

---

## Reger: Romantische Suite op. 125 (Arr.)



Title	Romantische Suite op. 125 by Max Reger, Arr. Arnold Schönberg
Time of Origin	1919/20
Premiere	9 October 1920 in Vienna
Duration	ca. 40 min.

In late fall of 1918, Arnold Schönberg founded the Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen (Society for Private Musical Performances) with the help of close associates and students. The purpose of the Society was to allow its members to become familiar with contemporary music. To this end, concerts were given at regular intervals, in which contemporary works were performed for a select audience. Along with Claude Debussy and Béla Bartók, Max Reger was one of the composers whose works were most frequently performed. Schönberg considered Reger to be an important musical innovator, writing to his friend Alexander Zemlinsky that “Reger, in my opinion, must be promoted; 1. because he composed a lot; 2. because he is already dead but still remains unfamiliar (incidentally, I consider him a genius).” It is therefore not surprising that the “First Public Concert of the Society” in the 1920 season, which served to attract new audience members, featured a work by Reger, namely, the “Romantic Suite for large orchestra,” op. 125. Since it was not possible to perform works requiring large instrumental forces due to limited financial resources and space restrictions, such works were arranged for smaller ensembles. Schönberg began an arrangement of the “Romantic Suite” in September 1920. However, an extended stay in Zandvoort, Netherlands, prevented him from finishing the project. The score was completed by the violinist Rudolf Kolisch, who was also an active member of the Society. The audience at the performance was unaware of Schönberg’s partial authorship, as the program notes only credited Kolisch for the arrangement.

Reger’s “Romantic Suite,” op. 125, is in three movements, with two slow movements providing the framework for a fast scherzo. Each movement is accompanied by a poem by Joseph von Eichendorff. Schönberg arranged the Suite for a chamber orchestra consisting of flute, clarinet, string quartet, harmonium four hands and piano four hands. Rudolf Kolisch added a double bass to the instrumentation. The concert featured works by Claude Debussy and Béla Bartók, as well as the premiere of the first two pieces from Schönberg’s Piano Pieces, op. 23. Schönberg’s student Egon Wellesz gave an introductory lecture on the “Romantic Suite,” which was later published; in it, he focuses above all on Reger’s approach to variation form.

Judging by letters sent to Schönberg, the performance of the “Romantic Suite” was very well received by the audience. In particular, many were surprised by the way the

arrangement sounded. Erwin Stein, conductor of the performance, described the sound as warm and clear. Alban Berg also offered words of praise: "The Romantic Suite sounded quite splendid. If we could constantly employ such a chamber orchestra, we would stay above water."

Sebastian Slameczka | © Arnold Schönberg Center, Wien  
[www.schoenberg.at](http://www.schoenberg.at)