

Richard STÖHR

SOLO AND CHAMBER MUSIC FOR ORGAN
FIVE INTERMEZZI FOR PIANO AND ORGAN, OP. 35
SUITE FOR ORGAN AND VIOLIN, OP. 102
ORGAN SONATA IN D MINOR, OP. 33

Jan Lehtola, organ
Anna-Leena Haikola, violin
Annikka Konttori-Gustafsson, piano

FIRST RECORDINGS

RICHARD STÖHR: A LONG LIFE IN BRIEF¹

by Stefan Koch

Richard Stöhr (1874–1967) was born Richard Stern in Vienna, in the same year as Arnold Schoenberg. His Jewish parents were originally from Hungary. His father, Samuel, was a professor of medicine at the University of Vienna, and his mother, Mathilde, was the sister of Heinrich Porges, one of Richard Wagner's closest associates.² Stöhr first obtained a degree in medicine from the University of Vienna, in 1898 but, his army service apart, never practised as a doctor and immediately entered the Vienna Academy of Music (now known as the University of Music and the Performing Arts) as a composition student of Robert Fuchs.³ At this time he also changed his name from Stern to Stöhr and converted to Christianity. In the annual summary he entered in his diary he wrote of 1898:

This was the year the big change occurred. Herewith I have sealed the fate of my future life. Now I am a musician and I carry this responsibility seriously, consciously and without regret. At the same time came the actual change of my name to 'Stöhr', on which I had decided already in the summer. It was just the right time for this and I am glad I didn't miss it. I am certain that in the future advantages will come from this for me.⁴

¹ A more complete biography of Richard Stöhr, with photos, documents, a complete list of compositions and a listening library of his music, can be found at www.richardstoehr.com.

² Porges (1837–1900) was another of the Jewish musicians with whom, paradoxically, the anti-Semitic Wagner surrounded himself (another was the conductor Hermann Levi, who conducted the premiere of *Parsifal*). Porges, born in Prague of a Jewish family that can trace its roots back several centuries, studied philosophy and law before turning first to music-criticism; he was also active as a choral conductor and composed a number of songs. He wrote extensively on Wagner. His daughter Elsa – Richard Stöhr's cousin – was the librettist of Engelbert Humperdinck's opera *Königskinder* (1895).

³ Fuchs (1847–1927) was perhaps Vienna's foremost teacher of composition, as well as being an esteemed composer in his own right, the popularity of his five *Serenades* (four of them scored for strings, the fifth for small orchestra) earning him the nickname 'Serenaden-Fuchs'. Fuchs' other students included Enescu, Korngold, Mahler, Schmidt, Schreker, Sibelius, Wolf and Zemlinsky.

⁴ Stöhr's papers are held privately by his family, by St Michael's College, Colchester, Vermont, and by the Austrian National Library in Vienna.

After completing his studies with Fuchs and earning a PhD in Music, in 1903, he immediately joined the faculty of the Academy. Soon he was teaching courses in theory, composition and the history of music, and coaching chamber music. Upon Fuchs' retirement in 1911 Stöhr took over his most advanced courses and became a full professor at the Academy in 1915. That year he was called up to serve as a doctor in the Austrian army and, since he was serving in a hospital in the suburbs of Vienna, he was able to live at home and continue teaching at the Academy.

His first book on harmony⁵ appeared in 1906. His early success as both author and composer is indicated in the diary summary for 1909:

Even more important for me⁶ was the success of my 'Harmonielehre', of which the first edition was already sold out in June and has therefore already appeared in the second edition. The reviews of this work were extremely positive from all sides. The performances of my compositions reached such frequency this season that some newspapers even commented that this was inappropriate.

Between the two World Wars Stöhr continued his prolific work as composer, author and teacher. After the *Anschluss* in March 1938, he was immediately identified by Nazi officials as a Jew and fired from his position at the Academy of Music. In February 1939 he emigrated to the United States. Had he not left Vienna, he probably would have shared the fate of his sister Hedwig, who was rounded up by the Nazis in 1941 and died in a transit camp in Poland in 1942. From this time until the end of his life, he used the alternative spelling of his name: Stoehr, just as Schönberg became Schoenberg. He was hired personally by Mrs Mary Curtis Bok, founder of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, to come to the Institute, initially as music librarian and subsequently to teach courses in theory and composition. He was also hired to translate part of the Burrell Collection of the letters of Richard Wagner.⁷

⁵ *Praktischer Leitfaden der Harmonielehre*, Universal Edition, Vienna.

⁶ In the previous sentence Stöhr mentions receiving his first income from the publication of a composition.

⁷ Published as *Letters of Richard Wagner*, *The Burrell Collection*, Macmillan, New York, 1950.

Curtis downsized its faculty in 1941 because of the war and Stoehr was 'let go' from his job there. He quickly found another position at St Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont, where he taught German as well as music. During his years in the United States Stoehr continued to compose prolifically in all major classical genres except opera. His output as a composer includes seven symphonies, two operas, choral music, 150 Lieder, fifteen violin sonatas, at least a dozen other major chamber works, as well as solo piano music.⁸ Although virtually all of his compositions before 1938 were published by major firms, including Universal Edition, none of the numerous works from his US years was ever published. His literary output extends to half a dozen books and numerous articles. During his fifty-year career as a teacher, his students numbered in the thousands and included Samuel Barber, Leonard Bernstein, Marlene Dietrich, Herbert von Karajan, Erich Leinsdorf and Rudolf Serkin. he died on 11 December 1967 in Montpelier, Vermont, and is buried in Merrill Cemetery in Colchester.

Stefan Koch is a native of York, Pennsylvania, and received his musical training at Temple University in Philadelphia; he also has a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Michigan. In 2001 he became a member of the Lansing Symphony and is a frequent performer with the Kalamazoo, West Michigan, Toledo and Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestras and the orchestra of Michigan Opera Theatre. In 2012 he undertook a series of recitals presenting the first US performances of the music for cello and piano by Richard Stöhr, the fruits of which, with the pianist Robert Conway, were released on a Toccata Classics album (TOCC 0210) in August 2014.

⁸ A full list of his compositions can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Stöhr.

THE ORGAN WORKS OF RICHARD STÖHR – CARILLONS AND A PROFUSION OF MELODY

by Jan Lehtola

Richard Stöhr's works for organ include a solo sonata, Op. 33 (1914), a suite for violin and organ, Op. 102 (1944), and a set of unpublished *24 Kurze Choralvorspiele*.¹ He also composed five Intermezzi for harmonium and piano, Op. 35 (1913), and wrote a part for organ into some of his works for orchestra.

Although Stöhr did not make his living as an organist, the organ seems to have played a more significant role for him than has been realised hitherto. He entered the Vienna Academy of Music to study the organ in 1898, and reported in his diary that he enjoyed both counterpoint and playing the organ – and, indeed, his works for organ, and especially the Sonata, are rich in counterpoint. His organ music, moreover, gives the impression that he was familiar with the instrument and its characteristics.

The earliest work here, the **Five Intermezzi for piano and harmonium, Op. 35** (1913), is not as anomalous in the duo repertoire as might first appear. The Romantic era fostered interest in the harmonium: it was an inexpensive instrument and added variety to music-making in the home. Easy to carry about and capable of producing diverse timbres, it also enjoyed a career as a concert instrument that, though brief, was rich in repertoire. Many major composers wrote for it, among them Berlioz, Boëllmann, Dvořák, Franck, Karg-Elert, Vierne and Widor. Together with the piano, the harmonium was an excellent alternative to a small ensemble or an orchestra, as proved by Rossini in his *Petite Messe Solennelle*.

In Finland there are virtually no harmoniums of the special construction of those found in France or the *Kunstharmonium* favoured by Stöhr and other composers in Austria and Germany. This recording was accordingly made with an organ. In sound,

¹ Not only are they unpublished: Stöhr did not intend them for public performance and forbade it.

the two instruments are basically similar, though the sighing element resulting from the air feed of the harmonium is missing entirely.

The first Intermezzo, *Andante con moto* [4], is an easy-going mood piece such as might be heard at a musical soirée in a bourgeois home. The two keyboard instruments take turns at being soloist and accompanist. The middle section, in C minor, introduces a note of tension, but it is soon dispelled, and the music returns to the carefree atmosphere of the beginning.

The second movement, *Poco presto* [5], is in the nature of a scherzo and calls to mind that from Mendelssohn's incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The tense outer sections form a contrast with the lyrical middle one, the musical ambience of which also leaves its mark on the coda.

The third movement, *Allegro molto* [6], is the most dramatic of the five. It begins with an intense quaver figure while the organ plays weighty snatches of melody over the piano accompaniment. After a static, mysterious middle section, the intense, dramatic music returns, with the two instruments superimposing their themes.

The fourth Intermezzo, *Poco adagio* [7], starts with a little solo introduction, the organ then joining in with soloistic gestures. After an exciting musical contraction, the middle section, *Poco più mosso*, begins with the instruments imitating each other in light, *staccato*-like figures, developing and building up to a climax of increasing tension and nuance. The languid initial texture returns with long phrases, raising the music to a new climax before a coda that evaporates into silence.

The fifth movement, *Vivace* [8], could have been influenced by children's round songs. Its cheerful, carefree sing-song brings to an end this otherwise varied suite packed with *joie de vivre*. Once again, the movement has a short, lyrical middle section, but it soon switches back to the sing-song texture, ending in a resolute *forte*.

Stöhr's **Organ Sonata in D minor, Op. 33**, was composed in 1914 and is dedicated to Rudolf Dittrich, who had been professor of organ in the Vienna Conservatoire since 1906 and was involved in the design of the organ in the Musikverein.² The Sonata is a

² Two years after Stöhr's dedication, on 18 October 1916, Dittrich collapsed in mid-performance and never entirely recovered; he died in Vienna on 16 January 1919.

work of symphonic stature lasting around half an hour. The main theme of the opening *Allegro con brio* [9] is solid and solemn and is first heard in homophonic mode. Even so, it is at once clear that the work is substantial and orchestrally conceived; indeed, it brilliantly exploits the full potential and range of timbres. The contrasting second subject is polyphonic and proceeds in steps. The immediate impression is of a carillon, and carillon motifs do indeed occupy a weighty role in the work. The movement is something of a mosaic, its pieces finally forming an overall image. The musical development and the handling of the material have features recalling the Mahler symphonies that were part of Stöhr's musical landscape in his native Austria. In addition to its first and second subjects, the Sonata has a fanfare figure and a carillon motif evocative of a nursery rhyme, both varied to suit different purposes. The overall structure has the makings of sonata form, though the wealth of thematic material is more than lavish.

In the second movement, an *Andantino pastorale* [10], the qualifying element in the tempo marking does indeed bring a pastoral atmosphere, perhaps even one that is slightly Christmas-like. The rocking main theme is subjected to a series of variations up to the contrasting middle section, which takes the form of a leisurely solo over a *staccato* accompaniment. The movement as a whole grows towards a fine closing phrase spread over three voices and then a recapitulation. To ensure that the middle section receives the attention it deserves, it is briefly repeated in the coda.

The third movement is a rondo, marked *Allegro vivace* [11], which presents a sparkling French toccata *à la* Guilmant. The easy-going, songlike main theme is heard in the top line while the others supply the action and energy. Both the first episode, and the third, which addresses the main theme, end with a passage suggestive of folk-music, almost as a reminder of Stöhr's Hungarian-Jewish origins. The major key dips into the minor in the development section, but nevertheless returns at the end to the home key and the major. In between the two main episodes are two lyrical *tranquillo* ones drawing extensively on the different timbral planes possible on an organ.

Exactly when the **Suite for Organ and Violin, Op. 102**, was composed is not entirely certain. In appreciation of a fine performance of his Organ Sonata, Stöhr dedicated this work to the organist Natilee Marston, for many years a member of the Music

Department of the University of Vermont. The Suite was performed on 6 October 1974 during the Richard Stöhr Memorial Concert at Trinity College, Burlington, Vermont, by Sadah Schuhari Colodny, violin, and Marie Vogelmann, organ. Although comparable to the two suites, Opp. 150 and 166, for the same two instruments by Josef Rheinberger (1839–1901), Stöhr's Suite is an original, distinctive work. Its symphonic – indeed, orchestral – dimensions and yet intimate and chamber-musical moments make it an important contribution to the repertoire of works for violin and organ; even so, it was never published. The manuscript, moreover, is a little unclear in places. Some of the harmonic solutions suggest that Stöhr may not have completed it; but since the score is marked with registrations and fingerings which possibly originate with him, it may nevertheless have been performed.

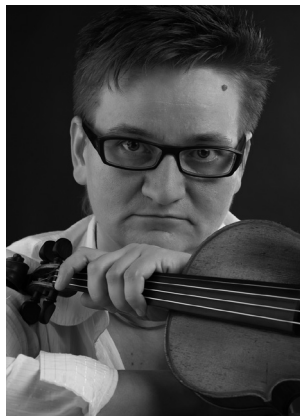
The first movement, bearing the tempo marking *Grave* [1], could have been entitled 'Sarabande', for its mournful, triple-time characteristics and accented second beat have the slight suggestion of a dance. It begins with an organ introduction in F minor, presenting a simple form of the theme. When the violin enters in A flat major, the second and third beats are often varied with crotchets. The third time, the theme is in the bass and the main key, F minor, above which the organ and violin engage in intimate dialogue. The introduction lasts 30 bars. Thereafter a new, extensive development section begins. The music is made more active by a figure in quavers. The development section consists of several short phrases in different key-relationships. The first three, in B flat minor, C major and A flat major, each consists of five bars. Over the next six-bar phrase the music proceeds via a sequence which lingers in E flat major and then moves on to a proud B major before creeping back to the initial mood and B flat major. The simple, chorale-like opening theme returns in a broad arch and marks the climax of the movement. Rounding it off is a coda using material from the development section in little fragmentary gestures.

The second movement is, as its heading, 'Butterfly and Flower', suggests, a scherzo-ish dialogue [2]. Might the violin be the butterfly? This light and cheerful central movement is in rondo form, the playfulness deriving mainly from the $\frac{3}{8}$ time-signature. There is just a hint of folk-music in the organ interludes. A blissful *poco tranquillo* episode, with long

phrases and *legato* lines, forms a contrast with the character of the rest of the movement, which is mostly *staccato*. The opening scherzo then returns with even more zest and leads the movement to an enigmatic close.

The third movement, marked *Allegro giusto* and *alla breve* [3], is rich in both thematic and harmonic material. It begins with a leisurely quaver passage on the organ over which the violin makes four-bar comments. The passages in minims and the dactylic rhythms constitute the main thematic material of the movement. Developmental, thematically disjointed episodes alternate with the opening material. Stöhr creates expectant sighs and chorales as a means of generating a symphonic effect. The end is sealed with a carillon note in the bass.

Having studied at the Liminka Music Institute, the Oulu Conservatoire and the Sibelius Academy, the violinist **Anna-Leena Haikola** graduated with distinction as a pupil of Päivi Meller in 2003. She also studied with Pierre Menard and Mathias Tacke at Northern Illinois University and in master-classes with teachers who included Hagai Shaham and Pinchas Zukerman. A versatile musician, she is equally at home in classical, contemporary and lighter music. She has appeared at many music festivals both at home in Finland and abroad, has appeared as soloist with the Helsinki Philharmonic, the Ostrobothnian Chamber and other orchestras, and frequently guest-leads different orchestras and ensembles. From 1995 she was a regular member of the Finnish National Opera Orchestra, thereafter transferring to the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra in 2003. Later that year, she was promoted to leader of the second violins. She is also a member of the Virtuosi di Kuhmo, Avanti! Chamber Orchestra and other ensembles and leader of the Avanti! Quartet.



Photograph: Jarkko Paavola

Annikka Konttori-Gustafsson studied piano with Izumi Tateno at the Sibelius Academy and with Klaus Schilde at the Hochschule für Musik Detmold and Hochschule der Künste Berlin. She obtained an artistic doctorate on the music of Olivier Messiaen at the Sibelius Academy in 2001.

Outside of her native Finland, she has appeared as a soloist, chamber musician and Lied pianist in Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, performing a wealth of Finnish music and of twentieth-century French repertoire. Annikka Konttori-Gustafsson has recorded for the radio in Finland and Switzerland and her discography includes music by Kazuo Fukushima (works for solo piano and duets with the flautist Liisa Ruoho), Olivier Messiaen's song-cycle *Harawi* (with Tuula-Marja Tuomela), organ-piano duos (with Jan Lehtola), vocal and piano music by Ernest Pingoud (with Helena Tenhunen and Jaakko Kortekangas), and piano music by Juhani Pohjanmies. Her previous appearance on Toccata Classics was in music by Sigfrid Karg-Elert (including two Sibelius arrangements) with Jan Lehtola, on TOCC 0419.

For some years now she has held a position as university lecturer in piano at the Sibelius Academy (University of the Arts Helsinki), and teaches also at the doctoral school of the Academy, where her role includes the supervision of, and the provision of seminars for, doctoral students. She has also taught Lied courses and piano master-classes in Finland and Germany.



Photograph: Mika Koivusalo

Dr **Jan Lehtola** is one of the most successful and progressive Finnish organists of his generation. He has appeared with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Tapiola Sinfonietta, the Lahti Symphony, Tampere Philharmonic and Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestras and the St Michel Strings, and he has performed at many international festivals. The conductors with whom he has worked include Juha Kangas, Ludovic Morlot, Kent Nagano, Sakari Oramo, Muhai Tang, Leif Segerstam and Osmo Vänskä.

Jan Lehtola works frequently with composers and has given more than 160 world and regional premieres. He was the Artistic Director of the Organo Novo Festival in Helsinki from 2007 to 2016 and Chairman of the Finnish Organum Society from 2009 to 2014. He has recorded for the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) and can be heard on more than forty commercial recordings, including six for Toccata Classics, of music by Harri Ahmas, William Humphreys Dayas, Sigfrid Karg-Elert, Joonas Kokkonen, Erkki Salmenhaara and Eduard Adolf Tod and his contemporaries (<https://toccataclassics.com/artist/jan-lehtola/>).

He studied the organ in Helsinki (with Olli Porthan and Kari Jussila), Amsterdam (with Jacques van Oortmerssen and Jean Boyer), Stuttgart (with Ludger Lohmann), Lyon (with Louis Robilliard) and Paris (with Naji Hakim). He graduated from the Church Music Department of the Sibelius Academy, gaining his diploma with distinction in 1998. In 2000 he gave his Sibelius Academy debut recital in Kallio Church, Helsinki, and in 2005 received a Doctorate for his dissertation on Oskar Merikanto as a transmitter of European influences to Finland. Jan Lehtola is himself a Lecturer in Organ Music in the Sibelius Academy. He is also active as a lecturer and a teacher of master-classes. www.janlehtola.com



Photograph: Gianni Proietti

The Main Organ of St Paul's Church in Helsinki, Finland

**Kangasalan Urkutehdas,
1931
Veikko Virtanen Oy, 2005**

*=from the 1931 organ

I C-a³

Principal 16'
Octava 8'
Flauto Major 8'
Quintatön 8'
Rohrflöte* 8'
Gamba 8'
Octava* 4'
Flöte* 4'
Quinta* 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Octava 2'
Kornett* 3-4 f
Mixtur* 4-6 f 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Fagott 16'
Trompete 8'

II C-a³

Quintadena* 16'
Geigen Principal* 8'
Flöte* 8'
Nackthorn* 8'
Gemshorn* 8'

Octava 4'
Querflöte* 4'
Piccolo* 2'
Sesquialtera* 2 f 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Krummhorn* 8'
Singend regal* 4'
tremolo

III C-a³

Lieblich Gedact* 16'
Principal 8'
Fugara 8'
Spitzflöte* 8'
Gedact* 8'
Voix celeste* 2 f 8'
Flauto dolce* 4'
Viola d'amore 4'
Querpfefte* 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Flageolet* 2'
Terz* 1 $\frac{3}{5}$ '
Harmonia aetheria 4 f 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Basson* 16'
Trompet harmonique 8'
Oboe 8'
Vox humana* 8'
Klarine 4'
tremolo

Pedal C-f¹

Grand Bordun 32' (octave transmission)
Violonbass 16'
Subbass* 16'
Echobass 16' (transmission)
Violoncello 8'
Flötenbass 8' (transmission)
Octava* 4'
Bombarde 16'
Trompete 8' (transmission)
Klarine 4' (transmission)

Couplers

II-I 8'
III-I 8'
III-II 8'
I, II, III-P 8'
III-I 16'
III 16'
II-I 4'
III-I 4'
III-II 4'
I, II, III-P 4'
General coupler 8'
General crescendo
Setzer



Photograph: Jan Lehtola

The Organ in Sovituksenkirkko ('Church of Reconciliation') in Hollola, Finland (2013)

Veikko Virtanen Oy

I C-g³

Borduna 16'

Principal 8'

Flûte harmonique 8'

Gamba 8'

Gedacht 8'

Octava 4'

Flûte octaviant 4'

Qvinta 3'

Octava 2'

Mixtur 3-4f

Trumpet 8'

II C-g³

Salicional 8'

Röhrflöjt 8'

Flöjt amabile 8'

Voix céleste 8'

Gamba 4'

Flute d'écho 2'

Flageolette 2'

Fagot-Oboe 8'

Tremulant

Pedal C-f¹

Violon 16'

Subbass 16'

Violoncello 8'

Bourdon 8'

Octava 4'

Basson 16'

Trumpet 8'

I/P, II/P, II/I, I 4', II 16'



Photograph: Sovituskenkirkko, Holola



Recorded on 17 January (Organ Sonata) and on 23 April (Suite for Organ and Violin)
in St Paul's Church in Helsinki, Finland, and on 11 May 2020 (Intermezzi)
in the Sovituksenkirkko (Church of Reconciliation), Hollola, Finland
Grand piano: Yamaha C 6

Recording and editing: Antti Pohjola

Producers: Annikka Konttori-Gustafsson and Jan Lehtola (Intermezzi),
Seppo Siirala (Suite for Organ and Violin) and Timo Asikainen (Organ Sonata)

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