
Rebay, Ferdinand (Wilhelm Friedrich)

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(*b* Vienna, June 11, 1880; *d* Vienna, Nov 6, 1953). Austrian composer, arranger, choirmaster, pianist, and piano teacher. As a child, he sang in the boys' choir of the Heiligenkreuz Abbey, later studying composition privately with two members of Brahms's circle, Eusebius Mandyczewski and Josef von Wöss. Rebay graduated in 1904 from the Conservatory of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, where he was a prize-winning student of Robert Fuchs. He subsequently worked for 16 years as a choirmaster in Vienna, leading two important choirs in that city: the Vienna Choir Association and the Schubertbund. During these years, Rebay acquired a local reputation as a composer of vocal music and regularly accompanied important Viennese singers, including Hans Duhan of the Vienna State Opera. In 1920, Rebay was hired as a piano teacher at his former school (by now renamed the Vienna Academy for Music and Performing Arts), a post he kept until his retirement in 1946. There, he mainly taught piano as a second instrument, also directing the piano studies in the continuing education programme. Rebay encountered the guitar and its repertoire through his colleague Jakob Ortner, who was responsible for creating one of the first European conservatoire-level guitar programmes in 1923 at the academy. His interest in the instrument was further stimulated by his niece, the guitarist Gerta Hammerschmid (1906–85), Ortner's former student and dedicatee of most of Rebay's guitar works.

Although he composed for a variety of vocal and instrumental combinations, Rebay's greatest importance remains as a guitar composer. He wrote close to 400 works for the instrument, ranging from songs, miniatures, and sets of variations to multi-movement sonatas, both solo and chamber music in both solo and ensemble settings. His anachronistic style is anchored in 19th-century Austro-German musical values: while a lyrical and late-Romantic atmosphere permeates his songs and shorter works, his sonatas show a strict adherence to formal conventions and an idiom directly linked to the Viennese classics. Rebay's more than 30 sonatas or sonata-structured works for guitar are unique, offering guitarists the opportunity to interact with the Romantic post-Beethovenian sonata, a genre otherwise nearly absent in the repertoire. In addition, by writing a copious amount of chamber music for guitar, he not only drew from a Viennese tradition but offered an alternative to the solo repertoire that was then favoured by mainstream guitarists such as Andrés Segovia.

In addition to Hammerschmid, some of the finest Viennese guitarists of Rebay's time, including Austria's foremost guitarist, Luise Walker, performed his music. Nevertheless, most of it remained unpublished and gradually fell into obscurity after his death. In the 1970s, Hammerschmid donated Rebay's manuscripts to the Heiligenkreuz Abbey and the Austrian National Library, and there they remained hidden from public view until the early 2000s, when the first modern publications appeared through Geneva-based Philomele Editions.

Works

(*selective list*)

Mss at A-HE, Wn^{A-}, Wst^{A-}, CZ-Bm, and US-NRol

Operas

Astrid, n.d.

Die Sinflut, 1907

Sacred

Jesu Geburt: Oratorium, solo v, mixed vv, orch, 1908
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Mass in B \flat in memory of Anton Bruckner, S, A, T, B, mixed vv, org, n.d.
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Mass in E \flat , female vv, org, (Vienna, 1949)
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Choral

Spanische Serenade, T, male vv, gui, ?1925
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Hirtenlied aus Hallingtal, 2 female vv, male vv, 2 ob, hn, gui, ?1925

64 unacc. choruses, male, female, mixed vv
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37 acc. choruses, male, female, mixed vv
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Solo vv, pf or gui acc.

Löns-Lieder, v, pf (Vienna, 1918)

Die kleine Rosengarten, v, gui, 1939

213 songs with pf acc.

156 songs with gui acc.

Orchestral

Symphony, b, orch, 1904

Serenade, E \flat , orch, 1904

Erlkönig: Ouverture, orch, n.d.

Piano Symphony, d, pn, orch, n.d.

Chamber with gui

Septet, a, fl, ob, cl, hn, bn, 2 gui, 1927

2 Quartets: d, vn, va, vc, gui, 1925

a, fl, va, vc, gui, 1942

3 Trios: D, fl, bs, gui, n.d.

A, fl, cl, gui, 1941

d, vn, va, gui, 1947

Lyrische Suite, vn, va, gui, 1935

Lustige Variationen über das alte Volkslied 'Die Pinzgauer wollten wallfahren gehn...', fl, gui, db, 1949

9 Duo Sonatas: e, ob, gui, 1925

d, va, gui, 1934

d, cl, gui, 1941

E, fl, gui, 1942

C, ob, gui, 1942

c, vn, gui, 1942

e, vn, gui, 1942

D, fl, gui, 1942

a, cl, gui, 1942

Sonata, C, pf, gui, n.d.

Grand Duo, a, pf, gui, 1942

Spanische Serenade, fl, gui, 1943

Gui ens

Quartet, g, terz gui, 2 gui, quintbass gui, 1925

Grand Duo, a, gui, quintbass gui, 1940

Duos, 4 vols., 2 gui (Vienna, 1949, 1951, 1958)

Chamber without gui

2 Str Qts: Eb, 1899

F, 1902

Sonata, c, vc, pf, n.d.

Trio, ob, hn, pf, 1925

Fantasie, hn, hp, 1925

Gui solo

7 Sonatas: a, 1925

d, 1941

E, 1941

D, 1943

a, 1944
Sonata in einem Satz, d, n.d.
E, n.d.

Drei kleine Vortragsstücke, 1925
Studies, miniatures, and variations

Piano solo

2 sonatas:	d, 1901
	a, 1902
Historische Walzer-Suite, n.d. (also in 4-hand version)	

Arrangements and opera reductions

Fantasias on themes by Offenbach, Bizet, Sibelius, Wagner, pf (2 and 4 hands) and vn, pf
Reductions of operas by Schreker and Korngold, pf

Main publishers: Hug & Co., Bosworth & Co., Robitschek, Breitkopf & Härtel, Universal Edition, Schott, Doblinger, Hladky, Chanterelle, Hans Pizka, Eudora, Bergmann

Bibliography

C. Dobrauz: Preface to F. Rebay: *Duo's für zwei Gitarren*, i (Vienna, 1949)

J. Gaitzsch: 'Ferdinand Rebay: Forgotten Brahms Epigone or Major Guitar Composer?', *Soundboard*, 31/4 (2006), 11–18

S. Hackl: *Die Gitarre in Österreich: von Abate Costa bis Zykan* (Innsbruck, 2011)

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Online sources

M. Kornberger: 'Familie Rebay', *Oesterreichisches Musiklexikon online*, https://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik_R/Rebay_Familie.xml <https://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik_R/Rebay_Familie.xml>

M. Chervenlieva-Gelew and S. Gelew: *Thematisch-Chronologisches Verzeichnis der Musikalischen Werke von Ferdinand Rebay*, <http://www.stift-heiligenkreuz-sammlungen.at/musikarchiv/ferdinand-rebay/werkverzeichnis> <<http://www.stift-heiligenkreuz-sammlungen.at/musikarchiv/ferdinand-rebay/werkverzeichnis>>

See also: Mandyczewski, Eusebius; Wöss, Josef Venantius von; Fuchs, Robert; Duhan, Hans; Walker, Luise