

The Events Surrounding the Composition of Jacobi's **Sonate für Altsaxophon und Klavier, Op. 42** (1932)

Having met the young saxophonist Sigurd Raschèr in Berlin in the early 1930s, Wolfgang Jacobi did not have to wait long before he was approached for a work for the saxophone. These years in Berlin, though ultimately short, proved fruitful for Jacobi, Raschèr, and the saxophone.

Jacobi was 13 years older than Raschèr, and somewhat further along in his career by this time. Though he did not formally study with Paul Hindemith and was actually one year older than the lion of modern German music, he often sought his advice, according to Raschèr, taking new works to him for commentary and suggestions. It was under just such circumstances that, in early 1932, Raschèr, Jacobi, and Hindemith met one day to play through Jacobi's new *Sonate für Altsaxophon und Klavier, Op. 42*. It had been recently completed, in February. Jacobi had not composed for Raschèr prior to this time, nor had Hindemith. During this session, Raschèr played the saxophone part through with a pianist whose identity this writer has not learned. It is possible that it was the pianist of the premiere of the work, Marie Zweig, but that is only conjecture. Hindemith was very favorably impressed with the *Sonate*. He made a few suggestions for tightening-up some of the phrasing in a few spots in the third movement, using a blue pen to mark out measures in at least two places, markings which are still easily visible in the original manuscript. This meeting also began the process of Hindemith becoming personally familiar with Raschèr's playing, though he was already generally familiar with the saxophone.

The first public performance of Jacobi's *Sonate* took place in Berlin (venue not known to this writer) on June 16, 1932 with soloist Sigurd Raschèr and pianist Marie Zweig. The inside back cover of the original manuscript is full of a listing of dozens of performances of the work in the early years after it was composed, and the *Sonate* continued to occupy an important place in Raschèr's repertoire for the remainder of his performing career.

The work remained unpublished for 33 years, until Bourne Co. of New York published a version of the work in 1965. While other works written for Raschèr were published during the 1930s in Germany (e.g. Dressel – *Bagatellen*) and elsewhere (Ibert, Glazunov, Martin, von Borck), there are particular reasons why Jacobi's *Sonate* may have waited so long. Jacobi was labeled by the Nazi government to be "half-Jewish", and therefore endured an *Arbeitsverbot* which meant that legal employment and performances of his music were banned in Germany from 1933 until 1945. Furthermore, in the 1930s there was for a short time a banning of the saxophone as a Jewish instrument. By the time the war was over, there was little classical saxophone activity in Germany and Raschèr was living in America with the original manuscript. By this time Jacobi, and most people in Germany, had much bigger social and artistic issues with which to deal, and finding a publisher for a saxophone work was simply not a priority.

Much research still needs to be accomplished to determine if the Bourne Co. version of the Sonate is actually a revised version or simply a poorly edited and proofed original version. Since the publisher is in New York and published other works dedicated to Raschèr, it is reasonable to assume that there may have been correspondence between Raschèr and Bourne on issues relating to some of these works. The Sigurd Raschèr Archives are set to be dedicated in May 2007, at the hundredth birthday of Sigurd Raschèr, at the State University of New York at Fredonia. Documents which may shed more light on this issue between Jacobi and Raschèr, as well as Raschèr and his publishers, will finally be available to serious researchers of the saxophone. In any event, there is, in this writer's opinion, strong evidence to support the idea that there may indeed be only one version of the Sonate, as well as the possibility that the inconsistencies between manuscript and published score are intentional refinements reflecting Jacobi's later view of the work. After several years of performing the work and periodic reference to the original manuscript, both my accompanist and I still find inconsistencies, note changes, clef changes, and other apparent errors which do not appear to be the result of a rethinking of form, or melodic or harmonic content.

Currently, Drs. Barbara Kienscherf, Andreas Ullrich and Richard Scruggs are engaged in researching more aspects of the work's genesis to determine the status, legally and artistically, of both the manuscript and the current printed version, and whether or not what is in print today is indeed an intentional, different version.

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