

The Instrumentation of Josef Gabriel Rheinberger's Organ Concertos and the Source of His Compositional Ideas

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This study aims to reveal the sources for compositional ideas in the organ concertos of Josef Gabriel Rheinberger (1839–1901), one of the composers who led the revival of this genre in the 19th century. The uniqueness of Rheinberger's instrumentation has already been noted by Choroba (2001), although Choroba focuses mainly on an analysis of musical form rather than acoustic design, which I consider in this study.

First, I focused on the differences in acoustic design of Rheinberger's organ concertos from other composers of his time (e.g., F. J. Fétis, E. Prout, and A. Guilmant). Whereas in the works of other composers, the orchestra and the organ alternate constantly and confront each other, Rheinberger used both sonic elements for the most part simultaneously, blended them together. The analyses reveal that Rheinberger's original acoustic design is an essential feature of his compositional style.

Second, I explored the influences for Rheinberger's unique compositional ideas through an analysis of historical documents such as his correspondences with organists P. Homeyer and C. L. Werner and the dispositions of the organs on which these compositions were performed. Other composers of his generation composed organ concertos with large new organs with over 50 registers in mind. On the other hand, Rheinberger was most familiar with medium-sized organs, and it is unlikely that his music was composed for any specific instrument. I also note that this compositional approach was likely inspired when he edited W. A. Mozart's church sonatas.

The above considerations indicate that the acoustic design of Rheinberger's organ concertos was the fruit of his attempt to write more versatile compositions that synthesized the sounds of organ and orchestra in an environment that differed from that of other composers of the period.