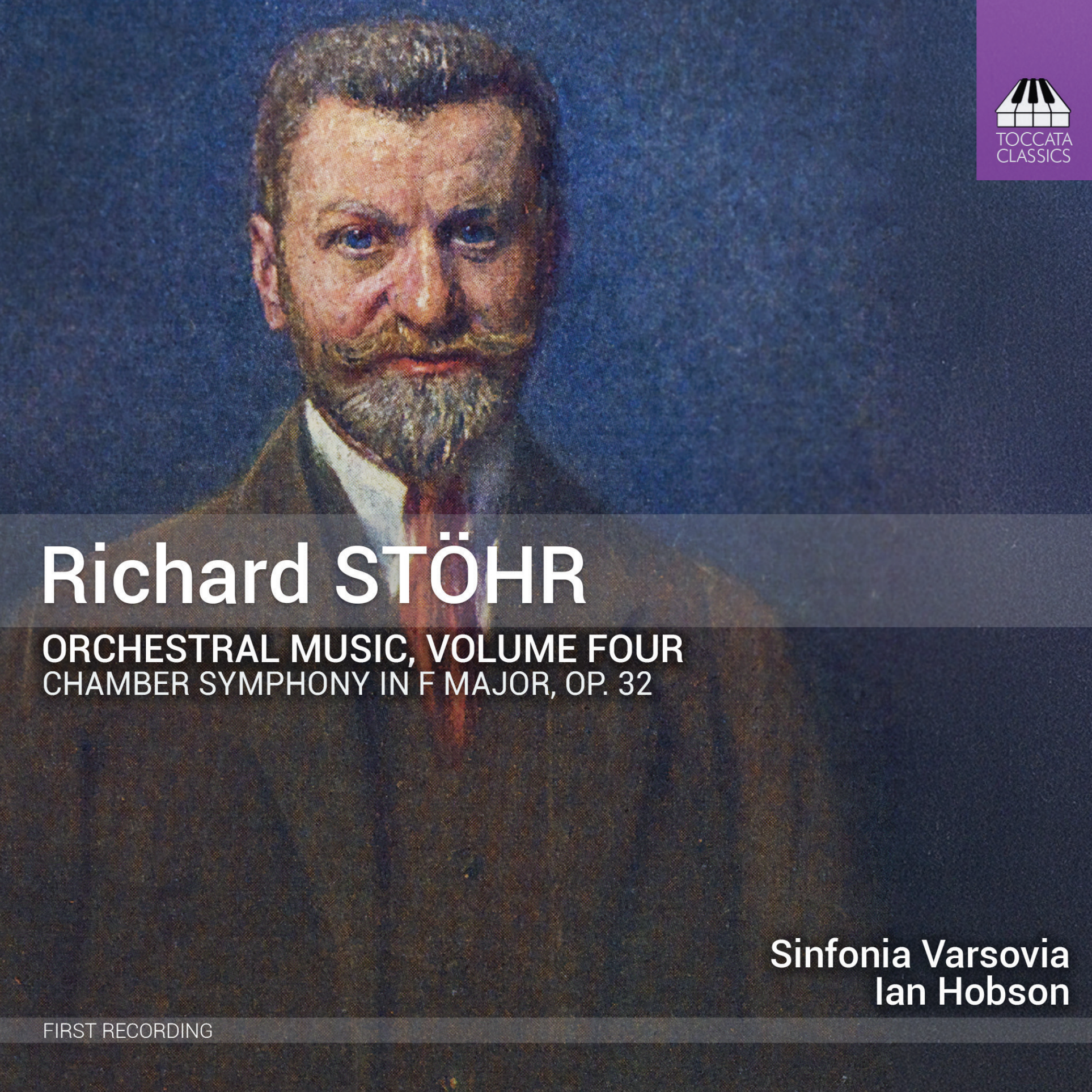


TOCCATA CLASSICS

Richard STÖHR

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME FOUR

CHAMBER SYMPHONY IN F MAJOR, OP. 32

Sinfonia Varsovia

Ian Hobson

FIRST RECORDING

RICHARD STÖHR: ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME FOUR

by William Melton

Richard Stöhr was born Richard Franz Stern into a well-to-do Jewish family in Vienna on 11 June 1874. His father was the university medical professor Samuel Salomon Stern, originally from Kiskunhalas, in present-day Hungary. Richard's mother, Matilde, *née* Porges, was from Prague, and her older brother, Heinrich Porges, had been the chief choral conductor of *Parsifal* at its original Bayreuth production in 1882 (when Richard Wagner dubbed him the 'Flower Father').[1] Porges had long been close to Franz Liszt, and in 1861 had arranged a charity benefit performance of Liszt's *Dante Symphony* in Prague. Under the direction of the composer, the concert was a thunderous success, and Liszt's visit to the Porges household made a lasting impression on the nineteen-year-old Matilde.[2]

At the age of fourteen, Richard Stern began a lifelong habit of diary-writing by describing the sensational murder-suicide of crown prince Rudolf and Baroness Mary Vetsera at the imperial hunting lodge at Mayerling on 30 January 1889.[3] In spite of encouragement from his music-steeped mother and uncle, 'he gave in to his father's insistence, renouncing art and musical training and studying medicine',[4] graduating in 1898. Then he abruptly changed direction. Taking a path that Jews, including Gustav Mahler, had used to advance their imperial careers, Stöhr converted to

[1] The nickname was awarded for his shepherding of Klingsor's Flower Maidens (Engelbert Humperdinck, *Parsifal-Skizzen: persönliche Erinnerungen an Richard Wagner und die erste Aufführung des Bühnenweihfestspiels*, Degen, Siegburg, 1947, p. 10). Heinrich Porges served as a pallbearer at Wagner's funeral on 18 February 1883.

[2] Matilde Stern-Porges, 'Erinnerungen an Franz Liszt', *Der Merker*, Vol. 2, No. 26, 1911, pp. 1074–75.

[3] Annual summaries of Stöhr's translated diaries are available at http://www.richardstoehr.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Stohr-Diary-Summaries.pdf.

[4] Anon., 'Prof. Dr. Richard Stöhr', *Musikverlag und Musikleben*, *Nachrichten der Verlagsfirmen Fr. Kistner und C. F. W. Siegel's Musikalienhandlung (R. Linnemann)*, No. 14, April 1920, p. 2.

Protestantism, also exchanging the surname Stern for Stöhr (much as Bruno Schlesinger had become Bruno Walter two years previously). He began lessons in counterpoint with Robert Fuchs, one of the most eminent music pedagogues in the city, and enrolled at the Conservatoire of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde ('Society of the Friends of Music'), studying with Wilhelm Schenner (piano) and Josef Vockner (organ). Fuchs had trained at the Conservatoire with Felix Otto Dessoff and Joseph Hellmesberger Sr. and, most notably, with the fabled Simon Sechter.[5] A teacher at the Conservatoire since 1875, Fuchs had remained there for nearly four decades, mentoring students who included Korngold, Mahler, Sibelius and Hugo Wolf.[6]

Richard Stöhr was hired at the Conservatoire in 1900 as a pianist-coach. He oversaw basic musicianship courses for instrumentalists and choral singers, graduated in organ in 1902 (winning the Silver Society Medal) and earned degrees in piano and composition. In 1904 he was engaged as instructor of music theory, a post he would hold for more than three decades (through two name-changes of the institution, to Akademie für Musik and then Hochschule für Musik), while teaching harmony, counterpoint, form, piano in chamber music and the didactics of music theory. In 1915 he was granted the title of professor, and was named a university lecturer in 1924 and a senior civil servant in 1926. Stöhr's engagement at the Conservatoire coincided with a fruitful period as a composer: 'Almost every year during this period he could count on something between one and three hundred performances'.[7] 'Stöhr is a very productive composer', wrote Paul Stefan in 1921, 'for whom no genre from *Lied* to opera was alien, and his name can be spotted on many concert programmes.'[8]

Stöhr himself remained unsatisfied. 'I am not a modern composer', he admitted in 1905; 'I do not understand the modern direction, and after it has triumphed, the

[5] Simon Sechter (1788–1867) instructed an illustrious group of musicians that began with Franz Schubert (who took one counterpoint lesson with Sechter in 1828) and included Anton Bruckner, Franz Lachner and Hans Richter.

[6] The list of Fuchs' leading students continues with George Enescu, Leo Fall, Richard Heuberger, Kamillo Horn, Eusebius Mandyczewski, Erkki Melartin, Franz Schmidt, Franz Schreker, Robert Stolz, Maude Valérie White and Alexander von Zemlinsky.

[7] Beate Hennenberg, '"Als Student kam man früher nach Wien, um bei Stoehr zu studieren" – Gedenktafel erinnert an den Kompositionsprofessor', *Musikerziehung*, Vol. 56, No. 6, 2002, p. 373.

[8] Paul Stefan, *Neue Musik und Wien*, Tal, Leipzig, Vienna and Zurich, 1921, p. 28.

world will not understand me'.[9] Even so, his best creations were held in respect, such as the *Chamber Symphony* in F major (Nonet), Op. 32, for string quartet, wind quartet and harp (at the Dresden premiere, 'The composer was celebrated with tumultuous applause'[10]) and the oratorio *Der verlorene Sohn* ('The Prodigal Son'), Op. 46 ('Stöhr obviously approached the musical execution of the work, which also contains many poetic beauties, with loving devotion and a fruitful use of his vibrant energy'[11]). Pianists who performed his works included Moriz Rosenthal, Alfred Grünfeld, Julius Epstein and the young Arthur Rubinstein, and 'Stöhr also enjoyed an excellent reputation as a sensitive song-composer and chamber musician'.[12]

During the First World War Stöhr served as a doctor in a hospital on the outskirts of Vienna. With 23 other composers (among them Korngold, Wilhelm Kienzl, Robert Fuchs and Hermann Grädener), he contributed to the 1916 collection *Lieder eines Verwundeten* ('Songs of a Wounded Man') in support of the Austrian Red Cross. At the end of the war, the optimism that had sustained him as a composer for nearly two decades waned, and he resignedly devoted himself to teaching and publishing his increasingly popular textbooks on music theory. In 1923 he married Marie (Mitzi), *née* Eitler, and a son, also Richard, and daughter Hedwig (Hedi) were products of the union.[13] The next year Stöhr mused on his 50th birthday:

> Ten years ago when I turned forty and the war broke out, I had realized that a kind of turning point in my life had been reached and that things could only go downhill for me in the artistic realm from then on. It was time to take leave of successes and artistic ambition. It meant learning to give up all those vain pleasures. I recognized this necessity ahead of time. To-day, ten years later I have regained my equilibrium and have separated myself internally from everything that had to do with myself as a creating artist. I have stopped creating and in spite of that have become a happier man than I was before. I am

[9] Hans Sittner, *Richard Stöhr: Mensch, Musiker, Lehrer*, Doblinger, Vienna, 1964, p. 34.
[10] Anon., 'Neuerscheinungen: Ur- und Erstaufführungen', *Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 88, No. 8, 16 December 1921, p. 220.
[11] Hugo Robert Fleischmann, 'Aus Wien', *Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 87, No. 24, 2 December 1920, p. 468.
[12] Hilde Hillemann-Stojan, 'Stöhr, Richard', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1980, Vol. 12, p. 1378.
[13] An earlier marriage in 1904 had quickly proved a failure. Heinrich, a second son with Mitzi, died as a toddler.

> surrounded by love and respect at home as also at school, rising in my profession which I love above everything, recognizing that ambition that is rewarded (which by the way was never satisfied) can only bring illusory happiness. In the 50th year of my life I have arrived at a kind of sunny plateau from which I can observe and smile without bitterness at my life thus far, at the collapse of my artistic strivings.[14]

His son remembered: 'He was very conscientious and severely punctual. If possible he answered every letter by hand on the same day it arrived. He was very strict, but also a very good teacher'.[15] His habits were modest, his routines prudent and he departed social evenings promptly at the stroke of ten. Still, if he came across a student of promise, he could bend his rules, as when the headstrong fourteen-year-old Erich Zeisl showed unusual promise in harmonising a phrase:

> The professor was very much taken aback, and he said, 'I have made a terrible mistake. Your mother must come and see me'. The mother came, and she was of course very, very doubtful of the whole thing and didn't want to believe it. And Stöhr said that Eric was very, very gifted, a born musician [who] had to study privately because class instruction apparently was not for him, that he was not a youngster who could take class instruction. My mother-in-law told me that herself, and she said, 'So I asked him again, "Do you really think that he should be a musician, a composer?", and he said, "If not he, then I don't know who in the world."' Then Eric said, 'I have no money.' He then made it possible for Eric by sending him [students], because he was the examiner of the harmony examinations that everybody who was studying an instrument had to take in order to get certificated.[16]

Stöhr often gathered students at his home to nourish them body and mind. 'Every two weeks', his pupil Hedy Kempny wrote:

[14] Richard Stöhr, 'Diaries; Annual Summaries; 1924', transl. by Hedi (Stoehr) Ballantyne (MS), p. 47 (http://www.richardstoehr.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Stohr-Diary-Summaries.pdf).

[15] Beate Hennenberg, 'Ein Lehrer aus Leidenschaft. Der Wiener Musiktheoretiker und Komponist Richard Stoehr', *klang:punkte*, No. 19, 2004, p. 16.

[16] Gertrude S. Zeisl and Malcolm Cole, *Eric Zeisl: His Life in Music*, Oral History Program, University of California at Los Angeles, 1978, p. 22.

> he had an 'open house', that meant whoever wanted to come to his house was invited. Around 7 p.m. we gathered and brought friends along or people to meet Dr. Stöhr. It was quite informal and sometimes he came home later and found his apartment crowded with thirty or more people.[17]

His students – and illustrious visitors who might include Felix Weingartner, Bruno Walter, Wilhelm Furtwängler or Erich Wolfgang Korngold – enjoyed a buffet, and afterwards free discussion was encouraged. Even the latest compositions of the New Vienna School were discussed with respect, with Stöhr himself demonstrating on the piano.

On repeated occasions, Stöhr donated his income from performances of his works for charitable purposes, the funds going to students and Akademie employees. After the First World War he arranged for needy students to convalesce in Switzerland, the Netherlands and Norway. Between the wars he began teaching popular Volkshochschule ('adult evening classes') courses and at the American People's College programme in Ötz, Tyrol. Contacts forged at this last venue would prove invaluable.

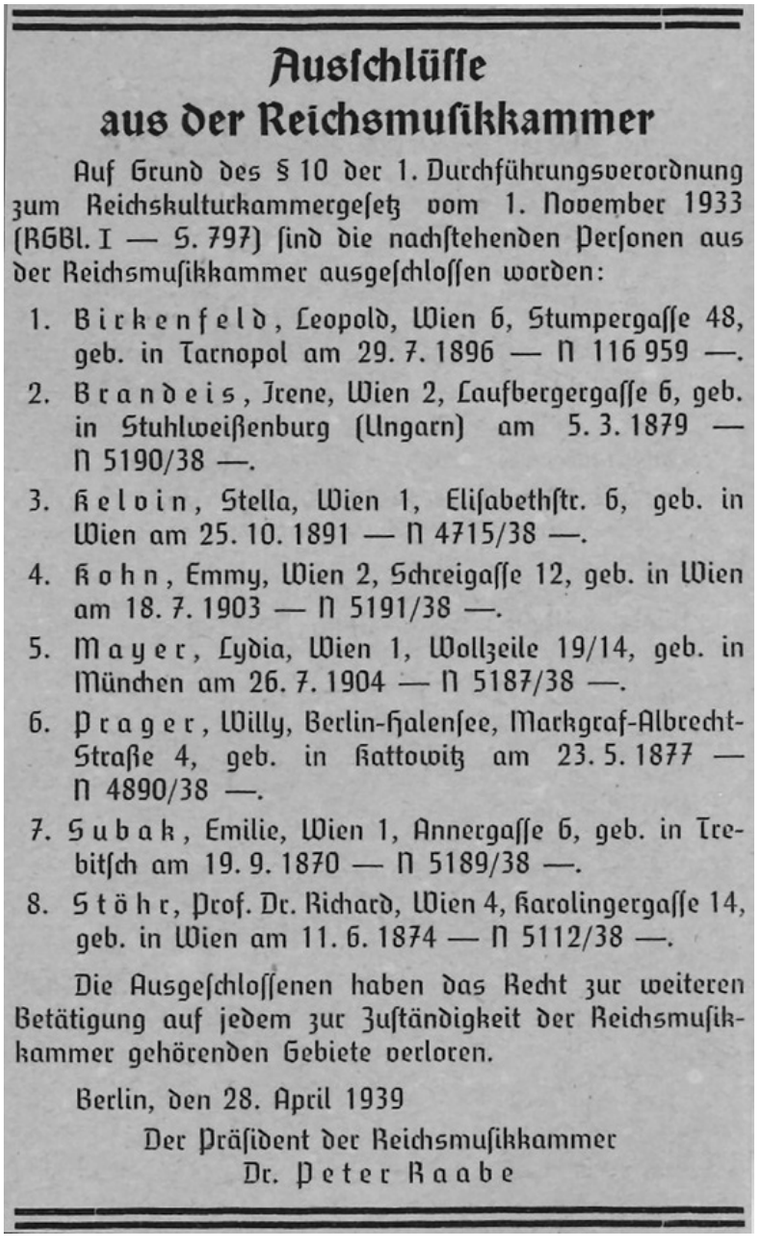
On 12 March 1938 came the *Anschluss*. Stöhr lamented that

> we have not only lost our fatherland but the Jews also their positions, their fortunes and their honour. Both I and all my Jewish and half Jewish colleagues were pensioned off and although the worst things as the loss of our apartment, imprisonment, tortures of all kind have been spared to me (at least until now) my whole system is racked and the daily humiliations we are exposed to apart from the constant fear and the enforced idleness are making advisable my emigration.[18]

[17] Lynne Heller (ed.), *The Composer and Teacher Richard Stöhr: 'I am a musician now, earnestly and free from regret' – Der Komponist & Lehrer Richard Stöhr: 'Nun bin ich Musiker mit Ernst und ohne Reue'*, Exhibition Catalogue, Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Vienna, 2017, p. 17.

[18] Richard Stöhr, 'Diaries; Annual Summaries; 1938', transl. by Hedi Ballantyne, unpaginated MS (http://www.richardstoehr.com/docs/1938-diary-summary/stohr-1938-diary-summary/). Among the colleagues who shared Stöhr's fate were the conductor Josef Krips and the historian-critic Max Graf (Barbara Preis, *Weibliche Lehrkräfte und Schülerinnen der Reichshochschule für Musik in Wien 1938–1945*, Dissertation, University of Vienna, 2009, p. 45).

In May 1939 the loss of his livelihood was made brutally public, when he was listed with 'The expelled persons [who] have lost the right to further activity in any field within the jurisdiction of the Reich Chamber of Music'.[19]



Ausschlüsse aus der Reichsmusikkammer

Auf Grund des § 10 der 1. Durchführungsverordnung zum Reichskulturkammergesetz vom 1. November 1933 (RGBl. I — S. 797) sind die nachstehenden Personen aus der Reichsmusikkammer ausgeschlossen worden:

1. Birkenfeld, Leopold, Wien 6, Stumpergasse 48, geb. in Tarnopol am 29. 7. 1896 — N 116 959 —.
2. Brandeis, Irene, Wien 2, Laufbergergasse 6, geb. in Stuhlweißenburg (Ungarn) am 5. 3. 1879 — N 5190/38 —.
3. Kelvin, Stella, Wien 1, Elisabethstr. 6, geb. in Wien am 25. 10. 1891 — N 4715/38 —.
4. Kohn, Emmy, Wien 2, Schreigasse 12, geb. in Wien am 18. 7. 1903 — N 5191/38 —.
5. Mayer, Lydia, Wien 1, Wollzeile 19/14, geb. in München am 26. 7. 1904 — N 5187/38 —.
6. Prager, Willy, Berlin-Halensee, Markgraf-Albrecht-Straße 4, geb. in Kattowitz am 23. 5. 1877 — N 4890/38 —.
7. Subak, Emilie, Wien 1, Annergasse 6, geb. in Trebitsch am 19. 9. 1870 — N 5189/38 —.
8. Stöhr, Prof. Dr. Richard, Wien 4, Karolingergasse 14, geb. in Wien am 11. 6. 1874 — N 5112/38 —.

Die Ausgeschlossenen haben das Recht zur weiteren Betätigung auf jedem zur Zuständigkeit der Reichsmusikkammer gehörenden Gebiete verloren.

Berlin, den 28. April 1939

Der Präsident der Reichsmusikkammer
Dr. Peter Raabe

'Expulsions from the Reich Chamber of Music', 28 April 1939, with No. '8. Stöhr, Prof. Dr. Richard'

[19] Peter Raabe, 'Ausschlüsse aus der Reichsmusikkammer; 28 April 1939', *Amtliche Mitteilungen der Reichsmusikkammer*, Vol. 6, No. 9, 1 May 1939, p. 30.

The Stöhr children were taunted, even assaulted, by classmates who now wore the Swastika pins and uniforms of the Hitler Youth. 'As I walked home from school', Hedi recalled,

> some children threw things at me. 'Jew girl, Jew girl!,' they yelled. They grabbed my school books and threw them in the street. I was devastated and cried as soon as I got away from the kids. Even the teacher at school said to another student, 'You're not going to work with the Jew girl, are you?'[20]

Fortuitously, the connections Stöhr had made with Americans in Ötz had given him reason for hope. At the end of 1938 he had sent a desperate note to Mary Louise Curtis Bok, founder of the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia:

> I implore you to help me in the following way: Send me a 'Sham Engagement' to your Institute (or to another) that never would be entered in fact but could enable me to get over to the U.S.A. immediately. […] The urgency of my appeal may be illustrated by the end of the couple Ehrmann in Baden near Vienna […]. Both did the only thing now left to us: He shot himself and his wife followed him 6 weeks later by poisoning with gas. Both avoiding sure starvation or imprisonment thereby. I know that I am in for the same if no rescue comes for I have only means for 3–4 months to live on, and in this sense you may understand my last SOS appeal.[21]

A timely response contained the promise of a library post at Curtis, allowing Stöhr entry into the United States. Hedi was sent to the UK (to Kingsbridge, in south Devon) and the younger Richard went to southern Sweden (Scania County), while Mitzi, who had no claim to asylum since she was categorised as 'Aryan' by the authorities, remained in Vienna. Richard Jr remembered, 'My father was allowed to take only one suitcase (really a box that contained his music) and 3 dollars, or 10 Reichsmarks'.[22] Thus equipped, he secured a berth on the last ship that was allowed to embark from Bremerhaven to

[20] Hedi (Stoehr) Ballantyne, 'The Last Carefree Summer/Untitled', Leo Baeck Institute, Center for Jewish History, New York (https://digipres.cjh.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE8480744), p. 4.
[21] Letter from Richard Stöhr to Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 30 November 1938, quoted in an e-mail from Dan Stohr, 27 August 2021.
[22] Hennenberg, 'Ein Lehrer aus Leidenschaft', *loc. cit*., p. 16.

New York, on 23 February 1939. In the US he was welcomed by former pupils and Austrian expatriates. Money was initially scarce, and would remain so. For the rest of his life, Stöhr's finances would depend on under-employment at institutions, fluctuating numbers of private pupils, letting out rooms in his home and such gifts as charities and friends could provide.

Initially, his outlook was hopeful. The Curtis faculty included Fritz Reiner, Stöhr's former pupil Rudolf Serkin, the master horn-player Anton Horner and the opera director and scholar Hans Wohlmuth – all émigrés from the Austrian Empire. Stöhr convinced the director of the Institute, the composer Randall Thompson, to allow him to teach music-theory classes, in addition to his work in the library helping to translate the Burrell Collection of Wagner's letters. He began teaching in 1939–40, sharing duties in harmony and elementary counterpoint with the recent Curtis graduate Anne-Marie Soffray.[23] The Institute magazine announced:

> Two newcomers assumed teaching activity mid-term of the present year. Dr. Richard Stohr [*sic*], formerly of Vienna, has begun work in the theory department, and Samuel Barber, who is a newcomer only in one sense, has formed a chorus of mixed voices which he conducts in Madrigals.[24]

A course in form was added to Stöhr's duties the next school year.[25] A twenty-year-old counterpoint pupil remembered:

> A remarkable teacher, a patient, gentle and deeply learned man, he taught me a great deal not only about music, but about teaching itself. His sense of contrapuntal design and of phrase structure was very deep, and has given me more insight into music than I should otherwise ever have had.[26]

That student, who not only befriended Stöhr but would also come to his aid financially, was Leonard Bernstein.

[23] Anon., *The Curtis Institute of Music Catalogue 1938–1939*, Curtis Institute, Philadelphia, 1939, p. 12.
[24] Anon., 'To Welcome the Newcomers', *Overtones*, Vol. 9, No. 2, April 1939, p. 34. Barber was another of Stöhr's students.
[25] *The Curtis Institute of Music Catalogue 1939–1940*, Curtis Institute, Philadelphia, 1940, p. 12.
[26] Sittner, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

Even as his compositional self enjoyed a rebirth, Stöhr remained chiefly a pedagogue:

> For Richard Stöhr and Ernst Kanitz, for Egon Lustgarten and Walter Bricht, teaching remained the dominant metier just as in Vienna, even if they themselves would sometimes have liked to see the emphasis distributed differently. Compositionally, they belonged to the conservative direction, unlike Paul Pisk, for example. […] yet their influence should not be underestimated merely because they did not impose their own styles upon their pupils.[27]

With the US entry into the war on 11 December 1941, a shortage of students soon resulted in the cancellation of Stöhr's classes at Curtis (the school had also hired two additional theory instructors in the interim).[28] Stints at the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia and summer courses at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music were short-lived. Saint Michael's College in Winooski Park (now Colchester), Vermont, offered longer-term prospects but little rewarding work, which was limited to teaching German-language classes and directing a mediocre glee club and an orchestra of eleven players. The critical inclusion of room and board, however, encouraged Stöhr to begin an Indian summer of composition – in 1942 alone he composed twenty pieces. In that year his sister Hedwig died in a transit camp in Poland, and Stöhr later learned that a Porges cousin had perished at Terezín (although Elsa Bernstein-Porges emerged alive[29]). Still, after the war and nearly a decade of separation, the Stöhr family was reunited when Mitzi, Richard Jr and Hedi made their way to the USA.

In 1950 Stöhr, now 76, lost his faculty position at Saint Michael's, though he was allowed to continue living in his rooms. Small amounts of royalties for his theory books trickled in, there was a limited pension from Austria, and his 80th birthday saw concerts

[27] Habakuk Traber, 'Bestandsaufnahme – 1988 an den Exilzentren von einst in Israel und USA', in Monica Wildauer (ed.), *Österreichische Musiker im Exil*, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1990, Österreichische Gesellschaft für Musik, Beiträge, Vol. 8, p. 29. Pedagogues all, the composer Ernst Kanitz (1894–1978), conductor-composer Egon Lustgarten (1887–1961) and pianist-composer Walter Bricht (1904–70) each left Vienna for the USA in 1938. Paul Pisk (1893–1990) was a Viennese composer-musicologist, a pupil of Guido Adler, Franz Schreker and Arnold Schoenberg, who emigrated to the USA in 1936.

[28] *The Curtis Institute of Music Catalogue 1940–1941*, Curtis Institute, Philadelphia, 1941, p. 12.

[29] Elsa Bernstein-Porges, the daughter of Heinrich Porges, was a writer and the librettist of Engelbert Humperdinck's melodrama and opera *Königskinder*.

in the USA and Vienna. He now viewed Vienna as hostile terrain, however: 'Apart from the Mahler that is directed by [Bruno] Walter, you will not find any non-Aryan composer on programmes'.[30] Answering Eric Zeisl's complaints of bad treatment in Hollywood, Stöhr responded, 'What does me such good here is the friendly humanity of all the priests, as well as that of the students and the many American friends we have made'.[31]

By 1955 all desire to compose had vanished, and he noted in his diary that a battle with dementia had begun. Invitations to teach in Vienna and Tokyo arrived too late, as Stöhr was moved to one rest home and then another (Mitzi found a house nearby). A short biography to mark his 90th birthday was published by his former student Hans Sittner in 1965. The composer's friend Wilhelm Raab was present during his last days.

> For me as a doctor and friend of the – if one can use the expression – departing one, it was a wistful experience to see a spirit brushed by the wings of genius, filled with melody, kindness of heart and humour, disappear into the fog of apathy. Of Stöhr's own musical personality nothing remained, though it was both strange and shocking that precisely that deepest core of his being could still shine forth from under the rubble of the collapse. Even when he no longer recognised those closest to him or his own music, when his speech had degenerated into inarticulate slurs, he was still able to improvise on the piano that stood beside his bed with warm expression and technical precision.[32]

Richard Stöhr died on 11 December 1967 in Montpelier, Vermont, and was buried in Merrill Cemetery in Colchester. The centenary of his birth was celebrated in 1974 with a small exhibition at the Music Collection of the Austrian National Library, 'so that despite the large number of musicians' names in the commemorative year 1974 (Bruckner, [Franz] Schmidt, Schoenberg), the name Richard Stöhr should not go wholly forgotten'.[33] In Vienna in 2003 a memorial plaque was mounted on the townhouse at Karolinengasse 14, near the Belvedere Palace in the Wieden district, which he had

[30] Letter from Richard Stöhr to Eric Zeisl, 20 June 1952, in Karin Wagner (ed.), *… es grüsst Dich Erichisrael. Briefe von und an Eric Zeisl, Hilde Spiel, Richard Stöhr, Ernst Toch, Hans Kafka u. a.*, Czernin, Vienna, 2008, p. 279.
[31] Letter from Richard Stöhr to Eric Zeisl, 15 October 1954, in *ibid*., p. 296.
[32] Sittner, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
[33] Anon., 'Nachrichten: Richard Stöhr zum 100. Geburtstag', *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, Vol. 29, Issue JG, 1974, p. 446.

occupied from 1911 until 1939. The Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts, the current incarnation of the Conservatoire and Akademie, organised a comprehensive exhibition about Stöhr's life in 2017.

A teacher and theorist of the highest order is how he is remembered: 'Richard Stöhr [was] immensely popular as a theoretician whose textbooks are widely distributed and even obligatory for certain examinations';[34] 'Veritable legends are told of the students who would tremble before presenting their theory assignments to Professor Stöhr'.[35] It has been estimated that during his roughly 50 years of teaching Stöhr gave instruction to 'the simply astonishing total of 10,000 students'.[36] The most gifted of these pupils not yet mentioned here included Vicki Baum, Alexander Brailowsky, Marlene Dietrich, Karl Geiringer, Alois Hába, Walter Hendl, Louis Horst (Martha Graham's preferred composer), Eugene Istomin, Herbert von Karajan, Hershy Kay, Rena Kyriakou, Erich Leinsdorf and Artur Rodzinski. Many less notable names would concur with Eberhard Würzl, 'For those who, like me, were enrolled in Richard Stöhr's class, the department of Composition and Form Theory had nothing more to offer'.[37] 'Richard Stöhr', Karin Wagner noted, with some historical perspective in the year 2008, 'was the artistic-pedagogical *authority* in Vienna'.[38]

'In the teaching of composition', Stöhr had noted after two decades at the Conservatoire/Akademie,

> where the teacher is most likely to be dealing with truly gifted students, it is ultimately a matter of the development and guidance of musical taste in the finer and higher sense of the word. It is at this point where submission to the authority of the teacher becomes most difficult. The beginner typically considers what he has just written to be beautiful and good; he has tried to do his best with it but lacks the finer critical eye to recognise

[34] Paul Stefan, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[35] Gilbert Klein, *Hohenemser Musiker: vom Geburtsgahrgang 1633 – mit einigen von der Geschichte diktierten Lücken – bis zum Jahrgang 1929*; *Emser Almanach*, Vol. 5, No. 9, Kulturkreis Hohenems, 2004, p. 62.

[36] Hennenberg, 'Als Student kam man früher nach Wien', *loc. cit.,* p. 373.

[37] Eberhard Würzl, 'Schulmusiker-Ausbildung an der Wiener Musikakademie 1933–1970', *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, Vol. 38, No. 6, 1983, p. 318.

[38] *… es grüsst Dich Erichisrael*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

> the weaknesses of what he has produced. Thus the teacher must quite often appear as the pupil's enemy, despoiling much of what the latter has created with his whole heart. Nowadays, as a completely new artistic direction is breaking through, such conflicts have become particularly common. The development of modern music has accelerated in recent decades, and the teacher must understandably attempt to balance the most impetuous urges of the pupil. At the same time it is clear that creation in a style which overturns the artistic tradition, which demands less technical ability and is less restricted by the inhibition of rules, is much more attractive to the young composer […].[39]

Stöhr served as a leader of the Österreichischen Musikpädagogischen Reichsverband ('Association of Austrian Music Teachers') and the Wiener Tonkünstlerverein ('Society of Viennese Composers'). His first published book on music theory would be his most successful. 'The record number of editions', Ernst Tittel wrote 60 years after publication, 'is undisputedly held by the *Praktische Leitfaden der Harmonielehre* ['Practical Method of Teaching Harmony'] by Richard Stöhr (first published in 1906, with 27 editions to date!)'.[40] This volume was reviewed by Richard Strauss' friend and biographer Max Steinitzer:

> It sounds difficult to believe: Stöhr has added a new book to the innumerable textbooks on this subject, a peculiarity for which we can be thankful. Written for use in teacher-training courses at the Viennese Conservatoire, the practical part of his book is atypical. In addition to the performance of basso continuo parts and the reduction of chords to basso continuo notation, it contains instructions for the harmonisation of upper parts, as well as for their natural piano accompaniment, for free modulation on the piano (or organ), and finally for the correction of one's own work, all in a highly practical and comprehensible manner.[41]

[39] Richard Stöhr, 'Erfahrungen beim Theorie-Unterricht', *Musikpädagogische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 11, No. 6, 1921, p. 89.
[40] Ernst Tittel, *Die Wiener Musikhochschule. Von Konservatorium der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde zur staatlichen Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst*, Lafite, Vienna, 1967, p. 47. Lynne Heller noted that 'Further German-language editions were released up to 2003(!)', *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[41] 'Besprechungen: Bücher: Richard Stöhr: Praktischer Leitfaden der Harmonielehre', *Die Musik*, Vol. 9, No. 7, January 1909/1910, p. 47.

Steinitzer also praised Stöhr's book on counterpoint, which followed in the path of Viennese forebears from J. J. Fux to Robert Fuchs: 'It is very conscientiously, precisely and intelligently written, with a fine sense of good presentation and clarity'.[42] Stöhr's book on form, *Musikalische Formenlehre*, which was first published in 1911 by Kistner & Siegel of Leipzig, earned the approval of such eminent composer-pedagogues as Paul Graener in Salzburg ('[The] work will certainly do much good in the future and I wish it a wide distribution'[43]) and Engelbert Humperdinck in Berlin ('Recommended as a valuable and important enrichment of the relevant literature'[44]). Within the first decade of its release, the book saw four editions, and 1933 brought a new, revised version entitled *Formenlehre der Musik*, with the collaboration of Hans Gál and Alfred Orel. The 1950s saw multiple editions after Germany's division into east (with Mitteldeutscher Verlag in Halle and Hofmeister in Leipzig) and west (Hofmeister in Hofheim am Taunus). A Japanese edition, translated by Keisei Sakka, appeared in Tokyo in 1954 and saw two reissues before at least three further German editions brought the publication of the work up to 1985.

Stöhr's compositions embraced all genres, and his 141 opus numbers included two operas (*Ilse*, originally *Rumpelstiltskin*, to a libretto by Richard Batka, and *Die Gürtelspanner* ('The Knife Wrestlers'),[45] libretto by Beatrice Dovsky), an oratorio (*Der verlorene Sohn*), two cantatas (*Notturno Sinfonico* and *Christmas Cantata*), 27 smaller works for chorus, twenty orchestral works, including seven symphonies and four suites (among them the *Romantic Suite* and *Vermont Suite*), two concertos (trumpet and violin), 41 chamber-music pieces (led by the *Chamber Symphony* (Nonet), but also including fifteen violin sonatas), 166 Lieder (some with violin or cello obbligato) and 34 pieces for piano, solo (including five sonatas) or four-hands, or two pianos.

[42] 'Richard Stöhr: Praktischer Leitfaden des Kontrapunkts', *Die Musik*, Vol. 11, No. 11, March 1912, p. 301.

[43] Anon., 'Verlag von C. F. W. Siegel's Musikalienhandlung (R. Linnemann), Leipzig: Richard Stöhr', *Musikpädagogische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 2, No. 8, 1912, p. 29.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Like *Mona Lisa*, Dovsky's later operatic collaboration with Max von Schillings, *Die Gürtelspanner* is based on a work of art, in this case the bronze *Bältespännarna*, sculpted in the mid-nineteenth century by the Swede Johan Peter Molin, which depicts two knife-fighters bound together with a belt.

Richard Specht singled out Stöhr in his 1909 survey 'Young Viennese Composers':

> Richard Stöhr is perhaps the most characteristic representative of the entire group. His works – songs, chamber music, cello pieces, a suite and a symphony – in which, by the way, there is an unmistakable progression from the commonplace simplicity of earlier works to a tighter muscularity and energy, are thoroughly noble in invention, soigné in performance and artful in their construction (particularly evident in the symphony); nowhere will one find anything carelessly written down and one often encounters broad, powerful themes. Only their development shows all too much of what has been 'learned', and has not yet been translated into what is felt.[46]

Walter Niemann classified the composer as one of three 'ostensible modernists', who included Hugo Kaun, Paul Juon

> and the Viennese Richard Stöhr; composers who today swing back and forth between Classical, Romantic and Neo-Romantic forms and ideas, between Berlioz, Wagner, Liszt and Richard Strauss, who – a characteristic sign of our time of transition! – write chamber music and symphonies in classical forms as well as programmatic symphonic poems, double fugues as well as impressionistic poems of mood, bowing today to the goddess of the classically beautiful, tomorrow to the goddess of the modern […].[47]

The historian-critic Hugo Robert Fleischmann assessed Stöhr:

> the tried and tested theory teacher at the Imperial and Royal Academy of Music in Vienna; as a composer, an honest, unsophisticated talent; the energy of his gift is of a distinctly muscular character, of an austere chastity which is nevertheless always surrounded by a pleasant, subduing grace, an almost mischievous kindness. His music offers a world view, a robust, vigorous *joie de vivre*, with a healthy positivism through and through. In his chamber music and orchestral works, Stöhr shows himself to be technically a fully mature artist who, rooted entirely in classicism, nevertheless goes his own way.[48]

[46] Richard Specht, 'Die Jungwiener Tondichter (Schluß)', *Die Musik*, Vol. 9, No. 8, January 1910, p. 84.
[47] Walter Niemann, *Die Musik seit Richard Wagner*, Schuster & Loeffler, Berlin and Leipzig, 1913, p. 148.
[48] Hugo Robert Fleischmann, 'Die Jungwiener Schule (eine musikalische Zeitfrage)', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 79, No. 39, 26 September 1912, p. 540.

Stöhr's allegiance to the Romantic past was mingled with a genuine curiosity about modern trends to create the inner struggle that personalised his works. Many commentators sensed the discord, praising his efforts in the Classical–Romantic tradition while remarking on incongruous modern additions. Oscar Köhler found that 'One can still recognise the deeply creative composer, but the high spirit and the great character that must emanate from a symphonic work are missing'.[49] Richard Specht saw something lacking in 'the fertile, inventive tone-poet who adapts to every style with astonishing flexibility, who is thoroughly distinguished, stimulating and interesting in his assured ability, yet strangely impersonal'.[50]

The composer viewed himself as a late-Romantic holdover standing against the modernist tide. 'Nevertheless, Stöhr cannot simply be dismissed as a backward-looking conservative', Ludwig Holtmeier commented; 'In particular, [...] he shows a very personal, "impressionistic" approach to harmony, even if he rarely oversteps the borders of traditional tonality'[51] (or, as Wilhelm Altmann noted, 'the composer does not close his ears to the good things offered by new sounds'[52]). Though Stöhr's compositions unquestionably presented a mixture of styles, the particular synthesis was guided by his unrivalled command of technique and firm aesthetic perception. 'Clear arrangement, sense of form, and unaffected feeling are the most prominent characteristics of his work', Rudolf Felber wrote; 'by his skill and his highly developed gift of fusion he achieves impressive artistic effects such as only a true master can produce'.[53]

Beethoven's Septet, Schubert's Octet and nineteenth-century nonets by Louis Spohr, Franz Lachner and Joseph Rheinberger were examples of a relatively uncommon chamber-music genre that offered various constellations of strings with winds. By

[49] Oscar Köhler, 'Konzerte: Leipzig', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 79, No. 46, 14 November 1912, p. 654.

[50] Richard Specht, 'Kritik (Konzert): Wien', *Die Musik*, Vol. 13, No. 8, 2 January 1914, p. 127.

[51] Ludwig Holtmeier, 'Stöhr, Richard, eigentl. Richard Stern', in Ludwig Finscher and Friedrich Blume (eds.), *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2006, Personenteil, Vol. 15, p. 1522.

[52] Wilhelm Altmann, 'Kritik – Musikalien: Richard Stöhr: Quartett (d-moll), Op. 65', *Die Musik*, Vol. 15, No. 1, October 1922, p. 63.

[53] Rudolf Felber, 'Stöhr, Richard', in Walter Willson Cobbett (ed.), *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965, Vol. 2, p. 458. Felber (1891–1978) studied at the Vienna University with the composers Karl Weigl and Josef Bohuslav Foerster, and – along with such names as Anton Webern, Egon Wellesz, Karl Geiringer and Ernst Kurth – was also a student of Guido Adler, a giant of Austrian musicology.

the first decades of the twentieth century such pieces were often termed 'chamber symphonies'. They fluctuated in size, and included works by Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (11 instruments, 1901), Arnold Schoenberg (No. 1 with 15 instruments, 1906), Franz Schreker (23 instruments, 1916) and Ernst Krenek (9 instruments, 1923). Richard Stöhr's *Kammersymphonie*, or Nonet, Op. 32, was composed in 1912 for the centenary of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna, and dedicated to that society. The premiere was given in Vienna the following year, when 'A Chamber Symphony by Richard Stöhr for string quartet, oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon and harp was produced at a concert of the Tonkünstlerverein'.[54] The ensuing chaos of the First World War shuttered much of concert life, and the publication of the work by C. F. Kahnt of Leipzig was not realised until 1921. That year Kurt Striegler, himself the composer of a chamber symphony in 1912, conducted the 'second' premiere of Stöhr's work in Dresden.

> In Dresden the premiere of the Chamber Symphony by Prof. Richard Stöhr of Vienna took place. The performance […] by the Striegler Quartet with the participation of winds and harp from the Staatsorchester and the Philharmonie under conductor Kurt Striegler left no wish unfulfilled. The composer was celebrated with a storm of applause.[55]

The performance history of Stöhr's *Kammersymphonie* since those first hearings is obscured by inadequate documentation, and with it the question of whether it was heard with single or multiple strings. The choice of a fuller string ensemble will obviously underline its symphonic status. A performance by the Chamber Orchestra of San Antonio, Texas, in April 2015 appears to have had three string players per part,[56] and in this recording Ian Hobson has taken that idea further, with a string section of full symphonic strength.

The work opens with an *Allegro* 1 in $\frac{3}{4}$. Four bars of *legato* string quavers on F major introduce the principal theme, marked *mp* and *espressivo*, with the expansive bucolic solo entrusted to the horn. After eight bars, the theme is played a fourth higher by the

[54] Anon., 'Foreign Notes: Vienna', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 54, No. 842, 1 April 1913, p. 270.
[55] Anon., 'Neuerscheinungen (Ur- und Erstaufführungen)', *Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 88, No. 8, 16 April 1921, p. 220.
[56] E-mail from Stefan Koch to Martin Anderson dated 7 July 2025.

oboe, afterwards going through a series of half-step modulations that see it passed to clarinet and bassoon. The directions *calando pp* and *poco sostenuto* precede a return to *a tempo*, which presents the first theme *mf*, the horn now reinforced by first violins and violas. Fragments of the tune are quoted by clarinet and bassoon over modulatory strings until a transitional section featuring the wind quartet playing *staccato* quavers over harp flourishes and interjections of the opening theme in the cellos. The quaver rhythms dissipate before a horn fanfare in fifths (*animato*) announces the simple secondary theme in the dominant key, C major, the stepwise crotchets in the strings marked *pizzicato* and the woodwind quavers *staccato*. Rapid modulation accompanies the progression of the secondary theme and a *Poco animato* segment, *ff* in A major, mingles fragments of both first and second themes. Cadential material in E minor brings the exposition to a close, as the marking *Appassionato* signals the beginning of the development section in G major, the first theme again in the horn but now enveloped by the busy orchestral accompaniment. The first theme is further fragmented at *a tempo* in E major, where *staccato–pizzicato* lines in the bassoons and cellos taper off to a *Tranquillo* in A major. This *Tranquillo* begins with clarinet slowly intoning the first theme *legato* over *arco* string quavers, followed by oboe and horn, with bassoon ending the section descending chromatically by dotted minims in the bass. At *Poco più lento* the dynamic is reduced to *pp* in A minor, and a *Più animato* section parades fragments of both themes through C minor, E flat, G major and a long stretch of C major/minor (complicated by interjections of B flat and D flat) before the horn again takes up the opening theme in F major for the recapitulation at *Tempo I*. B flat and D major are traversed before the horn fifth again signals the return of the secondary theme, no longer in the dominant C major of the exposition, but now in the tonic F major. Further chromatic probing leads to the opening horn theme reoccurring far afield in F sharp major, but a return to C major precedes the coda at *Poco più tranquillo*. Here violins slowly intone the opening theme over hushed *arco* string quavers, a variant of the first theme is then ventured by the clarinet, and the serenity is threatened only by soft but pungent Mahlerian semitone dissonances as the segment meanders to its close. The clarinet and stopped horn enter on an interval of a sixth (F and A, respectively), the final F major chords in harp and

strings break off, and the wind duet sustains the sixth, *ppp perdendosi*, for three bars until the end of the movement.

The movement that follows, *Andante quasi marcia* 2, is, as Rudolf Felber described it, a 'slow movement, a funeral march, with its use of muted horns and strings'.[57] In common time and D minor, both the funereal and march aspects of the piece are instantly evident as the movement opens with stopped horn sustaining a D minim, *piano*, over harp crotchets on beats one and three. At the end of each bar the horn plays drum-like 'rat a tat tats' (actually two demisemiquavers followed by a dotted quaver and semiquaver) before starting another long note on beat one of the next. In the third bar the strings launch a lugubrious dirge theme (A) in full, *mp molto espressivo*, and twelve bars later the woodwinds present the theme in octaves. A *crescendo* into transitional material features moments of graceful lyricism in unsettled F major before reaching the contrasting B theme in the dominant, A minor at *Poco più mosso*. Demisemiquavers bustle in the strings, *piano* and *con sordino*, below extended, baleful phrases in oboe and clarinet. Sequential repetitions of fragments give the end of the B section a developmental character, before an orchestra-wide *perdendosi* leads to a return of the opening funeral march, which verifies the ABA form of the movement. The opening D minor melody appears first in the winds, and then in the strings, where the texture is thickened by a counter-melody in the horn and bassoon. D minor becomes D major in a codetta at the last page *a tempo* where the B theme takes the foreground. Then *con sordino* violins and violas, low fifths in bassoon and horn (on D and the A above), and the demisemiquavers of B in the cellos wend their way, *pp*, towards the last, D major, chord.

The third movement *Allegro* 3, is a Scherzo in $\frac{2}{4}$ that begins *piano* with *staccato* quavers in strings and bassoon in F minor.[58] Felber noted that the opening tune that follows was a 'cheery theme in the scherzo [...] given to the oboe, suggesting a

[57] *Op. cit.*, p. 458.

[58] Scherzos have traditionally been in $\frac{3}{4}$ or $\frac{6}{8}$, though $\frac{2}{4}$ is not unknown (for example, the scherzo from Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36).

melody in *Hansel and Gretel*'.[59] The strings take over the melody, which is presented in E major/minor and F major/minor, with notable solos for horn and clarinet, before it is thoroughly fragmented and sequenced, and lands in F minor at *Poco più animato*. The latter key reigns through the postlude, 'Rasch' ('Quickly'), to the close of the scherzo on three *pizzicato* Fs in lower strings and harp. The Trio begins with solo horn contributing a bittersweet strain in D flat, which is answered in sweeping fashion in the strings, 'Mit grösster Wärme' ('Very warmly') in A flat major. This string sound dominates the material *Poco a poco accelerando* to the *calando*, *morendo ppp* ending of the Trio in A flat major, where the players are instructed to repeat the scherzo.

The finale begins with a slow introduction, *Un poco grave* 4, *ff* in $\frac{3}{4}$ and F minor, as the winds announce a theme in unison, *ff*, above sparse string tremolos. The melody (a recollection of the first theme of the movement) is then repeated in solo oboe and strings, *mp*. *Poco a poco più animato* precedes an *Allegro* where the oboe gives a definitive statement of the buoyant first theme in F major, soon repeated in the first violins. Fragments of the theme wind through a series of minor keys before the slower secondary theme, peppered with exotic accidentals, is introduced *mp* by the wind quartet in A minor. This theme expands to *mf* in the strings, with *stringendo* quickly subsiding into *calando* and *tranquillo* before the theme is reprised *Poco più animato* in D major-minor. A pedal point E in the cellos continues for twelve bars before joining the rest of the strings in churning semiquaver motion. At *Animato* in D minor, bassoon and clarinet give the opening motif of the first theme in imitation at an interval of one bar. Seventeen bars of this duet bring a cello entry followed by the violins, both instruments pitted against a counter theme in oboe and clarinet. A new direction, *Animato*, brings a reprise of the exotic, slower second theme, again in D major, but developmental, with fragments that include the opening of the first theme. A series of pedal points land, via G major, in a long C major region, which arrives *Poco meno mosso* at the first theme in F major, with oboe solo handing the melody over to first violins just as it did in the first iteration of the theme when the *Allegro* began. This repetition soon turns to development

[59] *Op. cit*., p. 458. The similarity of the melodic profile is undeniable, but the phrase is much sunnier in Humperdinck's major key version of two decades earlier, whilst Stöhr's oboe tune in F minor properly shares the darkly comic mood of the Scherzo.

of various fragments of the theme, transitional material returns to the slower secondary theme in E minor strings, which is then echoed in the clarinet. Ever-shorter fragments are sent through D major and F minor as motion becomes denser, and at *Più Allegro* the *fff* horn intones a slower cyclical reminder of the opening theme of the very first movement of the work. A dominant C in bassoon and cellos is held-out for the next 21 bars before landing at the coda, *Sempre più Allegro*. Cadential material contains repeated confirmation of F major as the movement closes, and four bars of *crescendo* from *pp* to *ff* end in a conclusive *sforzando*.

William Melton is the author of Humperdinck: A Life of the Composer of *Hänsel und Gretel (Toccata 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.*

Ian Hobson, pianist and conductor, enjoys an international reputation, both for his performances of the Romantic repertoire and of neglected piano music old and new, and for his assured conducting from both the piano and the podium, renewing interest in the music of such lesser-known masters as Ignaz Moscheles and Johann Nepomuk Hummel. He is also an effective advocate of works written expressly for him by contemporary composers, among them John Gardner, Benjamin Lees, David Liptak, Alan Ridout and Roberto Sierra.

As a guest soloist, Ian Hobson has appeared with the world's major orchestras; those in the United States include the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Philadelphia Orchestra, the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Florida, Houston, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh and St Louis, the American Symphony Orchestra and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico.

Elsewhere, he has been heard with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Hallé Orchestra in the UK, and the ORF Vienna, Orchester der Beethovenhalle, Moscow Chopin Orchestra, Israeli Sinfonietta and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Wolverhampton in 1952 and one of the youngest-ever graduates of the Royal Academy of Music, Ian Hobson subsequently pursued advanced studies at both Cambridge University and Yale University. He began his international career in 1981 when he won First Prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition, having previously earned silver medals at both the Arthur Rubinstein and Vienna Beethoven competitions. A professor in the Center for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), Ian Hobson received the endowed chair of Swanlund Professor of Music in 2000 and is now the Swanlund Emeritus Professor.

He is also much in demand as a conductor, particularly for performances in which he doubles as a pianist. He made his debut in this capacity in 1996 with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, and has since appeared with the English Chamber Orchestra, the Fort Worth Chamber Orchestra, the Sinfonia Varsovia (at Carnegie Hall), the Pomeranian Philharmonic and the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra of Israel, among others. He also performs extensively as pianist-conductor with Sinfonia da Camera, a group he formed in 1984 and which quickly gained international recognition through its recordings.

To date he has amassed a discography of some 60 releases, mostly on the Zephyr label, including the complete piano sonatas of Beethoven and Schumann, a complete edition of Brahms' piano variations and the complete piano works by Chopin. With the late violinist Sherban Lupu he has recorded, as pianist and conductor, most of the complete works of Ernst for Toccata Classics, for which label he has also recorded piano music by Edward and Kate Loder (TOCC 0322 and 0321) and Harold Truscott (TOCC 0252). He has released three albums in a pioneering series of recordings of the early orchestral works by Martinů, also for Toccata Classics (TOCC 0156, 0249 and 0414), and in the first album in the series of the orchestral music of Moritz Moszkowski, he conducts the Sinfonia Varsovia in Moszkowski's monumental symphonic poem *Johanna d'Arc* (TOCC 0523), its first-ever recording, received with astonished superlatives around the world. The second volume (TOCC 0557), which presented the Second and Third Orchestral Suites, Opp. 47 and 79, and the third (TOCC 0598), featuring Suite No. 1 in F major, Op. 39, the Prelude and Fugue for strings, Op. 85, and the early Overture in D major, both albums also recorded with the Sinfonia Varsovia, were equally well received.

In *Fanfare* reviews of Volume One of this series (TOCC 0468), which presented the *Konzert im alten Stil*, Op. 68, and the Suite in A minor, Op. 120, David DeBoor Canfield wrote of the *Konzert* that 'the craftsmanship is secure and the work is very pleasing to experience', and Jerry Dubins went further, arguing that the Suite, 'in gorgeous melodies, harmonies, and lush textures, can hold its own beside the great orchestral suites and serenades by the likes of Brahms, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Stenhammar, *et al*.'.
www.ianhobson.net

In 1984, at the invitation of Waldemar Dąbrowski, director of the Stanisław I. Witkiewicz Studio Centre for the Arts in Warsaw, and Franciszek Wybrańczyk, director of the Polish Chamber Orchestra, the violinist Yehudi Menuhin arrived in Poland to perform as a soloist and conductor. So as to meet the exigencies of the repertoire, the orchestra invited renowned Polish musicians from all over Poland to take part in the performances. The first concerts of the ensemble, conducted by Menuhin, were received enthusiastically by audiences and critics, and he accepted the invitation to become the first guest conductor of the newly established orchestra, now named **Sinfonia Varsovia**.

Sinfonia Varsovia performs at the world's most prestigious concert-halls and festivals, working with world-renowned conductors and soloists. The orchestra has recorded a wide range of albums, radio and television performances and boasts a discography of almost 300 albums, many of which have received prestigious prizes. In 1997 Krzysztof Penderecki became the musical director, and in 2003 also its artistic director. Sinfonia Varsovia is a municipal cultural institution co-ordinated by the City of Warsaw. In 2015, in the presence of the President of Warsaw, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, the architect Thomas Pucher and Janusz Marynowski, the director of Sinfonia Varsovia, signed a contract for the delivery of design documentation for a new concert-hall for the orchestra and for the development of the property at 272 ulica Grochowska, which is now the orchestra's new home.
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