

JOSEPH JONGEN
1873-1953

Petit Prélude (Aria), W.319
Scherzetto, Op. 108, No. 1
Choral, Op. 37, No. 4

Jongen's *Symphonie-Concertante* for organ and orchestra never left the standard repertoire, but his smaller pieces (numbering in the hundreds) for all instruments are providing a widespread, long-dormant delight. Jongen used classical forms such as sonata, scherzo, and song form to present otherwise somewhat exotic melodic and harmonic activity.

The *Aria*, a plaintive modal melody, was probably composed as a sight-reading exercise for the Conservatory at Brussels. The *Scherzetto* is a wonderfully brief fantasy piece, in natural minor mode and played nearly entirely on the various flutes of the organ. The *Choral*, the last in the Opus 37 *Quatre Pièces*, is among Jongen's best known and most often played works for solo organ. It is a beautiful, slow-moving, five-minute crescendo to full organ. Jongen marked the tempo '*assez lent*,' but not many pieces marked 'plenty slow' can thrill as this one can! The piece grows in registration and intensity, and by the end, the organ is full with a huge E major chord singing out rather triumphantly. As if that weren't enough, there is a canon between the uppermost melody and the pedal. The pedal plays the same notes as the melody but remains one measure behind for most of the piece.

Prelude and Fugue in E-flat, Op. 121

Characteristic of Jongen's style, the Prelude flows along in French toccata style, with effervescent chord figures in the hands and stately melody in the pedal. The fugue is a vigorous gigue.

Sonata Éroica

This sonata in C-sharp minor is Jongen's greatest work for organ solo. It could be considered the meeting of Liszt's *Fantasy on "Ad nos, ad salutarem undam"* and Widor's variation movements from his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. Put another way, Jongen weaves a seamless (and impressive) tapestry of variations on a single theme, while making the whole piece sound more like a huge sonata than just a set of variations. The Sonata's one and only theme is a lovely melody with a provincial ambiance, like an ancient carol; it begs to be sung to words. Jongen uses the entire theme in some places and fragments in others. This adds to the sense of "variation," for it is from the tiny motives that the larger piece is built. The main sections of the work proceed thus: huge Introduction; main Theme played very quietly and

serenely; two Variations; extended Allegro rhapsody with one partial and two full Variations; Fugue; one full Variation in major mode; Coda.

Toccatà

The *Toccatà* is a striking opus that derives its excitement from vigorous rhythm rather than sheer speed.