr. Botstein's most recent book is *Von Beethoven zu Berg: Das Gedächtnis der Moderne* (2013). He is the editor of *The Musical Quarterly* and the author of numerous articles and books. He is currently working on a sequel to *Jefferson's Children*, about the American education system. Collections of his writings and other resources may be found online at LeonBotsteinMusicRoom.com. For his contributions to music he has received the award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and Harvard University's prestigious Centennial Award, as well as the Cross of Honor, First Class from the government of Austria. Other recent awards include the Caroline P. and Charles W. Ireland Prize, the highest award given by the University of Alabama; the Bruckner Society's Julio Kilenyi Medal of Honor for his interpretations of that composer's music; the Leonard Bernstein Award for the Elevation of Music in Society; and Carnegie Foundation's Academic Leadership Award. In 2011 he was inducted into the American Philosophical Society.



PETER SERKIN, *Piano*

The American pianist Peter Serkin's musical heritage extends back several generations: his grandfather was violinist and composer Adolf Busch and his father pianist Rudolf Serkin. He has performed with the world's major symphony orchestras and is a dedicated chamber musician. He has collaborated with Alexander Schneider; Pamela Frank; Yo-Yo Ma; the Budapest, Guarneri, Orion, and Shanghai String quartets; and TASHI, of which he was a founding member.

Mr. Serkin's orchestral appearances for the 2014–15 season included concertos by Mozart, Bartók, and Beethoven with the San Francisco, Chicago, Dallas, and Sydney symphonies and the Florida Orchestra. In April he gave the world premiere of Pulitzer Prize– and MacArthur Fellowship–winning composer Charles Wuorinen's new piano concerto with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. He gave solo recitals in New York, Sydney, Brisbane, and New Haven at Yale University, and joined the Orion String Quartet at the Ravinia and Toronto



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Mr. Serkin currently teaches at Bard College Conservatory of Music and the Longy School of Music. He is a Steinway Artist and has recorded for Arcana, Boston Records, Bridge, Decca, ECM, Koch Classics, New World Records, RCA/BMG, Telarc, and Vanguard Classics. He is exclusively represented by Kirshbaum Associates, Inc.

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Now in its 54th season, the American Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1962 by Leopold Stokowski, with a mission of making orchestral music accessible and affordable for everyone. Music Director Leon Botstein expanded that mission when he joined the ASO in 1992, creating thematic concerts that explore music from the perspective of the visual arts, literature, religion, and history, and reviving rarely-performed works that audiences would otherwise never have a chance to hear performed live.

The orchestra's Vanguard Series consists of multiple concerts annually at

Carnegie Hall. ASO also performs at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College in Bard's SummerScape Festival and the Bard Music Festival. The orchestra has made several tours of Asia and Europe, and has performed in countless benefits for organizations including the Jerusalem Foundation and PBS.

Many of the world's most accomplished soloists have performed with the ASO, including Yo-Yo Ma, Deborah Voigt, and Sarah Chang. The orchestra has released several recordings on the Telarc, New World, Bridge, Koch, and



Vanguard labels, and many live performances are also available for digital download. In many cases these are the

only existing recordings of some of the rare works that have been rediscovered in ASO performances.

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