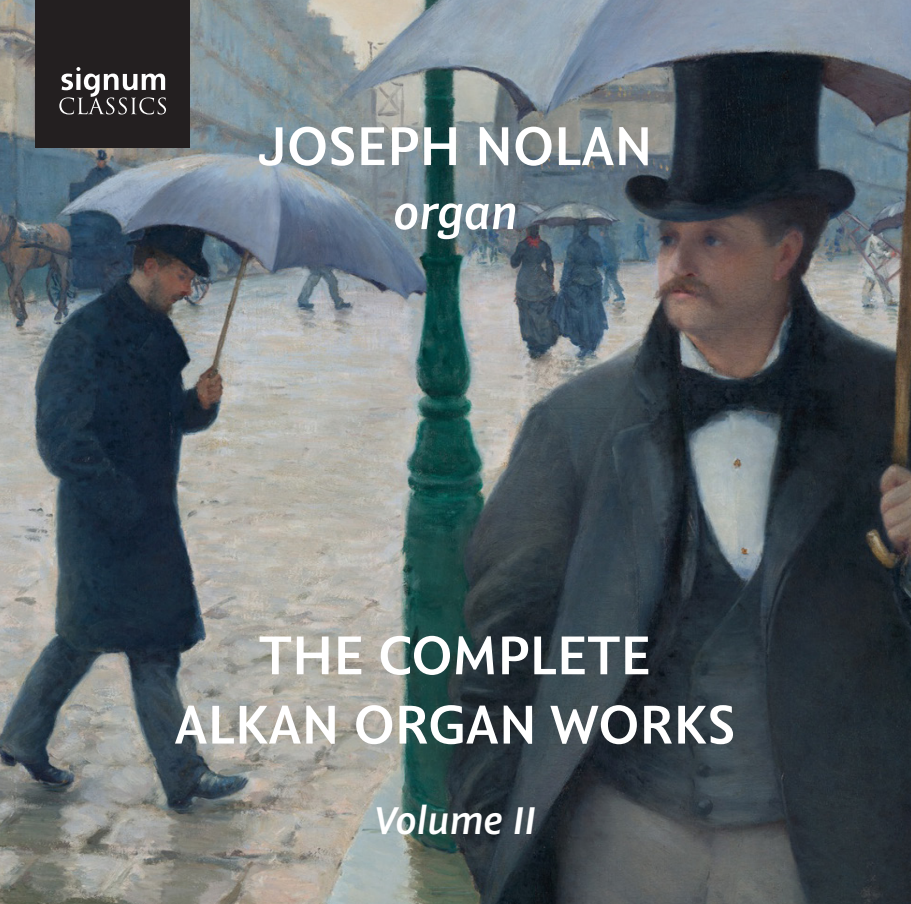




signum
CLASSICS

JOSEPH NOLAN
organ

THE COMPLETE
ALKAN ORGAN WORKS

Volume II

	13 Prières, Op. 64	
1	I. Andantino	[02.52]
2	II. Moderato	[02.38]
3	III. Poco Adagio	[03.45]
4	IV. Moderatamente	[03.05]
5	V. Adagio	[05.09]
6	VI. Moderato	[04.08]
7	VII. Maestoso	[06.10]
8	VIII. Tempo Giusto	[02.46]
9	IX. Doucement	[04.14]
10	X. Assez Lentement	[04.25]
11	XI. Andantino	[05.08]
12	XII. Allegretto	[03.20]
13	XIII. Largement Et Majestueusement	[04.12]
	12 Études pour les pieds seulement	
14	No. 1, Moderato	[01.33]
15	No. 2, Adagio	[02.53]
16	No. 3, Fughetta	[02.21]
17	No. 4, Moderato	[03.19]
18	No. 5, Moderato	[02.45]
19	No. 6, Adagio	[04.41]
20	Benedictus, Op. 54	[08.51]
	Total Timings:	[1.18.20]

The Stahlhuth-Jann Organ Of
St Martin's Church, Dudelange



© David Mason

INTRODUCTION

"He's a genuinely towering musician, who I think just deserves to be mentioned in every home as up there with Mozart, Bach, Chopin..."¹

Laudatory words like these could perhaps, for some, be used to describe one of the giants of the organ world like Franck, Liszt, Widor, Vierne, Dupré, or Reger, but they are instead offered by Dr Joseph Nolan to bring to further public consciousness and elevate their highly individual contemporary and predecessor, Charles-Valentin Alkan (1813-1888).

Alkan was a French Jewish Romantic-era composer and frighteningly virtuosic pianist admired by Chopin, Rubinstein, Franck, d'Indy and Liszt (who purportedly was nervous playing in his presence). A prodigy, he won several first prizes at the Paris Conservatoire, including for organ. His teacher, François Benoist, also instructed Franck, Saint-Saëns and Lefébure-Wély, all of whom Alkan knew well. One of the early French champions of JS Bach, Alkan contributed greatly to the revolutionising of French pedal technique from the mid-1800s. Yet his contributions have been comparatively neglected, for various reasons.

For one, he never became a famous Paris organist. Although he was appointed *titulaire* of the Synagogue de Nazareth in 1851, he almost immediately resigned the position due to artistic reasons. Thus, he lacked a prominent public position (and a desire for one).

Secondly, few of his *oeuvres* are designated for organ, but rather 'piano three hands' or the now obsolete pedal-piano (*pédalier*), of which Alkan was arguably the greatest and most highly respected exponent from 1850 onwards. Indeed,

¹ All quotes taken from an interview with Joseph Nolan for the UK-based Alkan Society, conducted by Bradley Berg, and a Q&A with Kevin Bowyer. See Alkan Society Bulletin No. 106, July 2025.

Marcel Dupré, pupil of Widor, regarded Alkan's pedal innovations, envisioned on this instrument, as vital for any serious organist's technique.

Which leads us to the music's difficulty. Before his first public performance of Alkan's *Impromptu*² (of which Liszt owned an autograph copy), Joseph Nolan says he was "pretty terrified". When comparing Alkan's demands to those of Reubke's Sonata, Liszt's *Ad nos* and Barber's *Toccata Festiva*, Nolan puts Alkan on a whole other level.

Yet he also praises Alkan calling him (in the best possible way) "one massive one-off". Organist Kevin Bowyer praises the music's "freshness of vision" and "spontaneity of expression that makes them stand out from anything else." Original and personal, some of it equals and surpasses the quality of renowned organ works by his contemporaries.

Indeed, for Bowyer:

"Alkan is right there among the gods."

Nolan's recordings are the culmination of a four-year journey - requiring "thousands of hours" of practice and familiarisation - through what he calls the most formidable challenge of his career. As the instigator of this project, nearly a decade in the making, I am greatly indebted to him. I hope, too, that you, the listener, gain great joy from this unfamiliar, fascinating, unique music, and that Alkan's inimitable voice wins many more admirers and performers.

© Seth Blacklock

Seth Blacklock, a member of the UK Alkan Society, is an amateur pianist and researcher of neglected composers and repertoire. He lives near Belfast, Northern Ireland with his wife and four boys.

² Recorded on Volume One in this series.

ARTIST FOREWORD

The genius, originality and appealing music of Charles-Valentin Alkan rivals the state of Western Australia, where I have lived for the past eighteen years, for being a well-kept secret from the world.

I had vaguely heard of Alkan but knew virtually nothing about him or his music. This was to change drastically in 2018 when I received an email from Steve Long, the Managing Director of Signum Classics. I have been a long-standing recording artist for Signum since my first recording for them featuring the Grand Ballroom Organ in Buckingham Palace in 2007.

I have recorded the complete organ works of Widor as well as individual recordings from St Sulpice, Paris, St Etienne Du Mont, Paris, and St Bavo, Haarlem. It has been an amazing journey with Signum, and I am truly grateful to Steve Long for his ongoing support of my career.

The email Steve received was from an admirer of my Widor cycle by the name of Seth Blacklock. Seth believed that my Widor playing indicated that I might prove to be a natural interpreter of the organ music of Charles Valentin Alkan. I wrote to Steve that I would investigate Alkan's organ music and revert with my thoughts.

These investigations commenced in the usual places – YouTube and IMSLP. I found recordings of Alkan's organ music performed by Kevin Bowyer from Salisbury Cathedral (Nimbus 1998) and two albums from Blackburn Cathedral (Toccata Classics 2005 and 2007). Helpfully, IMSLP provided copies of all the repertoire on the three albums.

I thought the music to be wonderful and instantly original. The sound world for me on first hearing was like Widor on steroids in the opera house. It has been a

delight for me to learn that Widor and Alkan were, by all accounts, mutual admirers of each other professionally.

So, who was Alkan? For an in-depth account of the man and his life, I can highly recommend a fantastic biography, *Alkan: The Man/The Music* by Ronald Smith.

An organist colleague mentioned the much-hyped organ and acoustic at Eglise St Martin Dudelange, Luxembourg. I listened to the organ online and was impressed. Signum and I wrote to the custodians of the organ, led by Mr Alex Christoffel, who welcomed our proposal warmly. Rehearsals and recording nights were set for 17-24 January 2025.

It is hard to describe quite how thrilling the tutti of the Stahlhuth/Jann organ sounds and feels in the first few seconds. Breathtaking doesn't come close. However, it is not just the tutti that is special about this organ. There is a major arsenal of colour from *pppp* to *ffff*, which, when coupled with the perfect handling acoustic, elevates Alkan's genius to the maximum.

I urge all musicians and music lovers to delve into the world of Alkan if he is a stranger to you. He has transformed my musical life for the better. I hope he does for you too.

© Joseph Nolan

CHARLES-VALENTIN ALKAN 1813-88

Organ Works Vol II

*'One of the strangest and most unclassifiable figures in all music ...
The actual stuff and substance of his music . . . is of such startling oddity,
such intensely personal and individual quality, shot through with an eerie,
uncanny feeling that makes it of irresistible fascination.'*¹

~ Kaikhosru Sorabji ~

'The head is strong; his broad forehead is that of a thinker; his mouth is large and smiling, his nose regular; the years have whitened his beard and hair, etched a few wrinkles into his features, emphasizing his overall appearance. His gaze is sharp, slightly mocking ... his stooped gait and puritanical attire give him the air of an Anglican minister or a rabbi - for which role he possesses the knowledge'.² Neighbour of Kalkbrenner, Chopin and George Sand, walking the Parisian streets of Berlioz and Liszt, esteemed by Delacroix, Victor Hugo and Meyerbeer, displeasing Schumann, Alkan was one of the 19th century's supreme individualists. His circle was tightly prescribed, his cherished friends (Chopin especially) discerningly few. From his late twenties he for the most part shunned society, the platform and worldly pursuits. 'While this poet lived his retired life in some dark corner of Paris, the limelight was for the Steibelts, the Pixises, and the Kalkbrenners. He was the unsurpassable virtuoso, but the others had the public,' pictured Bernard van Dieren³. Notwithstanding, he'd occasionally be seen at

concerts or the opera. A handful of colleagues dedicated works to him, among them César Franck (the *Grande pièce symphonique* Op 17, 1868), and Anton Rubinstein (his E-flat Fifth Concerto, 1875, the Russian 'Emperor').

Feared pianist, *maître organiste suprême*, 'a man of thought and feeling' (Fétis), Alkan lived through the Bourbon Restoration, July Monarchy and Second Empire, about him a city of grandiosity and temples but also 'putrefaction, where misery, pestilence and sickness work in concert, where sunlight and air rarely penetrate. Paris is a terrible place' (Victor Considerant, 1845). The cholera outbreak of 1832 - Châteaubriand's 'mortuary sheet flying as a flag from the heights of Notre Dame ... tolling funeral bells never silent' - claimed more than 18,000. That of 1849 took Kalkbrenner and Angelica Catalani within two days of each other. He beheld the Second Republic and the rise of the Third. Between 1830 and 1871 he survived the barricades and blood of uprisings and revolutions. In May 1871 the Tuileries was gunpowdered, tarred and torched. 'Out of every hundred Frenchmen ninety nine have lost their heads' he wrote post-Commune to Ferdinand Hiller. 'I have gone through forty-eight nights and fifty days of unbroken fighting and flying bullets' (18 August 1871).

Managed by his youngest brother Gustave (a musician of lighter cut), the 'Petits Concerts de musique classique' (1873-80) staged at the Salle Érard, rue de Mail with a repertory ranging from the Baroque and great masters to the 'moderns' and his own works - a project loosely anticipating Rubinstein's 1885-86 'Historical Concerts' - briefly returned him to life beyond his window-shuttered brick-and-stone faced Haussmannian *appartement* on rue Daru in the Russian quarter. But, like an incoming sea mist or the capital's *grandes puanteurs*, silence and isolation were omnipresent, shrouding then burying his final years. By all reports a difficult, disenchanted, melancholic old *ashkénaze* in black, pathologically fearful for his health. Yet one who could also be a lively conversationalist not without warmth. His few surviving letters are not without endearment and humour, recipients including Fétis, Gounod, Massenet, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Rubinstein, Sarasate and Clara Schumann, together

¹ Kaikhosru Sorabji, *Mi Contra Fa*, London 1947.

² Antoine François Marmontel, *Les pianistes célèbres*, Paris 1879.

³ *Down among the Dead Men*, London 1935.

with the well connected Troubetzkoy and Ney de la Moskowa families⁴. Those to the Spaniard Santiago de Masarnau point to 'a passionate individual with almost obsessive emotional traits'⁵. Vincent d'Indy, while indifferent to his music, recalled his playing of late Beethoven as 'more personal and humanly moving' than Liszt's⁶.

Dreaming, voyaging the fantastical, he fashioned horizons out of Antique pasts, Classical ghosts and Romantic wraiths. For Wilfrid Mellers he was the 'reclusive revolutionary', 'a superb contrapuntist in baroque tradition [...] an heir to Haydn in his classical command of "symphonic" argument [sharing] Beethoven's large-scale, "morphological" approach to form - as well as his partiality for gritty textures and for the abrupt punch-line or sudden reversal'⁷. True he wrote almost exclusively for the keyboard, but his music (as von Bülow recognised) traversed a range of sonorities, spacings and extremes, a span of melodic dialogues, chordal balances and linear voicings as brilliantly lit and theatrically managed in their associative imagery as anything orchestral. Bach and Beethoven were his gods, their German fugues, variations and sonatas his models. (Delacroix in 1849 records a Friday evening with Alkan at Chopin's discussing Beethoven 'tormented by the idea of Bach'.) Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* were the stimulus for his *Recueils de chants*. He had no time for Liszt, Wagner ('not a musician, but a sickness', January 1860), or the aesthetic of the Neudeutsche Schule. His cosmos was a ballet of grotesqueries and graces, poésie and profundity, the beautiful and the celestial, the terse and the titanic. His palate is one of pastoral, spiritual, satirical, imploring ... wild, jagged, bizarre ... rampant, incised incident. As beguiling as Peitho, Aphrodite's handmaiden. As mighty as Hercules wrestling Achelous for the hand of Deianira - of which

Aetolian encountered François Bosio's muscled bronze depiction formerly stood before the Tuileries.

Prowess aside (awarded the Conservatoire's *premier prix d'orgue* in 1834), Alkan was an infrequent visitor to Paris's organ lofts, holding no official position. It needed the coupling of piano and pedalboard, Érard's *piano-pédalier*⁸, to catalyse his music 'pour orgue', explaining its dynamics, hairpins, *grande pédale/pédale douce* emphasis, and absence of registrations. This touch-sensitive hybrid, shown in London at the 1851 Great Exhibition, was demonstrated by him during the 1855 Paris Exposition Universelle. His illegitimate son Élie-Miriam Delaborde - he of the parrots, cockatoos and apes who fled to London during the Franco-Prussian War - was also a renowned exponent, at the Hanover Square Rooms in 1871 playing a 'specially constructed' example by Broadwood⁹. With the *pédalier* Alkan metamorphosed the practice tool of organists into a medium for high art.

'Pour orgue avec pédal obligée ou piano à clavier de pédales ou piano à trois mains,' the *Prières* Op 64, dedicated to the memory of Pierre Érard (who saw his illustrious family company through the economic instabilities of the 1830s), were published in 1865. They range from the hallowed to the heroic. Crossing the pages are echoes of the more suppliant among the Op 31 *Préludes* (1); artful Mendelssohnian/baroque *invenzioni* (2, 9); Schumannesque rhythms (4, 6, 13); mixed meter (4: 2/2, 3/4, 4/4); the irreverent swagger of a Lefébure-Wély *sortie* (8, 'Lord God of Hosts', spelt out in Hebrew, Latin and French contoured into an ascending Star of David *triangulus*, מִשְׁלוֹשׁ); tart bucolics and 'unpredictable twists and turns'¹⁰ (10); sicilienne, descants and *bergers* (11). Other spectres coalesce and dissipate: the curious tricolon of 'trinity' chords in 2; the subterranean tremolos and pedal melody of 3 (minor then major); the

⁴ François Luguénot, 'Alkan [...] Overview of his Writings', *Dicteco*, 22 January 2019.

⁵ Edward Holden, 'Charles-Valentin Alkan: Interpreting the Composer's use of Rhythm [...]', PhD thesis, National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2014.

⁶ 'Impressions musicales d'enfance et de jeunesse: III adolescence', *Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires*, 1930.

⁷ *Times Literary Supplement*, 16/22 October 1987.

⁸ *Newton's London Journal of Arts and Sciences*, Vol XXXIX, London 1852; Dana Robinson, 'Playing Schumann's Works for Pedal Piano', *Vox Humana*, 14 November 2021.

⁹ A J Hipkins, *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* Vol II, London 1880.

¹⁰ Ronald Smith, *Alkan: the Music*, London 1987.

canons and metric oscillations of 4; the recitatives and monothematicism of 5; the juxtaposition of *piano* dance, *forte* militaria and 'central mystification' (the descending B $\flat$ -F 'funeral' tetrachord from Chopin's Second Sonata) in 6; the majesty and sweep, the *main gauche cantabile* of 7 (cf the pedal reprise of 6). Now and then Franck saunters by. In vintage Alkan manner 'snap' cadences sign off 4 and 6. The *pianississimo* cessations of 1-3, 7, 9 and 12 cloak the world in damask.

Tonally the set begins and ends in G. Keys, however, can be suspended (1, 5) or, a familiar Alkan device, paired within an orbit, modally open, circulating between A, E, B $\flat$, F and D - in which framework A is the pivotal pitch throughout. The seventh is a regal affair of circling poles and progressive tonality: A1 C major *maestoso*-B1 A major *espressivo*-A2 G major-B2 E major-B3 A major-B4 A minor. The minor numbers (3, 5) resolve in major *tierce de picardies*; contrariwise the B-flat major of 10 fades to the minor with an inverted Picardy third.

Given the broad pianistic character of the collection (3, 7, 8, 12, 13, arguably the Lisztian final third of 5 and left-hand scales of 6), Franck in his 1889 organ edition favoured just seven - 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 - arranging and registering them in the process. In 1901 Liszt's Portuguese disciple José Vianna da Motta published a piano transcription of 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12, dedicated to Busoni.

In February 1852, invited by Cavaillé-Coll, Jaak-Nicolaas Lemmens from Brussels played at Saint-Vincent-de-Paul and La Madeleine. Confounding Alkan, Benoist, Franck, Gounod and Lefébure-Wély among the many, his pedal skills revolutionised the ambit of the French Romantic organ. Fourteen years later Alkan's transcendental *Études pour les pieds seulement* appeared, inscribed to Lefébure-Wély. No holds barred, some might say to the point of lunacy if not gymnastic impossibility, they do for the pedalboard what Paganini did for the violin and Liszt for the piano. Marcel Dupré, Widor's successor at Saint-Sulpice, believed them to be 'the complete and indispensable foundation of pedal technique'. William Alexander Eddie suggests 'there is no other 19th century

organ composition to rival these *études* in difficulty ... Alkan [casting] an arrow into modern times'¹¹. Testing musicality, expression and execution, the first six cover complex monophonic/polyphonic demands. From four-voiced chords (2) and precision part-playing (3, an intricately inventive Fughetta) to meditative *recitativo* and quasi-improvisation (6). The agility required - rapid runs, stretches, trills (3, 6), *legato/staccato* articulation (4), repetition, sustained melodic thirds (5) - is not for the faint of heart. Cultivating a feeling for paraphrase (1, *belle danse, roi soleil* style), adapting the extended *pédalier* compass to that of the organ, bring other challenges. 'Widor on steroids', Joseph Nolan's *bon mot*, sums up the prospect.

The *Benedictus* Op 54, 'pour piano à clavier de pédales, ou piano à 3 mains' (Richault's title page, the 'pour orgue' qualification apparent only on the cover of the 1903 Delaborde/Philippe 'nouvelle édition') was published in 1859. Alkan dedicated it to the influential Catholic scholar and critic Joseph d'Ortigue, friend and champion of Berlioz and Liszt, and, like Alkan, a supporter of Napoléon III and the Second Empire. Darkness to dawn, *dolce* to drama, it reverberates across the octaves, the final paean one of thunder and *gloire* organistically somewhere between Berlioz's *Te Deum* and Saint-Saëns's Third Symphony. Cast in four linked sections, facets of metamorphosis, variation and evolving development not least among the work's tensioned building blocks, events are channelled through a marriage of traditional key relationships and high-gear harmonies, aspects of the structure ('orchestration' too) foreseeing the seventh *Prière* from Op 64 and the *Impromptu* Op 69. *Lento*: A1 D minor *dolce*-B1 A major *dolcissimo*-A2 F minor-B2 C major > *Un poco più animato*: C1 F major-C2 D minor > *Alla Breve* D major: D1 *sostenuto*-E *cantante*-D2 > *Lento fortississimo* D major: A3. 'Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel, quia visitavit, et fecit redemptionem plebis suae'; 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people'¹².

¹¹ Charles-Valentin Alkan, Aldershot 2007.

¹² Luke 1:68, Douay-Rheims Bible, 1582.

Twenty-five *Préludes* Op 31. Thirteen *Prières* Op 64. Eleven *Grands Préludes* Op 66. Eleven *Pièces dans le style religieux* Op 72. Do such asymmetric groupings manifest Alkan's leanings towards numerology and subtext? All presume strong Jewish symbolism. *Eleven*: Joseph's dream in Genesis (בראשית) of 'the sun, moon and the eleven stars' making obeisance to him; the eleven scented spices of the Incense offering. *Thirteen*: the thirteen attributes of Divine Mercy identified in Exodus (שמות). *Twenty-five*: Psalm 25, 'To thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul' (אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה נַפְשִׁי)¹³; forgiveness and guidance in tormented times; 'light' (אור), the twenty-fifth word of the Torah. Alkan's 'Prière' farewelling the *Préludes*. White C major.

© Ateş Orga 2026

¹³ Douay-Rheims Bible, 1610.

STAHLHUTH–JANN ORGAN OF ST MARTIN'S CHURCH, DUDELANGE (1912, 2002)

The organ in St. Martin's church was built in 1912 by the organbuilder Georg Stahlhuth (1830-1913) and his son Eduard Stahlhuth (1862-1916).

As Germans, installed at Aachen, Georg and Eduard Stahlhuth had all the basic knowledge of German romantic organbuilding. As disciples and close friends of Joseph Merklin at Brussels and Lyon, they had a share in the development of French symphonic organbuilding. Their contracts in England and Ireland provided them with good knowledge of English romantic organbuilding. Thus, they were among the rare craftsmen able to incorporate both French and English characteristics into German romantic organbuilding, defending in this way Albert Schweitzer's 'European' ideas in matter of organbuilding, ideas on which the project was founded in 1912.

The three-manual organ of 1912 had 45 stops (and 3 transmissions under expression in the pedal) on cone-valve chests with pneumatic note and stop action. Wind was supplied by three English water engines. A further borrowing from English organbuilding was the high-pressure Tuba mirabilis 8' in the Positiv-Swell division, voiced on 300 mm. Typical French features were the overblowing stops (typical of Stahlhuth's organs) and the reeds of French-style construction (with tin-plated shallots), of which at least three were supplied by the Paris firm Veuve Jules Sézérie: Vox humana 8', Tuba 8' and Posaune 16' 'octave grave de bombarde 16', grosse taille'. Basically, however, the organ was attuned to a German romantic style, with plentiful foundation 8'-stops, differentiation in the manuals according to the various scalings (wide, normal, narrow) and their dynamic gradation (f, mf, p). Besides the high-pressure Tuba mirabilis, the organ had two further 'Starkton-Register' (strong and expressive

in tonal design): Seraphon Gedackt 8' and Seraphon Flöte 8', each with two mouths. With these three loud toned stops, the numerous foundation stops and the two expressive divisions with their sub and superoctave couplers, the organ had an exceptionally broad dynamic spectrum.

In 1962, in accordance with the then predominant neobaroque tonal aesthetic, the organ suffered far reaching modifications in total negligence of its stylistic specificity: reduction of the wind pressure, replacement of the pneumatic action by electric action, removal of the original console, changes to the pipework, transfer of stops onto other windchests, addition of high-pitched mixtures and mutations, as well as a fourth manual of neobaroque conception and removal of characteristic Stahlhuth stops.

After the organ had become nearly unplayable in the middle of the 1990s, a renovation of the organ had become inescapable. From 2001 to 2002, the following actions were carried out by organbuilder Thomas Jann, Laberweinting (Germany) and his craftsmen:

- restoration and reconstruction of the Stahlhuth pipes and windchests from 1912;
- renewal of the swell boxes and the wind supply system ;
- removal of the additional stops from 1962 and reverse of the transfers carried out in 1962;
- addition of a Bombarde division in place of the neobaroque Positiv ;
- harmonious extension of the organ up to 78 speaking stops with both German romantic and French symphonic tone colors, notably by:
- further development of the string chorus (full-fledged chorus from 16' through Terzgamba 1 3/5')
- numerous orchestral solo stops, constructed

Récit expressif (Swellbox)
3.Manual; 61 keys; 90 mm

Quintatön	16'
Geigenprinzipal	8'*
Flûte harmonique	8'*
Violine	8'*
Unda maris	8'*
Zartgedackt	8'*
Salicional	8'*
Octav	4'
Rohrflöte	4'*
Fugara	4'*
Flageolet	2'*
Progr. harm. 3-5 fach	2 2/3'
Bombarde	16'
Trompette harmonique	8'
Basson et Hautbois	8'
Oboe	8'*
Vox humana	8'*
Clairon harmonique	4'

Bombardwerk
4.Manual; 61 keys; 120 mm

Bombarde en chamade	16'
Trompette en chamade	8'
Tromp. en chamade	5 1/3'
Clairon en chamade	4'

Pedal
32 keys; 95 mm; 32': 120 mm

Untersatz	32'*
Majorbass	16'*
Minorbass (<i>Tr. Princ. 16' I</i>)	16'*
Subbass	16'*
Gamba (<i>Tr. Gamba 16' II</i>)	16'
Bordun (<i>Tr. Bordun 16' II</i>)	16'*
Oktavbass	8'*
Gedacktbass	8'
Cello	8'*
Zartgedackt (<i>Tr. Lieblichgedackt 8' II</i>)	8'*
Flûte	4'
Choralbass (<i>Ext. Oktavb.</i>)	4''
Contrabombarde (<i>Ext. Posaune 16'</i>)	32'
Posaune	16'*
Fagott	16'
Tuba	8'*
Clairon	4'

* = restored or reconstructed stops
from 1912

Couplers:

P/I; I/P; II/P; III/P; IV/P; Super I/P; Super II/P;
Super III/P;
II/I; III/I; IV/I; Sub II/I; Super II/I; Sub III/I;
Super III/I; III/II; IV/II; Sub III/II; Super III/II;
Sub II/II; Super III/III; IV/III



Cone-valve chests electropneumatic action
Tremolo: I, II, III; 4995 electronic combinations;
MIDI interface; Replay-system
5261 pipes; 72 Register stops (94 ranks)
plus 6 extensions and 4 transmissions

Organ renovation: Thomas Jann Orgelbau
GmbH, Allkofen 208 84082 Laberweinting
(Germany)
Conception: Thomas Jann, Pierre Nimax jr.
Construction: Markus Leipold
Voicing: Andreas Utz, Markus Schanze

JOSEPH NOLAN | BIOGRAPHY

APRA award-winning British Australian organist Joseph Nolan is hailed as “one of the great organists of our time” (ABC Radio National) and “indisputably one of the world’s finest organists” (Limelight, Australia). Renowned for his artistry—distinguished by “miraculous playing” (BBC Radio 3 Record Review), “towering technique, vivid virtuosity, and inspired interpretive insight” (Gramophone, UK)—Nolan has garnered widespread acclaim, with Fanfare (USA) lauding him as “the Australian counterpart of Cameron Carpenter... an organist with absolutely phenomenal keyboard technique”.

Joseph Nolan’s recording of Widor’s Symphony No. 5, captured at La Madeleine in Paris and released on Signum Classics, was awarded Apple Classical’s Editor’s Choice, surpassing 169 other recordings on the platform.

In a remarkable feat, Joseph recorded the complete organ works of Charles-Valentin Alkan, the enigmatic Parisian virtuoso, over just four nights in January 2025. Volume One of the Alkan cycle, recorded on the famous Stahlhuth/Jann organ at Eglise St Martin in Dudelange, Luxembourg, was released by Signum Classics in March 2026.

The critical reaction to the first volume of Joseph’s new cycle of Alkan’s complete organ works for Signum Classics has received universal critical acclaim. Volume one was awarded a review score of 100 per cent and as Album of the Week in Slipped Disc.

Norman Lebrecht, reviewing Alkan volume one for Myscena magazine (Canada) commented “Nolan is an organist with a mind of his own and there is nothing like it anywhere on record”.

Limelight Magazine (Australia) awarded the album its Editor’s Choice award, stating, “One can only be awestruck by Nolan’s heroism in tackling this fiendishly difficult extravaganza”. The Guardian Newspaper (UK) awarded the album five stars praising Nolan for his “death-defying virtuosity”. Upon release, the album went

straight into the top twenty of the BBC Radio Specialist Charts.

Widely acclaimed for his interpretations of Widor’s complete organ works, Nolan’s Widor cycle has received two Gramophone Critics’ Choice awards, innumerable five-star reviews in leading publications, and is recognised as the current benchmark by Gramophone, The Criterion (New York), MusicWeb International, and ClassicalSource. His performances have been broadcast by BBC Radio 3, Pipedreams USA, Radio France, Radio Sweden, ABC Classic, and more.

An exclusive artist with Signum Classics, Gramophone’s Label of the Year, Nolan’s discography is a testament to his musical reputation featuring performances on some of the world’s finest organs in venues including St Sulpice, La Madeleine, St Etienne du Mont, St Sernin, St François de Sales, St Bavo, Haarlem, St Ouen, Rouen, Buckingham Palace, Eglise St Martin Dudelange, Luxembourg, and Berliner Dom, Germany.

In demand as a soloist with leading orchestras, Nolan made his Sydney Opera House debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, sharing the stage with renowned US mezzo-soprano Susan Graham under the direction of David Robertson. The concerts received glowing reviews, with Limelight and The Sydney Morning Herald praising Nolan’s refined ear and sensitivity to French repertoire, remarking, “I have never heard the Sydney Opera House organ sound better.”

His debut as organ soloist in the world premiere of Mary Finsterer’s Stabat Mater with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Melbourne, won both Performance of the Year and Work of the Year at the 2024 Arts (APRA) awards, under the baton of Principal Conductor Ben Northey.

Joseph has also performed as a concerto soloist with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra at St Peter’s Cathedral, Canberra Symphony Orchestra at Llewellyn Hall, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra at Petronas Towers, Queensland Symphony Orchestra at QPAC, West Australian Symphony Orchestra at Perth Concert Hall, and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, where he performed alongside celebrated Venezuelan pianist Gabriela Montero and conductor Alexander Shelley on a

national tour of New Zealand.

Nolan made his debut in the 2025/2026 Singapore Symphony Season, performing a sold-out concert at Victoria Hall.

Joseph's formative years were shaped at The Royal College of Music, London, where he studied under Professor Richard Popplewell, won the Canon Bark prize for most promising organ student, graduated with First Class Honours for his BMus recital at Temple Church, and pursued postgraduate studies with Marie Claire Alain in Paris, supported by the Countess of Munster Musical Trust and the Hattori Foundation.

Returning to London, he was appointed to Her Majesty's Chapel Royal at St James's Palace in 2004, regularly performing at Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace, including the inaugural concert on the refurbished Grand Ballroom organ for an esteemed audience. Nolan is notably the first solo artist featured on a commercial recording of the Grand Ballroom organ at Buckingham Palace.

In 2008, Nolan was appointed Master of Music at St George's Cathedral, Perth, Western Australia, by invitation of the Dean Emeritus, Dr John Shepherd AM. Nolan founded the Cathedral Consort and Cathedral Concert Series in 2009, and they are widely regarded as cultural jewels of Western Australia. The Australian and The West Australian newspapers have lauded the Cathedral Consort as "elite and world class".

Under Nolan's guidance, the Cathedral Consort have performed at the Perth Festival, for Musica Viva, and collaborated with The Hilliard Ensemble, The Academy of Ancient Music, and The King's Singers. "Gloria", a collaboration between WASO, St George's Cathedral Consort, and contemporary dance group Co3, conducted by Nolan, was awarded an Australian Performing Arts Mainstage award.

Nolan conducted WASO and St George's Cathedral Consort at Perth Concert Hall in April 2024 in "Gloria", featuring Vivaldi's Gloria and Handel's Dixit Dominus. This concert was voted one of Australia's best by Limelight magazine.

In April 2025, Nolan led WASO and St George's Cathedral Consort in "Devotion and Glory" at Winthrop Hall, earning five stars from Limelight Magazine, with William Yeoman describing it as "an extraordinary performance of an extraordinary work (Finsterer Stabat Mater)".

Joseph Nolan recently made his debut conducting the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and New Zealand Voices at the 2026 New Zealand International Festival.

In recognition of his contribution to French music, the Government of France have awarded Joseph Nolan the medal of Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres. He is an Honorary Fellow of the University of Western Australia and was conferred its prestigious higher doctorate, Doctor of Letters, in 2018. Nolan's distinguished career has been the subject of major interviews on Radio National (Australia) and has featured in Gramophone, Choir and Organ, The Organ, The Age (Sydney), Classical Music, and The Australian.

Joseph recorded a commercial album for Signum Classics at the iconic Berliner Dom, home of the legendary 1905 Sauer Organ, in January 2026. This October, Joseph returns as featured soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra performing four concerts at Melbourne Town Hall.



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This album is dedicated to The Venerable Lionel Snell Archdeacon
Emeritus The Anglican Diocese of Perth, Western Australia.

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**PRAISE FOR THE COMPLETE ALKAN ORGAN WORKS:
Volume I on Signum Classics**

★★★★★ - *"Death-defying virtuosity"*

- The Guardian

Editors Choice: ★★★★★.5 stars - "This impressive, finely engineered recording will intrigue organ lovers and arch-romantics alike."

- Limelight

"Jaw-dropping virtuosity at a full organ console ... a veritable feast of excellent romantic organ music."

- MusicWebInternational

ALBUM OF THE WEEK 100% - "Nolan is an organist with a mind of his own and this record is in a class of its own ... Nothing else like it on record."

- Slipped Disc

★★★★★

- The Critic UK

