

Max REGER (1873-1916)

String Quartet in E-flat major, Op.109

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| 1 | I. Allegro moderato | 14:14 |
| 2 | II. Quasi presto | 4:20 |
| 3 | III. Larghetto | 12:43 |
| 4 | IV. Allegro con grazia | 9:11 |

BUSCH QUARTET: Adolf Busch (violin), Bruno Straumann (violin), Hugo Gottesmann (viola), Hermann Busch (cello) Recorded: 15 February 1951 - Bavarian Radio, Munich

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| 5 | Violin Sonata in F sharp minor, Op.84: II. Allegretto | 2:38 |
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ADOLF BUSCH (violin), RUDOLF SERKIN (piano)
Recorded: 7 May 1931 - Small Queen's Hall, London (Electrola D.B. 1523; 32-2188; E-2B 843)

Suite in Old Style, Op.93

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| 6 | I. Präludium. Allegro comodo - | 4:56 |
| 7 | II. Largo | 8:18 |
| 8 | III. Fuge. Allegro con spirito (ma non troppo vivace) Meno mosso - Allargando | 5:47 |

ADOLF BUSCH (violin), RUDOLF SERKIN (piano)
Recorded: 20 January 1941 - Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Bonus tracks

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| 9 | Clarinet Quintet in A major, Op.146: II. Vivace | 6:51 |
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PHILIPP DREISBACH (clarinet)
WENDLING-QUARTETT: Karl Wendling (violin), Hermann Hubl (violin), Ludwig Natterer (viola), Alfred Saal (cello) Recorded: 1929 (Grammophon 24796-B; B 9023)

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| 10 | String Quartet in E-flat major, Op.109: II. Quasi presto | 3:59 |
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WENDLING-QUARTETT: Karl Wendling (violin), Hermann Hubl (violin), Ludwig Natterer (viola), Alfred Saal (cello) Recorded: ca. 1934 (Electrola E. H. 886; E-2D 2021)



**ADOLF
BUSCH**

performs

REGER

String Quartet, Op.109
Violin Sonata, Op.84 (II)
Suite in the Old Style

BUSCH QUARTET
RUDOLF SERKIN

Recorded 1931-1951



Romm 1912

Schaffgans

A GUILD HISTORICAL RELEASE

- Recordings [1-5]; [9]; [10] and photographs from the BuschBrothersArchive in the Max-Reger-Institut, Karlsruhe
- Recording of *Suite in the Old Style* [6-8] courtesy of Tully Potter
- Photo credits: Lotte Meitner-Graf (p. 1), Theo Schaffgans (p. 2)
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F sharp minor Violin Sonata, Op. 84, of 1905), naturally enough, as the final item. Generally Adolf Busch was not in favour of recording only single movements of larger works, but in the era of the 78 this was a not only natural, but also unavoidable necessity in order to “fill” the new production appropriately. To listen to this new remaster of the old record, can only give unrestricted pleasure and admiration for the remastering. Much more immediate in sound, but perhaps even more inspired is the life performance from the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., where the Busch/Serkin duo, the Busch/Serkin trio and the Busch Quartet were frequent guests. Most of these concerts have been recorded, many of these recordings have survived, but only few of these have been released on CD. To hear Busch and Serkin on 20 January 1941 in the Bach-inspired Suite in the Old Style, Op. 93 (1906), with an impassioned slow movement and energetic outer movements (with Serkin in the finale in particularly splendid form), consoles us for all those missing recordings of Reger performances Busch and

Serkin gave over the decades, not least the great C minor Violin Sonata, Op. 139, the manuscript of which has remained in the Serkin family since Reger’s widow, Elsa, had sold it to Adolf Busch in the 1920s.



Adolf Busch and Rudolf Serkin

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Max-Reger-Institut with BuschBrothersArchive

It was on 26 January 1909 at the Cologne Conservatoire that young, 17 years old Adolf Busch performed, from memory, Max Reger’s Violin Concerto to the composer, accompanied by his brother Fritz (who, likewise, had not yet turned 19). Reger was duly impressed, stressing to his wife the technical accomplishment, musical understanding and beauty of the rendering. Reger was a favourite of the Principal of the Conservatoire, conductor Fritz Steinbach, who also happened to be Adolf Busch’s composition teacher. It will not be surprising that that a strong kinship was felt from both sides, Reger calling the Busch brothers “my two musical nurslings”. The musical bond between Busch and the composer, some eighteen years his senior, remained a strong one for the rest of both musicians’ lives. Reger’s Violin Concerto frequently featured in Adolf Busch’s concert programmes, starting with Busch’s debut of a Reger work in concert, a performance conducted by Reger himself on 4 March 1910 at the Berlin Singakademie (the same concert featured a composition of Busch’s, his Schubert Variations, Op. 2). More than twenty collaborative concerts followed until the composer’s untimely death in May 1916 at age 43, including a final tour in the war-time Netherlands, with a concluding concert in Frankfurt on 17 March. In April 1913 Busch and Reger jointly visited the photographer Theo Schafgans in Bonn, Busch having to entertain Reger during the camera setup by “fiddling along”.

Later in life Reger felt less sympathy for his own Violin Concerto, which he thought too elaborate particularly concerning the orchestration. But instead of re-orchestrating the work, he wanted to write a new Introduction and Rondo capriccioso for violin and small orchestra, to be dedicated to Busch (as his Op. 147); this was not to be due to Reger’s unexpected death, the composition remained only half-finished, and neither Busch nor any other close contemporary saw a possibility to complete it posthumously (some twenty years later, Florizel von Reuter attempted a kind of completion, deviating however from Reger’s original formal intentions). Busch however remained faithful to the Violin Concerto, re-orchestrating the work on 29 January 1942 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, aiming to “lighten” the orchestral textures. This performance (conducted by Fritz Busch). Busch had in fact been encouraged to revise the work by no less than Arnold Schoenberg, who likewise held Reger’s music in high esteem, particularly the Violin Concerto (which had also featured, in a reduced instrumentation, in Schoenberg’s Vienna Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen).

As a chamber musician, Busch was much in demand to play Reger, whether in duo, partnered by Reger and his brother Fritz, amongst others, later by his son-in-law Rudolf Serkin, together with Fritz Busch and cellist Paul Grümmer in order to perform the Piano Trio in E minor, Op. 102, or with his string quartet. It is a performance of the Busch Quartet performing the E flat major Quartet, Op. 109, that is the most substantial surviving sound document of Adolf Busch performing Reger. Made by the Bavarian Radio in a studio performance on 15 February



Busch Quartet

1951. The Busch Quartet, which had in 1946/7 been re-formed, now consisted, apart from his cellist brother Hermann (1897–1975) who was a member of the quartet since 1930, of his Basle-born young violinist pupil Bruno Straumann (1924–2000) and Viennese violist Bruno Gottesmann (1896–1970), who had become a member of the Busch Little Symphony late in 1945. Tully Potter reports how emotional the final tour of the Quartet in post-war Europe was – several of the twenty concerts took place in heavily destroyed German cities, including Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Hamburg, and Stuttgart. The concerts had been organised by Busch's Swiss agent, and the first five concerts of the tour were given in Berne, Basle, Zurich and Strasbourg (where two years previously the Busch Quartet had partaken in the Strasbourg Music Festival).

Reger's E flat major String Quartet, Op. 109 of 1909, is, by today's standards, by no means his most frequently performed nor his most typical one – yet, in the earliest times of recording, it was put to disc as early as c1934, when the Wendling Quartet recorded the Scherzo for Electrola. Carl Wendling (1875–1962) had been a pupil of Joseph Joachim; he was acquainted with Reger from 1904, and their earliest concert together has been recorded to have taken place on 13 February 1905. An early performance of the E flat major String Quartet by the Wendling Quartet is recorded for 21 February 1913 in Frankfurt. Later the Wendling Quartet was to give, together with clarinettist Philipp Dreisbach (1891–1980), the first performance of Reger's Clarinet Quintet in A, Op. 146, which the composer dedicated to the violinist (later the same forces recorded the scherzo of the quintet for the record). Wendling later occasionally performed together (e.g. in the Bach Double Concerto) with Adolf Busch, who always enjoyed the older musician's company; Fritz Busch, under whom during the latter's Stuttgart years Wendling (as Dreisbach and the other members of the quartet featured here) performed as leader of the court orchestra, retrospectively referred to him as a "serious, cultivated and loveable man; my contact with him and our exchange of ideas enriched my years at Stuttgart. To hear that liberal-minded man lived up to his principles in the later evil times was a satisfaction but no surprise."

The Busch's performance of the Reger Quartet, although maybe not outwardly beautiful in tone, is of extreme intensity, penetrating the music's levels of meaning, the scherzo utterly funny (much funnier than the Wendling's rendering, which may musically yet be the more successful one), the Larghetto bespeaking Reger's "con gran espressione" (a kind of typical prescription such as Elgar's "Nobilmente"), the opening movement foreshadowing the opening string sextet of Richard Strauss's opera *Capriccio*, the concluding fugue displaying the best qualities of the Busch's quartet playing.

As early as in 193 Busch went into the recording studio also to "do some Reger", together with Rudolph Serkin – albeit only as a complement to Schubert's Grand Fantasia in C, Op. post. 159 (D 934). The recording was made on 6/7 May 1931 in London's Small Queen's Hall, the Reger (the Scherzo middle movement) of the