

Historicism and German Nationalism in Max Reger's Requiems

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Background: Historicism and German Requiems

Germans have long perceived their literary and musical traditions as being of central importance to their sense of national identity. Historians and music scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought to define specifically German attributes in music that elevated the status of German music, and of particular canonic composers.

It was the Requiem that became an ideal vehicle for transmitting these German ideals. Although there had long been a tradition of German Lutheran funeral music, it was only in the nineteenth century that composers began creating alternatives to the Catholic Requiem with the same monumental scope (and the same title). Although there were several important examples of Latin Requiems by composers like Mozart, none used the German language or the Lutheran theology that were of particular importance to the Prussians. Because there was not yet a single German nation, many individuals and state governments sought examples of pan-German unity such as the German language, the Lutheran faith, and German literary and musical culture to connect the scattered German people across what is now Germany, Austria, Poland, and the Czech Republic.

During the nineteenth century, German composers began creating alternative German Requiems that used either German literary material, as in Schumann's *Requiem für Mignon* with texts by Goethe, or German theology, as in selections from Luther's translation of the Bible in Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*. The musical sources tended to be specifically German as well; composers made use of German folk materials, German spiritual materials such as the Lutheran chorale, and historical forms and ideas like the fugue, the pedal point, antiphony, and other devices derived from Bach's cantatas and Schütz's funeral music.

As Daniel Beller-McKenna notes, Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* was written at the same time as Germany's move toward unification under Kaiser Wilhelm and Bismarck. While Brahms exhibited some nationalist sympathies—he owned a bust of Bismarck and wrote the jingoistic *Triumphlied*—his Requiem became

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more closely associated with nationalism than he may originally have intended. That connection with nationalism may have stemmed from the trend among German writers in the years after Beethoven's Symphony no. 9 to view massed choral music as representing the *Volk* and a larger sense of unity.¹

Musical historicism has been the foundation of musical composition in the modern era. While composers who make overt use of musical historicism have sometimes been maligned as being derivative, others have been praised for making creative use of the grand musical tradition that preceded them. The idea that a Requiem would make use of historicism seems, to my mind, only appropriate; what better way to honor those who have passed before us than with a referential musical idea in a monumental work?²

¹ Daniel Beller-McKenna, *Brahms and the German Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 11-12.

² Antonius Bittmann gives an excellent summary of sources on historicism in his book *Max Reger and Historicist Modernisms*, Sammlung Musikwissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen 95 (Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 2004), 238. Bittmann writes:

The notion that, over the last hundred years, historicism has provided the intellectual and aesthetic framework for the emergence of a musical mainstream culture was introduced, most notably, by J. Peter Burkholder. See his "Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years," *Journal of Musicology* 2 (1983): 115-34. In its basic assumptions, Joseph Straus's *Remaking the Past* follows Burkholder's work, but, unlike Burkholder, Straus has made the relationship between historicism and modernism quite explicit: "The most important and characteristic musical works of the first half of this century incorporate and reinterpret elements of earlier music. This dual process, more than any specific element of style or structure, defines the mainstream of musical modernism." See Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 2. Other studies on historicism in music include Leo Treitler, *Music and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Walter Wiora, ed., *Die Ausbreitung des Historismus über die Musik* (Regensburg: Bosse Verlag, 1969).

Max Reger's Mixed Reception

Max Reger's contemporaries held widely differing opinions on the composer's music. Reger's obvious debt to the music of Bach, Brahms, and even contemporaries such as Strauss provoked both praise for his innovations and censure for being derivative or an epigone, a mere artistic imitator. In the *Dresdner Anzeiger* on January 12, 1906, Friedrich Brandes wrote of Reger:

One can hardly believe that an imitator can merge so deceivingly with his model... Astonishing artistry, similar enough to be mistaken for art... Simulated music is no music, and there is an enormous gap between art and artistic skill.³

Similarly, Paul Becker wrote in 1906 in the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* vol. 33 that Reger's works:

again leave the strange impression that this artist, in spite of his amazing productivity and his astounding arbitrariness, is a figure which nourishes itself largely from extraneous undercurrents. The personal elements which Reger adds to his Bach and Brahms are more of a combinational than a productive nature.⁴

In other words, the connection to historical tradition that had been part of Brahms's eventual fame and lasting legacy did not suffice to elevate Reger's status to the German pantheon to which he aspired. Yet Reger had progressive

³ Susanne Popp and Susanne Shigihara, eds., *Max Reger at the Turning Point to Modernism: An Illustrated Volume with Documents from the Collection of the Max Reger Institute* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1988), 139.

⁴ Ibid.

characteristics too, notably his dense chromatic writing, motivic development, and innovative use of variation technique. John Williamson's *New Grove* entry on Max Reger highlights this contrast in Reger's music and reputation; the first paragraph that summarizes Reger's contributions notes, "His musical style, which combines a chromatic harmonic language with Baroque and Classical formal procedures, situates him as both a successor to late 19th-century Romanticism and a forerunner of early 20th-century modernism."⁵ Even in this most basic summary, Reger is associated with both historicism and progressive tendencies—as was the case with Brahms.

Yet Reger's reputation, then as now, pales in comparison with Brahms's—and, as outlined below, he was quite frequently compared with Brahms. Perhaps one reason was his failure to write in traditional monumental genres aside from the concerto; he completed no symphonies or operas and only one longer choral work (Psalm 100), though, as this article will discuss in detail, he attempted a Latin Requiem that remained unfinished and then a shorter *Hebbel-Requiem* which set a poem by the great German poet Christian Friedrich Hebbel. Carl Dahlhaus described Reger as a pedantic reactionary whose lack of a "monumental piece in the sublime style" excluded him from the modernist canon.⁶ His music was not considered accessible, combining as it did the removed archaicism from early music's sacred genres with a dense chromatic language that lacked the lyricism in Brahms's works.

⁵ John Williamson, "Max Reger," *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 15 November 2007), <http://www.grovemusic.com>. For an excellent comprehensive biographical and musical sketch of Reger, see Susanne Popp, "Max Reger," *Die Musik in der Geschichte und Gegenwart* Personenteil 13, 2nd rev. ed., ed. Ludwig Fischer (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1994), 1402-33.

⁶ Williamson, "Max Reger."

But many scholars consider Reger the bridge between Brahms and Schoenberg, including Schoenberg himself, who understood Reger to be one of the pioneers of the "new" technique of "developing variation."⁷ However, praising Reger's music primarily because of its historical position, as John Williamson writes, is a double-edged sword:

Killmayer's phrase, 'das In-sich-beschlossen-Sein der Regerschen Musik', [the enclosed-in-itself nature of Reger's music] sums up the nature of the problem. If the music is understood on its own terms, it is in danger of being ignored; if, on the other hand, it is understood within a historical context, it runs the risk of losing its unique identity.⁸

In this study, I suggest that Reger was a complicated figure whose compositional style was inevitably subject to comparisons with Brahms's due to the two composers' mutual affinity for incorporating historicism into their works. His attempts to compose a monumental choral work of "großen Stils" [great style] were made significantly more difficult by his efforts to avoid comparison to Brahms yet remain true to his similar historicist leanings. Because the Latin Requiem was unfinished and the poetry-based *Hebbel-Requiem* a single-movement work, neither work was on the grand scale of Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, though similarities reveal themselves in other ways. Reger's dedication to a German national ideal was made transparent in both his comments about his music and his inscriptions on the works themselves. His Requiem compositions, although one was in Latin and one a setting of German poetry, were inscribed to the fallen

⁷ Arnold Schoenberg, "Criteria for the Evaluation of Music" (1946), quoted in *ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

German heroes of World War I, and both made significant use of historicism. They continue, in a way that is true to Reger's musical language and ideals, the German Requiem traditions.

Reger, German Nationalism, and Theology

Many sources emphasize Reger's Bavarian roots and the seeming conflict between his Southern German Catholic upbringing and his affection for the traditionally Northern German Protestant genres, particularly chorales and chorale preludes. John Williamson notes that, although Reger insisted he was a true Catholic (despite marrying a Lutheran in a Protestant ceremony), "the curiously ecumenical character of his career flowed from a unique combination of religious and professional characteristics: his mastery of a primarily Protestant genre displays a blend of his professional training as an organist and his high regard for absolute music."⁹ Christopher Anderson notes the frequency with which the "immediacy and unvarnished honesty" of Reger's music has been attributed, "not least of all by the composer himself, to his rustic Bavarian roots."¹⁰ This duality between his Catholic upbringing and his musical pull toward the Northern Germans—both Bach and Brahms—and their genres may explain why he would eventually be drawn to composing Requiems of both the Latin and German traditions. Reger's friend and advocate, the organist and Thomaskantor Karl Straube, wrote in a 1946 letter that, although Reger had been strongly inclined toward Protestantism, he would never have changed his Catholic beliefs, for example to have become the Thomaskantor.¹¹

⁹ Williamson, "Max Reger."

¹⁰ *Selected Writings of Max Reger*, Anderson, Christopher, ed. and trans. (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), xxi.

¹¹ Karl Straube, *Briefe eines Thomaskantors*, ed. Wilibald Gurlitt and Hans-Olaf Hudemann (Stuttgart: K. F. Koehler Verlag, 1952), 207.

Reger himself identified strongly with his Catholic and Southern roots but felt a patriotic connection to the idea of German cultural progress and the united Germany, as well as a musical and perhaps even spiritual connection to the Lutheran tradition of Bach and Brahms. His essay "More Light" reveals much of his way of thinking about his national identity and his role within the German tradition. The final paragraph of this essay, written in response to Max Arend's criticism of Reger's *Beiträge zur Modulationslehre*, is telling:

Although backward-looking tendencies and endeavors, patronized on many sides, proliferate increasingly in music, although especially in music we have at our disposal a vast and imposing series of 'Monuments of German Criticism' [eine imposante, unübersehbare Reihe von 'Denkmälern deutscher Kritik'] we—who dedicate ourselves with confidence in the German spirit and open, forward-looking eyes to the further development of our art—nevertheless will not lose hope that some day Goethe's words '*More light!*' will be fulfilled.¹²

Anderson highlights three particularly revealing aspects of this paragraph. First, Reger played on the name of the music series *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst*; although Reger benefited from the access to the works of earlier composers, he still lumped that kind of enterprise in with pedantic theory and criticism, which he despised. Second, Reger considered himself a representative of the German spirit, again reinforcing the commonly held, albeit vague, notion of something quintessentially German. Finally, he invokes no less a figure than Goethe to support his cause. In addition, Reger delineates those who espouse "backward-looking

¹² *Selected Writings of Max Reger*, 18.

tendencies” and “we” who have “forward-looking eyes.” In other words, despite the common popular tendency to view Reger as a reactionary who depended on his historicist connection to earlier forms and techniques, Reger himself saw his work otherwise, as a progressive and truly German creation.

Yet Reger also spoke and wrote of his deep understanding of Bach and Brahms, and the musical connection with their work was certainly present in his. Reger may have viewed his work as truly German, not directly because of his connection to historicist modes of composing, but indirectly, because he was able to meet progressive German goals after a strong foundation in the German tradition. Indeed, Reger’s 1906 article “Music and Progress” in Stuttgart’s *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, following controversy over Strauss’s *Salome*, clarified that Reger saw himself as allied with Strauss and the progressives, but that he feared, as Anderson describes, the “dangers of dismissing the past outright,” that “true progress can only come from innovation informed by tradition.”¹³

Reger and Bachian Tradition

As a child, Reger studied piano with Adalbert Lindner, who gave him a strong foundation in the keyboard works of both Beethoven and Brahms. In 1888, after seeing Wagner’s *Meistersinger* and *Parsifal* at Bayreuth, Reger immediately announced his desire to pursue a career in music. Between 1886 and 1889, Reger served as deputy organist, frequently performing works of Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Liszt, as well as some of Bach’s music. But it was his study with Hugo Riemann that gave him a more comprehensive knowledge

¹³ *Ibid.*, 22.

of Bach and of Brahms’s organ music. It was Riemann who first advised Lindner, “Bayreuth is poison for him. Let him study Bach and Beethoven.” He described his study of Bach with Riemann as “the way backwards from enchantment with Liszt to honoring Beethoven and Bach.”¹⁴ Seven years later, Reger would refer to himself as a “young master who served only his masters Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms with complete earnest enthusiasm.”¹⁵

By 1896, Reger had arranged fourteen of Bach’s organ prelude and fugues for piano, and he would eventually arrange 428 Bach pieces. Reger also composed in Bach’s Baroque genres, as Antonius Bittmann summarizes, with:

chorale fantasias, chorale preludes, passacaglias, prelude-and-fugue pairings for organ; the four chorale cantatas; and the works for solo strings... ‘Strictly speaking, we are all epigones of Bach,’ Reger claimed in 1894. Yet, as Friedhelm Krummacher emphasized, Reger did not content himself with providing mere stylistic imitations of Bachian models and Baroque idioms. Rather his goal was to modernize the older master’s music for consumption by *fin de siècle* listeners. In highlighting the progressive qualities of Bach’s work, Reger joined a larger movement that redefined Bach’s historical significance at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁶

For this study, the primary question is why this sort of reconciliation of historicism with a modern, progressive compositional style helped

¹⁴ Williamson, “Max Reger.”

¹⁵ My translation; Friedrich Krummacher, “Auseinandersetzung im Abstand: Über Regers Verhältnis zu Bach,” *Reger-Studien* 5, ed. Susanne Shigihara (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1993), 11.

¹⁶ Bittmann, *Max Reger and Historicist Modernisms*, 55.

solidify Brahms's lasting reputation as a genius but caused Reger to be perceived as a mediocre imitator. Perhaps Brahms's popularization of historicist techniques and his overt designation as the third of the so-called 3 Bs made Reger's attempts seem like imitation rather than alternative solutions to similar questions.

In 1905, the journal *Die Musik* asked composers to respond to the question, "What is J. S. Bach to me, and what does he mean for our time?" Reger responded, in his typically extroverted fashion:

For me, Seb. Bach is the beginning and end of all music. *All true* progress is based on and rests with him!

What Seb. Bach means—pardon—*ought* to mean for our time?

A most powerful and inexhaustible remedy not only for all those composers and performers who have become ill from 'misunderstood Wagner,' but also for all those 'contemporaries' who suffer from spinal atrophy [Rückenmarkschwindsucht] of all kinds. To be 'Bachian' means to be *proto-Germanic, unyielding*.

That Bach could be misjudged for so long is the greatest disgrace for the 'critical wisdom' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁷

Reger revered Bach, and his comment that "All true progress is based on and rests on him" reveals his awareness of his historicist connection with Bach's music. On June 25, 1904, Reger wrote to Karl Straube, elaborating further on his appreciation for the "old masters:"

I understand completely well that you have returned ambivalently to the old

¹⁷ *Selected Writings of Max Reger*, 76.

masters—and I myself 'bathe' myself in old masters, always! *These* musicians wanted to make *only* music, had an *enormous* amount of talent and learned *just as much truly*—the composers of today want to make everything but music, have for the most part very little talent, and in the rarest cases have truly learned anything!¹⁸

Reger's friend, Elsa von Zschinsky-Troxler, recalled that Reger was once asked how he, as one of the most modern, could play Bach so unforgettably, to which he replied, "We have the same grammar."¹⁹

While Reger valued individuality and thought his music stood on its own, that was not the impression held by many of Reger's contemporaries. After a concert in 1905, Rudolf Buck wrote in the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*, "Although he was initially equally dependent on Bach and Brahms, recently he [Reger] has emancipated himself more from the latter in order to follow the former more faithfully."²⁰ Friedrich Krummacher observes that this was a sharp reproach to Reger, confirming that he had no place in the progressive era of the early twentieth century. Krummacher writes:

The verdict was often that Reger was not only an epigone but rather—even worse—an eclectic who could write music that...one moment sounded like it came from Bach or the Baroque, then...from Brahms or the Late Romantic...Was it anything but pure caprice

¹⁸ My translation; Krummacher, "Auseinandersetzung im Abstand," 13.

¹⁹ My translation; from Max Reger Institut, *Erinnerungen und Beiträge Persönlicher Reger-Freunde* (Bonn: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlag, 1950), 21.

²⁰ My translation; Krummacher, "Auseinandersetzung im Abstand," 11.

that drove him to write chorale preludes or chorale cantatas?...What right would one have to use such heightened chromaticism when one was harmonizing the diatonic melodies of the Protestant chorale?²¹

Krummacker also makes clear that scholars use Bach's name when they mean only to refer back a generally archaic style, even when it was not Bach in particular that a composer was evoking. In addition, he cautions that even in Reger's works in the same genres that Bach was known for (the motet, the chorale prelude), there is still a great deal that is modern. The problem, Krummacker believes, was that after Reger's death, many of the innovative works were either lost in favor of the organ preludes and choral music (traditional, historical genres) or were overshadowed by Schoenberg's music.²²

Many scholars believe that Reger's lasting contribution was his ability, as Richard Würz wrote in 1923, to reconcile "past and present while decisively maintaining a progressive outlook."²³ As Antonius Bittmann describes, "In appropriating the past for modern ends, Reger saw himself as a renegade whose agenda was, as he so famously put it, to 'ride steadfastly to the left.'"²⁴ Johannes Lorenzen writes, "For Reger, the Baroque forms were only architecture, a protective shell, from which to spring forth with the strengths of his expansive style, so that the whole would not descend into the 'formless.'"²⁵

²¹ Ibid., 12.

²² Ibid., 39.

²³ Quoted in Bittmann, *Max Reger and Historicist Modernisms*, 4.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Johannes Lorenzen, *Max Reger als Bearbeiter Bachs* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1982), 79.

But others saw Reger's music not as derivative of Bach's music but as derivative of Brahms's music—or even of Bach's music through the lens of the Bach-lover Brahms, as Helmuth Wirth describes it.²⁶ Even Karl Straube wrote in a 1944 letter:

The relationships of Max Reger to the great Thomaskantor are not as close as one would be inclined to assume. Reger comes from late Beethoven, the Romantics, and Johannes Brahms. From Bach he inherited the Well-tempered Clavier and the organ works that his first publisher Augener had given him in the edition of the Englishman W.T. Best.... Just like Hans von Bülow, the young master [Reger] knew very few of the cantatas, and he didn't even possess the scores to the St. Matthew Passion and the Great Mass.²⁷

This provides a valuable caution regarding the extent to which Reger knew Bach, as well as an indication of the lasting comparison of Reger, even twenty years after his death, to Johannes Brahms and the Romantics.

Reger and Brahms

Brahms and Reger shared a deep interest in Bach and earlier music, the desire to evoke earlier styles and genres in their music, and a composition style that often expanded on short motivic units. Reger made this connection overt in works like his fantasy on B-A-C-H, which deliberately quoted both Bach and then the Romantic composers such as Liszt who had written pieces on the same melodic theme. Yet,

²⁶ Helmuth Wirth, "Johannes Brahms und Max Reger," in *Brahms-Studien* 1, ed. Constantin Floros (Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandlung Karl Dieter Wagner, 1974), 91-112.

²⁷ My translation; Straube, *Briefe eines Thomaskantors*, 175-76.

as Bittmann notes, it was crucial for Reger not merely to imitate his predecessors but to be seen as improving on the earlier models by making his own unique contribution to the genre. Bittmann writes that this:

illustrates the challenge with which, according to J. Peter Burkholder, ‘mainstream composers’ of the last century have been faced. Trying to secure a place in the museum of eternally great masterworks, Burkholder argued, German composers engaged in musical negotiations with their towering predecessors. In large part, their success has depended on their ability to develop an individual voice from the precarious balance of stylistic emulation and innovation.²⁸

Just as Reger had initially followed Wagner and Bayreuth but then considered the New German influence to be a threat to be contained, later it was Brahms in that position of dangerous influence. Reger wrote Busoni in September 1895:

I have noticed for a long time that, especially when one pursues, as I do, the Brahmsian path, the horizon of the imagination is, in the beginning, rather narrow. However, I believe that, through my intensive studies over the last few years, I have now been more successful in repressing Brahmsian influences.²⁹

Clearly the close association with Brahms was often seen, both by Reger and others, as detrimental to Reger’s career. Reger’s contemporary R. Buck wrote in 1899, “His preference for the old master [Brahms] proved to be Reger’s undoing...By adopting Brahms’s

²⁸ Bittmann, *Max Reger and Historicist Modernisms*, 80.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

technique as a tool for expressing what moved him, Reger himself absorbed so much of Brahms’s expression and spirit that he lost, in part, the ability to get a clear sense of the individuality of his own works.”³⁰ Paul Zschorlich described Reger’s reputation as a Brahmsian in a 1903 article:

Today we name him in the same breath as Brahms. Reger has his own physiognomy, but it is as if he were wearing Brahms’s beard, characteristic necktie, and wide artist’s coat. He looks like Brahms, while constantly screaming at us, ‘But Brahms is dead, I am Max Reger.’ ...Such an immensely strong influence is unprecedented. Pedants can smell instances of plagiarism in every measure. Without Brahms, Reger is really inconceivable. Reger is Brahms’s *Doppelgänger*.³¹

Reger’s 1906 article, “Music and Progress,” quoted above, also provides insight into Reger’s feelings about Brahms. He defends Brahms’s reputation in such a vigorous way as to invite speculation that he identified deeply with that composer and resented their shared criticisms. This passage bears quotation at length:

We have at present in Germany circles of musicians—I do not need to name these gentlemen—in which J. Brahms is mocked as a long-since superseded affair. And only now, with the newly emerging preference for *chamber music*, for absolute music—after the eternal program music and all its degenerate offshoots have upset the stomach—it has again occurred to our dear German what an *endlessly rich treasure of true German art and depth of soul J. Brahms has given the*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

German people! And Brahms was supposed to have issued from the so-very-distant past! (All indications suggest that Brahms comes from the distant future!)...The immediate and distant past in our art cannot be pressed urgently enough upon the hearts of the young who strive with us! And concerning those young individuals who believe that sufficient progress comes when one puts on a red Jacobian cap and cries out ‘Down with the tyrants!’ (the ‘people from yesterday’): it cannot be made emphatically clear enough to these people that *true* progress can only come and be expected on the basis of the most *exact* and *loving* knowledge of the works of those ‘from yesterday,’ that above all progress can only grow out of *ability*—the *kind of ability* which those ‘from yesterday’ possessed always in exemplary ways, bequeathed to us so that we might imitate and emulate it.³²

Both in this passage and in “An Open Letter” in *Die Musik* 7/1 of October 1907, Reger cited a belief in art through a craftsman-like ability which, after deep study, may be applied “to break the form with a wise hand, that is, to broaden, to deepen it.”³³ Perhaps the reputation this helped develop of Reger as a hard-working craftsman worked against the possibility of his being considered a true genius in the Romantic, Brahmsian way, or an inspired innovator in the progressive, Schoenbergian way.

Another telling essay was Reger’s refutation of his former mentor Riemann’s “Degeneration and Regeneration in Music.” Riemann had written that Brahms was the “complement to the historicizing endeavors of the musicology

that has developed in the last decades,” and that composers ought to follow Brahms in studying the ancients (though not merely imitate Brahms).³⁴ Reger wrote:

I believe that my complete admiration of Joh. Brahms and my glowing veneration for the great old masters is too well known that I would need to emphasize this again in the present context. But above all I *protest* here *most energetically* against the notion of Brahms as the complement to the historicizing endeavors of the musicology that has developed in the last decades!...It is well known that musicology only seizes on a great figure once the cool grass has at long last overgrown him...It would be very sad for the immortality of a Brahms if he owed his status in the first place to his reliance on the old masters, as Riemann believes...What assures Brahms’s immortality is *never and in no case* the ‘reliance’ on old masters, rather *only* the fact that he knew how to set free new, unexpected emotions *of the soul* on the basis of his own soul-centered personality! *Therein* lies the root of all immortality, but *never* in the mere reliance on the old masters, which the inexorable dynamic of history will form into a death sentence in a few decades!”³⁵

Reger’s protests seem to paraphrase his own feelings about his relationship to Brahms: no mere “reliance” on the master but a desire for immortality through his own individual contributions. This conflicted feeling would have a strong impact on the type of Requiem that interested Reger as a composer, and ultimately the type of Requiem Reger was able to complete successfully.

³² *Selected Writings of Max Reger*, 23-24.

³³ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

Op. 145a: The Unfinished Latin Requiem

Reger first turned to the idea of composing specific funeral music in the fall of 1914. He wrote Straube that he was working with a theology professor in Gießen to assemble texts for a larger choral work to be called “Die letzten Dinge (Jüngstes Gericht u. Auferstehung)” [The Last Things (Final Judgment and Resurrection)].³⁶ Straube encouraged the idea of a Latin Requiem instead. Reger protested at first, writing Straube incredulously, “I would gladly write a Requiem—but do you really mean with the Catholic text! Wouldn’t it be possible to put together a text from the Bible that one could make into a large unified thing as a ‘funeral ode’ [‘Trauerode’]:”³⁷ Straube responded, “It would only be a set of *Variations on the Brahms Requiem!*”³⁸ Reger decided to take Straube’s advice and compose a Catholic Requiem with Latin text.

Ironically, in 1906, Straube had encouraged Reger to create a work, *Hymnus*, using German texts from the Bible. Reger had written Straube of his inspiration to write a great biblical work after seeing Berlioz’s *L’enfance du Christ*. He wanted to write an oratorio with Psalm texts and asked Straube’s help in selecting them. In May 1906 Reger wrote Straube of plans for a choral work “Vom Tode und ewigen Leben” [of death and eternal life] to be in the keys of E minor to E major. His plans indicated that it would use text from the Bible, in German, and be composed for boy choir, choir, orchestra, and organ. On September 9, 1906, he wrote Fritz Steinbach of a *Hymnus* that was meant to be a

³⁶ Susanne Popp, “Die ungeschriebenen Oratorien Max Regers,” *Regers-Studien* 5 (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1993.), 282.

³⁷ My translation; *ibid.*, 283.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

contrasting piece, in a single movement, to the *Deutsches Requiem* but with more polyphony. According to his plans, Reger wished to begin the Introit with the words of Christ in a *cappella* chorus—to my mind, very evocative of Schütz—and also planned a historicizing final fugue with the chorale “Jesus, meine Zuversicht” as cantus firmus. Instead, he composed a double fugue with offstage organ, boy choir, and brass instruments intoning the chorale “Jerusalem, du hochgebaute Stadt.” The *Hymnus* used some of the same texts that Brahms had set in *Ein deutsches Requiem*, including “Wie gar nichts sind alle Menschen, die doch so sicher leben” [All men who still walk the earth are as nothing], “Nun Herr, wes soll ich mich trösten” [Now, Lord, how shall I find comfort], and “Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg” [Death is swallowed up in victory]. But unlike Brahms, Reger linked these to explicitly Christian texts, from “Ich bin die Auferstehung und das Leben” [I am the resurrection and the life] from John 11:25 to the final fugue on the text “der uns den Sieg gegeben hat durch unseren Herrn Jesum Christum” [who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ]. Reger apparently worked on this *Hymnus* through October but never finished it.³⁹ It seems noteworthy that Straube approved of the German-language *Hymnus* but not of the idea to use German biblical texts in the funeral or Requiem context. The Requiem context seemed to be the aspect that troubled him as being so derivative of Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*, not the idea itself of assembling German texts from the Bible.

On October 3, 1914, Reger wrote his publisher Simrock that it would be a while until he would send them something larger, that he was working on composing a Requiem “großen Stils” [of great style] for soloists, chorus, orchestra, and organ.

³⁹ Popp, “Die ungeschriebenen Oratorien Max Regers,” 272-77.

He described his desire for it to be a “ganz großes Ding” [completely great thing], writing that after the Requiem he would compose the Te Deum because there did not yet exist a Requiem and a Te Deum of “großen deutschen Stils” [of great German style].⁴⁰ His Requiem desires were therefore linked to the hope of composing something essentially and monumentally German, and while he had originally hoped to do that with a German text from the Bible, he changed his mind after his discussion with Straube and began work on the Latin Requiem.

Reger wrote the *Kyrie* quickly, completing it by November 10. On December 6, he wrote Fritz Stein that he was in the middle of composing the *Dies irae*. A few days later, he stopped composing that movement after the text “Statuens in parte dextra.” Elsa Reger wrote a letter to Stein on December 16 explaining why Reger had changed plans to write a Latin Requiem and then why he had broken off composing that work:

Max just came from Leipzig and tells me that he isn't going to finish the Requiem, that Straube had convinced him that he's not up to the subject, and now he can't finish it. Straube with his cold, corrosive spirit robs us of a magnificent work. Max is completely despondent.⁴¹

Three days later, she wrote to Stein again:

Max wanted to write a Requiem in the German language because he thought that, in his own language, he would be able to speak

better to the hearts of men. Unfortunately, he discussed this with Straube, and Straube talked him out of it; it would only be a poor copy of the Requiem of Brahms. So Max took up the Latin text and composed and composed. Unfortunately he took his composition along to Leipzig and talked it through with Straube; that was eight days ago. Straube explained to him that he hadn't done everything in his power with the Latin text, he wasn't master of the text...That took the belief away from Max that he was capable of writing a Requiem, and along with it the joy in the work. He can't find the creative thread any more and gave the three quarters-completed work to Straube. Now Straube is supposed to find him a German text from the Bible.⁴²

If we can believe the accuracy of Elsa Reger's description of these events, we can understand several aspects of Reger's compositional decision-making in the context of the history of German Requiems and the history of the composer's own critical reception. Reger was initially drawn toward the idea of writing a Requiem with German texts, which he even initially described as a *Trauerode*, a funeral ode—the same term that was generally applied to Lutheran funeral music compositions from the tradition of Bach, Schütz, and the earlier “German masters.” He felt that writing in German would speak to the hearts of men, and perhaps this was his desired technique for creating a Requiem of great German style, as he had written his publisher. He wished to assemble texts from the Bible that would express his personal theology (perhaps a complicated amalgam of his Catholic upbringing and his adult connection to Lutheran theology, both through his marriage and his musical leanings).

⁴⁰ Sun-Woo Cho, “Die Chorwerke Max Regers” (Ph.D. diss.: Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen, 1986), 261–62.

⁴¹ My translation with Joshua Rifkin; *ibid.*, 262.

⁴² *Ibid.*

In the end, despite Reger's connection to this material, Straube was able to convince Reger to abandon the project—an uncharacteristic decision for Reger—at least in part by citing the devastating comparison to Brahms. There may have been other factors; Reger may himself have been displeased with the work, although the speed of his composition seems to indicate otherwise. Roman Brotbeck also describes Reger's unwillingness to use Protestant chorales in the Latin Requiem; he had broken off composing the *Vater Unser* in 1909 because he couldn't find a convincing way to bring the chorale "Jesus meine Zuversicht" into the ending. For Reger, Brotbeck writes, "Protestant chorales were not mere tunes, but rather he regarded them—as we will see with the *Hebbel-Requiem*—as musical-textual unities."⁴³ Yet Protestant chorales were generally hallmarks of his major works, and particularly the works he associated with the German cultural nation, from his Psalm 100 to the patriotic 1914 *Vaterländische Ouvertüre*, also dedicated to the fallen heroes of World War I.⁴⁴ Deprived of one of his monumental compositional devices, perhaps Reger found himself less pleased with the ultimate results of his composing.

Susanne Shigihara speculates about a more complex understanding of Reger's choice to break

⁴³ Roman Brotbeck, *Zum Spätwerk von Max Reger: Fünf Diskurse* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1988), 85.

⁴⁴ According to notes by William Grim for Reger's publisher, Reger composed *Eine Vaterländische Ouvertüre*, op. 140, after the outbreak of the World War I in September 1914. It interweaves the overtly pro-German melodies "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles," "Ich hab mich ergeben," and "Die Wacht am Rhein." At the end of the work, the chorale "Nun danket alle Gott" is taken up by the trombones and worked into the "Deutschlandlied." Reger's widow Elsa wrote in 1930, "I have experienced firsthand how this piece moved everybody who once stood face to face with the enemy, who heard the shells fire, and who hour by hour had to face death." From http://www.musikmph.de/musical_scores/vorworte/126.html (Accessed September 8, 2014).

off the composition of his Latin Requiem.⁴⁵ She notes that Straube never otherwise convinced Reger to give up a composition. In other cases, Straube would give Reger negative criticism, which Reger would vehemently refute. So Reger's decision to give up the composition without the usual fight was uncharacteristic, which Shigihara suggests is indication that he may have been insecure about this work and therefore accepted Straube's criticism so willingly. In addition, this compositional break resulted in a deep depression and an unprecedented creative crisis. Therefore, Shigihara asks why Reger would break off composing this work, which he otherwise would never do, merely on the advice of Straube, when his letters describe how easily the composition was flowing, how excited he was, and that he may have needed only to recapitulate the music of the *Dies irae* opening in order to complete the movement—not creatively "stuck" at all? And why would this cause him to enter a depressive state when, in other cases, breaking off a work meant he had simply turned to something else?

She suggests that there would have had to be something that was close to heart that would lead to his depression. He may have been intimidated by the monumentality of the Requiem genre since the nineteenth century, in which Requiems were now closely associated with the personality of their composer with more choice given to a composer for personal expression. In addition, World War I had just broken out, a deeply traumatic event for the German people at the time. Because Reger had chosen to dedicate his Latin Requiem to the fallen heroes of the war, he may have been one of the first composers to confront, involuntarily, the inadequacy of the traditional Catholic text to express personal feelings about the first modern war. She writes:

⁴⁵ Susanne Shigihara, "Spannungsfelder – Max Regers Requiemkompositionen im Kontext der Gattungsgeschichte," *Reger-Studien* 5, 333-68.

In the light of the problems of the genre that were caused by the world war, the breaking off of the composition of the Latin Requiem gains a dimension that reaches farther than just personal insecurity about the monumental form and, as so often, also characterizes Reger's composition in this case as a type of seismographic shift caused by the upheavals of the time. From this perspective, Straube's criticism of the work, whatever its motivation, would have hit home with something in Reger that sensed, thanks to the shock of the war, the deficiencies of the Requiem as a genre more deeply than was conducive to a work demanding the devotion of all his heart.⁴⁶

Reger's choice to abandon the Latin Requiem may have reinforced his idea that a personal work in the German Requiem tradition would give his grief at World War I its proper expression. The following year, he would begin work on his single-movement setting of a poem ("Requiem") by Christian Friedrich Hebbel, published as the *Hebbel-Requiem*, op. 144b.

The first movement of the Latin Requiem was published as Op. 145a for the first time in 1938; today that entire movement is known simply as the Latin Requiem [*Lateinisches Requiem*]. The unfinished *Dies irae* was published in 1974 as a supplement to the complete works of Reger. Reger's Latin Requiem is the only one of his choral works to use a solo quartet. The quartet functions antiphonally, in opposition to the chorus, and uses short motives. As Sun-Woo Cho writes, the solo quartet, chorus, orchestra, and organ act as four separate "Klangapparate" in a way evocative of Schütz and the polychoral style. Reger juxtaposes historical-sounding modal melodies with dense chromaticism,

⁴⁶ My translation with Joshua Rifkin, from *ibid.*, 345.

often alternating between the two styles even within a single phrase, which Cho describes as causing complicated polyphonic ideas to become more traditional.⁴⁷

The first movement uses both the Introitus and the Kyrie together and consists of seven musical sections, each closing with a cadence, with the exception of the sixth part, which ends with an augmented chord. The movement begins with a 64-measure organ pedal point on D with quarter-note pulsations, which then lowers a step to C for another 9 measures, then 2 measures on E-flat. The idea of the pedal point immediately conjures thoughts of Bach and Schütz and Baroque compositional styles, as well as Romantic composers. Although Susanne Shigihara sees the long pedal point as similar to the opening to Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, I find it more convincing as an allusion to Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, which begins with an F pedal point with quarter-note pulsations.⁴⁸

Example 1a: Reger, *Lateinisches Requiem*, mvt. 1 opening

Molto sostenuto

⁴⁷ Cho, "Die Chorwerke Max Regers," 263-64.

⁴⁸ Shigihara, "Spannungsfelder," 333-368.

Example 1b: Brahms, *Ein deutsches Requiem*, mvt. 1 opening

Ziemlich langsam und mit Ausdruck

p legato

p legato

p

A grim footnote to the work's compositional history is that, for its first performance in 1938 (years after Reger's death), an alternative German text was written for the single Requiem movement to suit the needs of the Third Reich. The Latin Requiem was first published by the Max Reger Society in 1939 under the title of *Totenfeier* [funeral rite], adding the substitute German text by Hellmut von Hase, who eliminated all denominational and Old Testament references and created a text that depicted the Nazi adulation of the fallen war hero. For example, he substituted for *exaudi orationem meam, ad te omnis caro veniet* the German text *In sorrow we mutely lower the flags, for into the grave sunk what was dear to us*. A contemporary reviewer wrote that:

in the future this work could be the proper supplement to the not quite programme-filling *German Requiem* from Brahms. In addition to this, with its German text, which follows the melodic lines more than the intellectual content, it is a solemn memorial in music at celebrations and commemorations of the political leadership.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Popp and Shigihara, eds., *Max Reger at the Turning Point to Modernism: An Illustrated Volume with Documents from the Collection of the Max Reger Institute* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag

Herbert Gerigk praised the new German text in his review in *Die Musik* in 1939, noting that it would hopefully render the work very usable by German choirs, as the text was now "singable" instead of the Latin Requiem text (which, elsewhere in the same volume of *Die Musik*, was criticized for its references to Old Testament language).⁵⁰ Ironically, the work that caused Reger the most difficulty as a proper expression of his grief at the German losses in World War I ended up having an overtly patriotic German text designed to cater to the Nazi mythology of the fallen war hero.

Op. 144b: The Hebbel-Requiem

After a period of depression and creative crisis, Reger turned in 1915 to the *Hebbel-Requiem*, published as Op. 144b, with a poetic and secular text by the great German poet Christian Friedrich Hebbel.⁵¹ Roman Brotbeck notes that Reger probably understood the *Hebbel-Requiem* as continuation of his old Requiem project, with its similar dedication (now, explicitly, to the fallen *German* heroes of the war).⁵² Though it was not composed on the same monumental scale as a multi-movement Latin or German Requiem, the *Hebbel-Requiem* nonetheless represents one of Reger's attempts to create a larger choral-orchestral work. Reger composed the *Hebbel-Requiem* between the beginning of August and August 15, 1915, in Jena. The work is set for alto or baritone solo (the alto perhaps a tribute

Herbert Grundmann, 1988), 181.

⁵⁰ Herbert Gerigk, "Max Reger: *Totenfeier*," in *Die Musik* vol. 32 (1939), 378.

⁵¹ See Appendix for the complete text and translation. Hebbel's poem "Requiem" had also been set in 1863 by Peter Cornelius in response to Hebbel's death. The 9-minute *a cappella* work Cornelius composed was written in chromatic harmonic language that owed much to Franz Liszt, likely due to Cornelius's close personal relationship as amanuensis to Liszt.

⁵² Brotbeck, *Zum Spätwerk von Max Reger*, 90.

to Brahms's Alto Rhapsody), mixed chorus, and orchestra. Chronologically, it was Reger's last choral work.

The text, with its repeated plea, "Seele, vergiß sie nicht. Seele, vergiß nicht die Toten" [Soul, do not forget them. Soul, do not forget the dead] is a prayer not to God, as in the Latin Requiem or

even in Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, but to the living man.⁵³ The work could be interpreted in entirely secular ways, as in the original poem, were it not for Reger's giving a Christian flavor to the text by using the chorale "Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden." The textual refrain sung by the alto soloist, "Seele, vergiß sie nicht...", is repeated three times, which Roman Brotbeck maintains elevates the text to the status of ritual.⁵⁴

Example 2: Reger, *Hebbel-Requiem*, alto solo, mm. 29-37

Alto

See-le, ver - giß sie nicht, See-le, ver - giß nicht die To - ten, See - le, ver - giß sie nicht!

The work therefore alternates between the solo refrain and the choral verses, using the form A B A C A.

Reger, Hebbel-Requiem, op. 144b, Formal Description

A	1-40	Solo and orchestra	Refrain
B	41-63	Chorus and orchestra	Verse 1
A	63-75	Solo and orchestra	Refrain
C	75-138	Chorus and orchestra	Verse 2
A	139-175	Soloist, chorus, & orchestra	Extended refrain with chorale

⁵³ Cho, "Die Chorwerke Max Regers," 257.

⁵⁴ Brotbeck, *Zum Spätwerk von Max Reger*, 93.

According to Roman Brotbeck, Reger’s use of antiphonal technique to separate the refrain and the verse clarifies a gap in Hebbel’s poem, which had not identified the speaker; it could be a poetic narrator, divine voice, or even the dead. Reger does not have the option of conveying the uncertainty of the poem because he has to make a compositional choice. He assigns to the chorus the part of the dead, who speak in the third person about what happens to them, while the solo voice “receives in Reger’s setting, because of the archaic atmosphere from which she emerges, the character of a spirit’s voice, perhaps also a leader of the chorus, who admonishes the souls with a magical call.”⁵⁵ In this sense, the solo functions similarly to the fifth movement solo in Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*, in which the solo voice could be a divine or prophetic

voice, although in that case, the chorus does not represent the dead but also sings of divine comfort for the living.

Just as in the *Latin Requiem*, op. 145a, Reger creates an extended orchestral introduction based on a D pedal point, though it is shorter than in the *Latin Requiem*. This pedal point can now be seen as alluding to at least four historical Requiem traditions: the funeral music tradition of Bach and Schütz with their use of pedal points, the D minor of the Mozart Requiem, the pedal point with quarter-note pulsation in the opening of the Brahms Requiem, and finally Reger’s own earlier *Latin Requiem*. Reger lets the introduction and refrain begin and end with the archaic-sounding open fifth D-A.

Example 3: Reger, *Hebbel-Requiem*, opening

The musical score is titled "Molto sostenuto" and is in common time (C). It features three staves: Horns, Strings, and Contrabass. The Horns part (top staff) begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of chords in D major and D minor, with dynamics *p* and *pp*. The Strings part (middle staff) begins with a *ppp* dynamic, playing a series of chords in D major and D minor, with dynamics *p* and *pp*. The Contrabass part (bottom staff) begins with a *ppp* dynamic, playing a series of quarter notes in D major and D minor, with dynamics *p* and *pp*. The score is marked "Horns, con sord." and "Strings, con sord.".

⁵⁵ Ibid., 95–96.

This was not Reger's first time setting the *Requiem* poem by Hebbel; in 1911 he had written a short *a cappella* version for men's chorus, published in 1912 as the tenth number of Op. 83, a set of *Gesänge* for men's chorus. Even though the work would not have had the monumental implications of the latter version, there are, nevertheless, similarities. The version for men's chorus also contains musical material that recurs with every statement of "Seele, vergiß nicht die Toten," a mirror of Hebbel's poetic form. In the men's chorus version, that musical material is a homophonic statement by the four-part chorus. In both the men's chorus version and the full orchestral version Op. 144b, Reger sets the text "ihr verglimmendes Leben" [their fading life] with a sequence of chromatically descending sixth chords, which Albert J. J. Troskie notes is part of Reger's representation, in all of his works, with pain, fear, death, and suffering—common associations with chromaticism since the sixteenth century.⁵⁶

When the chorus enters in measure 41 with the text of the first verse, the pedal point ceases. It returns every time the alto soloist sings the text of the refrain. The chorus, on the other hand, states the text in Schützian fashion, with different pairs or trios of voices introducing new text homophonically, albeit over dense chromatic orchestral accompaniment. The choral writing also makes use of the historical device of text painting, as for example when the chorus descends and decrescendos during measures 75-93 to depict the text "erstarren sie bis hinein in das Tiefste" [they freeze within, into the depths].

The final section returns immediately to the D pedal point. As before, the alto enters with the

⁵⁶ Albert J. J. Troskie, "Die Tonsymbolik in Regers Chorwerken," in *Reger-Studien* 1, ed. Günther Massenkeil and Susanne Popp (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1978), 119-25.

refrain text, but now the chorus enters, at the end of the alto's text, this time using the refrain text typically associated with the soloist but with the melody derived from their first entrance. After a pause in which only the D pulsating pedal can be heard, the chorus enters again with Hassler's chorale melody, known also from its use in Bach's Passions, "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden" [O head full of blood and wounds], known in English as "O Sacred Head." Reger always named this chorale by the text of its ninth verse, "Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden" [When I should once and for all depart], typically associated with funerals and known in particular as the text to the final chorale of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. Reger asked, for example, in a letter to Arthur Seidl from 1913, "Have you not yet noticed the way the chorale 'Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden' resonates through all of my things?"⁵⁷ In all of his compositions, Reger thought of the text to the chorale as adding another dimension to the work, so here he would be thinking of the following words, if we consider the ninth verse text: "Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden, so scheid nicht von mir...Wenn mir am allerbängsten..." [When I should once and for all depart, then do not depart from me...When my heart should be most fearful...]

Examples 4a and 4b on next page.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

Example 4a: Bach, *St. Matthew Passion*, chorale 62

Soprano
Wenn ich ein mal soll schei - den, so scheide nichts von - mir,

Alto
Wenn ich ein - mal soll schei - den, so scheide nichts von - mir,

Tenor
Wenn ich ein mal soll schei - den, so scheide nichts von mir,

Bass
Wenn ich ein mal soll schei - den, so scheide nichts von mir,

Example 4b: Reger, *Hebbel-Requiem*, chorus of mm. 156–164

Soprano
Ver - giß sie nicht, die To - ten, ver - giß sie nicht die To - ten,

Alto
Ver - giß sie nicht, die To - ten, ver - giß sie nicht die To - ten,

Tenor
Ver - giß sie nicht, die To - ten, ver - giß sie nicht die To - ten,

Bass
Ver - giß sie nicht, die To - ten, ver - giß sie nicht die To - ten,

Because Reger omits the repetition of the A-part and also the continuation of the B-part of the chorale, he loses the second-person “du” that originally referred to Christ. By substituting the secular Hebbel text for the Christian texts, Brotbeck believes, Reger does not change the chorale’s meaning to a secular one but instead reinforces the plea of the Hebbel with a plea to God to take up the dead and not leave them to the eternal storm.⁵⁸ Brotbeck also writes that Reger might have understood the text “erneuertes

⁵⁸ Ibid., 97.

Sein” [renewed existence] in the sense of reincarnation of the dead, as that was a popular idea at the fin de siècle and during World War I. Reincarnation was thought of not necessarily according to the Eastern tradition but rather in the sense that the dead might return from the other side and come back to this one, where they could have a renewed taste of happiness and love.⁵⁹ Brotbeck believes that Reger may have seen this text as a naïve admonition to the afterworld not to forget the fallen heroes.

Reger's Afterlife in the Third Reich

In addition to the re-texting of the *Latin Requiem* as the *Totenfeier* described above, Reger's music was received in complex ways during the Nazi era. Just as his reputation was polarized during his own lifetime, it received renewed polarized comments during the 1930s. As Antonius Bittmann details, Reger's ostensibly pathological physical and musical features led racist writers to deem him “East Baltic,” a term used as a euphemism for Jewish, or “non-German.”⁶⁰ The anti-Semitic musicologist Richard Eichenauer, for example, who was employed by the SS to research racial theories of music, wrote:

Niemann describes how German musicians, with their characteristic thoroughness, compete with each other in the understanding of Reger's works, and in most cases remain unable to relate to him. This cannot be explained any other way but racially; for the East Baltic psyche is alien to ‘genuine’ Germans, who, serious efforts notwithstanding, are unable to experience it. Reger's tragic fate was to have been an outcast among his own people. To

⁵⁹ Ibid., 93.

⁶⁰ Bittmann, *Max Reger and Historicist Modernisms*, 15.

me, it is incorrect to say that Reger's art is not an expression of emotions and the soul. There are emotions and a heart in it, but it is the kind of heart that cannot find an echo with the German people.⁶¹

However, Reger was eventually accepted during the Nazi era as a “German master.” He was defended by Karl Hasse, who published the Max Reger *Mitteilungen*. Fritz Stein became even more influential; he was named director of the Berlin Conservatory of Music and was a member of the presidential council of the Reich Chamber of Music. As Susanne Popp and Susanne Shigihara describe it:

Stein was the only one of the members of the Reger circle influential during National Socialism who accepted the composer unreservedly in his contradiction of character and music and also proclaimed this vehemently...Otherwise, everything possible was done on the part of Reger's remaining friends to certify his ‘German essence,’ in the course of which the pervadingly apologetic tone all too clearly pointed to the continual objections from other sides.⁶²

During the Nazi era, Reger's most monumental and patriotic works, the *Vaterländische Ouvertüre*, *Hebbel-Requiem*, the re-texted *Totenfeier*, and the *Böcklin-Suite*, were performed frequently at Nazi state celebrations and funerals as part of the ceremonial pomp that the Nazis cultivated.⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid. For a biographical sketch of Richard Eichenauer, see Oliver Kopf, “Richard Eichenauer,” *Die Musik in der Geschichte und Gegenwart* Personenteil 6, 2nd rev. ed., ed. Ludwig Fischer (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1994), 144.

⁶² Popp and Shigihara, eds., *Max Reger at the Turning Point to Modernism*, 172-73.

⁶³ Ibid.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Bittmann details efforts to rehabilitate Reger from his Nazi-influenced criticism. Bittmann writes, “Bringing Reger’s reception image full-circle, post-War commentators reinstated Reger as heir to (and epigone of) the older master [Johannes Brahms]. To Theodor Anton Henseler, for example, Reger emerged as the only legitimate candidate to succeed the German master.”⁶⁴ Today, Reger is certainly seen as a successor of Brahms and known for his close relationship with Bach; his historicism is a significant factor in his reputation. For Reger, knowing the great works and composers of the German tradition was the essential background that enabled one to compose innovative progressive works. This explained his complex relationship with the Lutheran funeral music tradition, the Catholic Requiem, and Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem* as he struggled to write a German Requiem that adequately expressed his feelings about the German losses in World War I. It also reminds us of the degree to which Brahms’s choices of historical musical materials and German texts had become intricately linked with notions of German nationalism.

⁶⁴ Bittmann, *Max Reger and Historicist Modernisms*, 15-16.

Appendix: Text and Translation

Max Reger, *Hebbel* Requiem

Seele, vergiß sie nicht,
Seele, vergiß nicht die Toten!
Sieh, sie umschweben dich,
Schauernd, verlassen,
Und in den heiligen Gluten,
Die den Armen die Liebe schürt,
Atmen sie auf und erwärmen,
Und genießen zum letzten Mal
Ihr verglimmendes Leben.
Seele, vergiß sie nicht,
Seele, vergiß nicht die Toten!
Sieh, sie umschweben dich,
Schauernd, verlassen,
Und wenn du dich erkaltend
Ihnen verschliefst, erstarren sie
Bis hinein in das Tiefste.
Dann ergreift sie der Sturm der Nacht,
Dem sie, zusammengekrampft in sich,
Trotzten im Schoße der Liebe,
Und er jagt sie mit Ungestüm
Durch die unendliche Wüste hin,
Wo nicht Leben mehr ist, nur Kampf
Losgelassener Kräfte
Um erneuertes Sein!
Seele, vergiß sie nicht,
Seele, vergiß nicht die Toten!

- Friedrich Hebbel

*Soul, do not forget them,
Soul, do not forget the dead!
See, they float around you,
Shuddering, abandoned,
And in the holy radiance
That is fueled by our love,
They breathe again, warm again,
And enjoy for the last time
Their fading life.
Soul, do not forget them,
Soul, do not forget the dead!
See, they float around you,
Shuddering, abandoned,
And when you gradually
Forget them, they freeze within
Into the depths.
Then the storm of night catches them,
Which they together
Resist with the strength of our love,
And the storm chases them with violence
Through the endless desert,
Where there is no more life, only the struggle
Of wildly released forces
For renewed existence!
Soul, do not forget them,
Soul, do not forget the dead!*

- Author's translation

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