
RACHEL
LAURIN
PLAYS HER
EARLY WORKS
ORGANS BY
JAQUOT-JEANPIERRE
& GONZALEZ
IN THE VOSGES REGION
OF FRANCE
Pro
Organo
7295

Pro Organo

7295

Recorded in August 1995
Recording engineers:
André Thiébault and Laurent Pélissier
Remastered in 2025 for **Pro Organo**
by Frederick Hohman
Cover photo of Rachel Laurin
by Jean De La Durantaye

Rachel Laurin plays her early works

"The goal of this recording is to promote liturgical works written by 20th-century composers and to showcase the organs of the Vosges region. These instruments constitute the precious heritage of many towns and villages, big and small. May this recording draw the attention of music lovers to three distinctive Vosges organs and to the first organ compositions of a young Canadian musician who, through her talent and radiant personality, has captivated everyone she has met."

Armand Ory, 1995
President of the Jeanne D'Arc Association
Director of the "Musique sacrée" journal

Canadian organist and composer Rachel Laurin taught organ improvisation at the Épinal sacred music summer course (France) in the late 1980s and early 1990s, where she met and befriended Abbot Armand Ory and several other key members of the organ and sacred music community of the Vosges department. A recording project was instigated and came to life thanks to the support of this vibrant musical community; recording sessions were held in August 1995 in three of the region's churches.

Variations sur un Noël lorrain, Op. 26 (1994)

This 30-minute work was commissioned for the 120th anniversary of the "Musique sacrée" (Sacred Music) journal. The theme of this nowell, still sung in the Lorraine region of France, has remained very popular and has been the subject of choral arrangements by musicians such as Joseph Samson and Pierre Doury. It also inspired Alexandre Guilmant, the noted organist and composer, to write a set of variations for organ entitled Variations sur le Noël "Nuit sombre, ton ombre vaut les plus beaux jours", in volume 2 of his Opus 60.

In Rachel Laurin's set of variations, the theme, explicitly suggested by Abbot Ory, is treated in a wide-ranging, contrasting, and personal style. The exposition of the tune on the eight-foot stops is followed by fifteen variations inspired both by baroque musical forms and the symphonic style. Pastorale, Fanfare, Cloches, Canons, Tambourin-Musette, Duos and Trio recall the tradition of classical French organists, while Flute solo, Berceuse, Dances, Fugue and Toccata are clearly evocative of the French symphonic style.

The Jaquot-Jeanpierre organ of Cornimont's Saint-Barthélémy Church is ideally suited to the range of colors and moods of this work.

Suites brèves, Op. 6 No. 1 & No. 2 (1984)

The two Suites brèves (Short Suites) are Rachel Laurin's very first organ compositions. Initially intended for liturgical use, they can be performed on small instruments during a church service, but also as a multi-movement work in a concert setting. Suite No. 1 has a more extroverted and festive character. Suite No. 2 is more mystical, except for the final Toccata.

The rural church of Longchamp has less reverberant acoustics than that of a large nave; this more intimate resonance gives prominence to the liturgical character of these suites (Entrance, Offertory, Communion, Recessional).

Scènes vosgiennes, Op. 16 (1989)

Scènes vosgiennes (Vosges Scenes) is an album of the composer's memories following her stay in the Vosges region in 1989, and the encounters she had with musicians at Épinal's sacred music course.

Some of these pieces are almost like musical portraits, referring to the individuals to whom they are dedicated. Yet this does not prevent the six "tableaux" from being genuinely liturgical; they are indeed written on themes by Pierre Doury, sung during the 1989 summer workshops. Certain movements are written in specific forms such as the fugue, the dialogue, or the fanfare, while others adopt a more improvisational style.

The Gonzalez organ in Dignonville provided the flute, cornet and crumhorn timbres to charmingly depict these colorful remembrances.

Notes based on those written by Rachel Laurin in 1995, and edited in 2025 by Marc Bourdeau for the Rachel Laurin estate.



ALBUM TRACK LIST & TIMINGS

All works in this program are by Rachel Laurin [1961-2023]

All musical works in this program are published by The Leupold Foundation.

Variations sur un Noël lorrain, Op. 26

1 *Thème • Variation 1: Pastorale • Variation 2: Pastorale (renversement de Var. 1)*
Variation 3: Brebis et pastoureaux • Variation 4: Fanfare • 5:23

2 *Variation 5: Nuit sombre • Variation 6: Danse des angelots*
Variation 7: Scène de la Nativité • Variation 8: Chahut des diablotins • 9:55

3 *Variation 9: Tambourin - Musette • Variation 10: Trio*
Variation 11: Cloches • Variation 12: Duo I • 7:14

4 *Variation 13: Duo II • Variation 14: Dialogue • Variation 15: Fugue et Toccata* • 8:37

Suite brève, Op. 6, No. 1

5 ***I. Prélude*** • 2:39 6 ***II. Intermezzo*** • 2:04 7 ***III. Méditation*** • 2:28 8 ***IV. Carillon*** • 5:06

Suite brève, Op. 6, No. 2

9 ***I. Prélude*** • 3:57 10 ***II. Intermezzo*** •2:23 11 ***III. Romance*** • 2:16 12 ***IV. Toccata*** • 2:43

Scènes vosgiennes, Op. 16

13 ***I. Évocation d'Épinal*** • 2:31 14 ***II. Improvisation*** • 1:40 15 ***III. Dialogue*** • 1:24
16 ***IV. Fugue*** • 1:51 17 ***V. Office à Longchamp*** • 4:00
18 ***VI. Procession dans la Cité des Images*** • 2:39

Total playing time: 68:50



St. Vincent Church
Dignonville, France



Photo credit: Gilles Leclerc

The Canadian composer, organist, improviser, teacher and speaker **RACHEL LAURIN** (1961-2023) was born in Saint-Benoît, Québec. After her studies at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, she became the assistant of Raymond Daveluy, titular organist of Saint Joseph's Oratory (Montréal), a position she held from 1986 to 2002. She was titular organist at Notre-Dame Cathedral (Ottawa) from 2002 to 2006, subsequently leaving this position to devote herself fully to concerts, composition, leading master classes, and presenting lectures.

She gave numerous concerts and recitals in Canada, the United States, and Europe (France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, United Kingdom, Switzerland, etc.). Under the auspices of the Royal Canadian College of Organists (RCCO), she travelled on more than one occasion across the country to present organ recitals and workshops.

Notable performances include Raymond Daveluy's *Concerto for Organ and Orchestra* with the Hamilton Philharmonic in 1999, Louis Vierne's *Six Symphonies* (in three recitals) in Montréal in 2000 and in Ottawa in 2001, and the première of Jacques Hétu's *Concerto for Organ and Orchestra* with the Edmonton Symphony in 2002 for the inauguration of the Winspear Centre's Létourneau organ, a work she reprised in 2008 with the Ottawa Symphony at the National Arts Centre, and with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in 2009 at Toronto's Metropolitan United Church for the RCCO's Centennial Organ Festival.

As an organist-composer, lecturer and teacher, she was a frequent guest at several American and Canadian universities, including Yale University, Houston University, Saint Thomas University, Baylor University, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Mount Royal College, University of Saint Lawrence, Kansas City University, and the University of Alberta. She also taught organ improvisation at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, the École de musique sacrée d'Épinal (France), and the Mount Royal International Summer School.

Rachel Laurin became an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre in 1989, and served as a "house composer" at Leupold Editions from 2006 until her untimely passing in 2023. Composing almost exclusively on commissions, she wrote over one hundred works for solo instruments, chamber music ensembles, orchestra, voice, and choir. Her compositions are published by North American publishing houses and are regularly performed — notably those for organ — in renowned concert halls and illustrious places of worship at the four corners of the globe.

Rachel Laurin biography continues on the next page.

Her discography, as an organist and as a composer, includes some thirty albums for labels such as Pro Organo, Raven, Delphian Records, Regent Records, Acis, Motette, Atma Classique, Centaur Records, Centrediscs, MDG, Gothic, CBC Records, Analekta, Amplitude, Société Nouvelle d'Enregistrement, Musicus/Fidelio, and Richelieu/SRC.

Rachel Laurin received several awards and honors recognizing her valuable contribution to the organ repertoire: Holtkamp-AGO Composition Prize (2008); First Prize at the Marilyn Mason New Organ Music Competition (2009); member, since 2016, of the Honorary Committee of the Fédération Francophone des Amis de l'Orgue (FFAO); First Prize at the Orgelkids Composition Contest (2019); Distinguished Composer Award (2022) from the American Guild of Organists (AGO); winner of the Pogorzelski-Yankee Competition for New Organ Music (2022); Composer-in-Residence in 2023–2024 at Salle Bourgie (Montréal), a season during which her works, including two premières, were featured in four concerts.

In her memory, *The American Organist* magazine devoted some twenty pages to her in the September 2024 issue; that same month, Minnesota Public Radio's Pipedreams broadcast an in-memoriam program, hosted by Michael Barone and entitled "Remembering Rachel"; and in 2025, the RCCO organized the first edition of the Rachel Laurin Composition Competition.

For further information,
including a complete list of her compositions,
please visit the **RachelLaurin.com** website.

Below: the organ case in
St. Remy Church, Longchamp.



Recording locations in the French Vosges region:

- Saint-Barthélémy Church, Cornimont
  heard in Tracks 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- Saint-Rémy Church, Longchamp
  heard in Tracks 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.
- Saint-Vincent Church, Dignonville
  heard in Tracks 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.



Acknowledgments and Thanks

The original compact disc, released in 1995, was made possible through the support of the Association Jeanne d'Arc, the Conseil Général des Vosges, the Association Vosgienne pour le Développement des Activités Musicales, the Manufacture d'Orgues Muhleisen, and the Manufacture Vosgienne de Grandes Orgues.

Vosges Organ Tradition

The Vosges department has a significant and rather distinctive organ tradition, even though few old instruments remain, largely due to all the wars that ravaged eastern France over the centuries. The 19th century's economic boom led to the founding of several organ builders in various towns and villages — among which Jaquot-Jeanpierre, Gonzalez, and Jacquot-Lavergne stand out — resulting in quite a few instruments with post-classical and romantic aesthetics. Newer organs were built after 1945, in response to wartime damage along with the renewed dynamism of parishes and municipalities. Nowadays, the Manufacture Vosgienne de Grandes Orgues carries on the region's organ building tradition.

Saint-Barthélémy Church, Cornimont

Cornimont, a town of 3100 inhabitants in the Moselotte Valley, is the birthplace of the Jeanpierre family, a dynasty of well-known organ builders. Only a few stops remain from the instrument built by Jaquot-Jeanpierre in 1871 for the town's new neo-Gothic church, and the current organ is actually a reconstruction, made in 1960 by Schwenkedel, in the baroque style, and based on specifications given by Gaston Litaize.

In 1992, the Muhleisen firm (then in Strasbourg, now in Eschau) carried out the restoration and revoicing of the instrument. The organ is without a case, with a separate console to the side of the gallery, and the action is electro-pneumatic.

In its current state, it is one of the finer instruments in the Vosges. The variety of timbres, the perfect balance of the ensembles, the richness of the foundation stops, and the generosity of the reeds allow the performance of the entire repertoire.

Saint-Rémy Church, Longchamp

Longchamp is a village of 475 inhabitants, 8 kilometers from Épinal. In 1966, the 18th-century church was equipped with a new organ of small dimensions, built by the Gonzalez firm which, at the time, had just taken over from Jacquot-Lavergne in Rambervillers. A sub-bass was added in 1968, followed in 1972 by the addition of 2 sets of reeds, a complete revoicing, as well as placing the organ on a new loft.

Although modest in size, this Gonzalez organ produces a rich and powerful sound, somewhat reminiscent of Nordic instruments. Inaugurated by Gaston Litaize, it has often been heard on radio broadcasts of Sunday mass. In addition to its use in liturgical services, it also serves as a practice instrument, particularly for participants in Épinal's sacred music course held during the summer.

Saint-Vincent Church, Dignonville

An annex parish of Longchamp, Dignonville is a village of 225 inhabitants and has an 18th-century church with a striking 16th-century bell tower. In 1970, the Gonzalez firm installed an instrument with 7 stops on a single manual and pedalboard. A second manual was added in 1977, and in 1994, Gonzalez enclosed the instrument in a case and moved the second windchest, which from Oberwerk became a Positif division at the back, without altering the voicing. Despite its limitations, this organ possesses stops with a truly unique charm.

The organ specifications are found on the next page.

Organ Specification • Jaquot-Jeanpierre organ (Cornimont)
Couplers, pedal couplers, reed stops, 2 free combinations, and 5 fixed combinations.

GRAND ORGUE

Bourdon 16
Montre 8
Flûte à fuseau 8
Prestant 4
Flûte à cheminée 4
Doublette 2
Fourniture IV
Cymbale III
Trompette 8

POSITIF
Bourdon à cheminée 8
Prestant 4
Doublette 2
Larigot 1 1/3
Sesquialtera II
Cymbale V
Cromorne 8

RÉCIT (enclosed)
Principal 8
Flûte conique 8
Unda maris 8
Principal 4
Flûte conique 4
Quinte 2 2/3
Quarte 2
Tierc 1 3/5
Cymbale IV
Trompette 8
Clairon 4

PÉDALE
Quinte 10 2/3
Soubasse 16
Principal 8
Bourdon 16
Bourdon 8
Prestant 4
Fournitures III
Bombarde 16
Trompette 8
Clairon 4

Organ Specification • Gonzalez organ (Longchamp) Couplers, pedal couplers, expression, window-style console, mechanical action.

GRAND ORGUE
Bourdon 8
Prestant 4
Plein-Jeu II

RÉCIT (enclosed)
Quintation 8
Doublette 2
Cromorne 8

PÉDALE
Soubasse 16
Trompette 8

Organ Specification • Gonzalez organ (Dignonville) Couplers, pedal couplers, window-style console, mechanical action.

GRAND ORGUE
Bourdon 8
Flûte à cheminée 4
Prestant 4
Doublette 2
Plein-Jeu III
Cromorne 8

POSITIF
Bourdon 8
Flûte douce 4
Doublette 2
Nazard 2 2/3
Tierce 1 3/5
Cymbale II

PÉDALE
Soubasse 16

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