

The background of the entire cover is a painting of a rainy street scene. In the foreground, two men in dark coats walk towards the left, one holding a large white umbrella. Behind them is a horse-drawn carriage with large wooden wheels. In the middle ground, several other figures are walking with umbrellas. The street is wet and reflects the light. In the background, there are multi-story buildings with windows. The overall style is impressionistic and atmospheric.

signum
CLASSICS

JOSEPH NOLAN
organ

THE COMPLETE
ALKAN ORGAN WORKS

Volume I

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

Total Timings: [1.16.28]



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INTRODUCTION

*"It is probably one of the greatest pieces written, ever, for any instrument."*¹

You might be forgiven for thinking Dr Joseph Nolan is speaking here of a piece by an organ giant like Franck, Liszt, Widor, Vierne, Dupré, or Reger. But these laudatory words are about the *Impromptu*, Op.69, by 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, Marcel Dupré, pupil of Widor, regarded Alkan's pedal innovations, envisioned on this instrument, as vital for any serious organist's technique.

¹All 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.

Which leads us to the music's difficulty. Before his first public performance of Alkan's *Impromptu* (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 as a "genuinely towering musician", 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 practise 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.

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 discs from Blackburn Cathedral (Toccat 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 handing 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 1

*'The sadness, the demonism, the omnipresent foreboding, the palpably sinister obsessional repetitions, the haunting melodies and distressing harmonies, the propulsive power and the almost suffocating intensity of the music deliver a formidable shock.'*¹

~ James F Penrose ~

Descended from an Ashkenazi community near Metz in the Moselle region of north-eastern France, Charles-Valentin was the second of six children born to Alkan [Elkanan] and Julie Morhange. All had musical careers, and, under an 1807 French law, all took 'Alkan' for their surname. He grew up in the Marais district of Paris, the Jewish quarter of the city, around the corner from Balzac and within walking distance of Les Halles and the Galeries de Bois, 'capharnaüm of all dissolutions'.² Living in his garret in the 1820s, Balzac pictured the surroundings: 'A view of roofs - brown, grey, or red, slated or tiled, covered with yellow or green mosses ... at night, streams of light through half-closed shutters would light up and colour the dark abysses of this strange landscape, [the] feeble lights of street lamps sending up yellow gleams through the fog ... the silence and the magic of night, the mysteries of dawn, smoke wreaths from each chimney'.³

¹ 'The strange case of Charles Valentin Alkan', *The New Criterion*, May 1993.

² Kim Willshire, 'Paris's Galeries de Bois', *Guardian*, 30 March 2015.

³ *Le Peau de Chagrin* (1831), adapted from Ellen Marriage's translation (1896).

Alkan auditioned for the Paris Conservatoire aged five. Here he studied *solfège*, piano (with Joseph Zimmermann), harmony, and organ (with François Benoist, a committed Bachian). By the age of twelve or so he was appearing in concerts in the capital, a couple of years later teaching at his father's predominantly Jewish music school in the Marais. The 1830s saw him in ascendance, two Prix de Rome failures notwithstanding. He visited England twice, in 1835 appearing with Cramer and Moscheles. On home soil he shared the platform with Liszt and salons with the aristocracy, enjoying, it's said, the patronage of 'highly perfumed and frilled' Russian ladies. He moved to rue Saint-Lazare/Square d'Orléans in 1837,⁴ socially and culturally removed from *le Marais*, staying until 1851, his neighbours including Chopin and George Sand. Between 1868 and his death twenty years later he lived in rue Daru in the 8th *arrondissement*, doors away from the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and Russian orthodoxy.

The birth in February 1839 of a natural son, Élie-Miriam Delaborde, the outcome of 'an affair with [an older] married pupil of high social rank',⁵ occluded Alkan's *etoile*. Withdrawing from public life, aged twenty-six, he immersed himself almost entirely in composition, Talmudic/Biblical study and translation (he was versed in Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Syriac), and - obstructed from leading the piano department at the Conservatoire - private teaching (on Chopin's death in 1849 acquiring several of his pupils). A comeback in 1845 underwhelmed the critics. 'Driven by passion in a cold, systematic way ... [lacking] breadth, passion, poetry, and individuality, despite his pretence of showing them in his compositions ... still much to learn'.⁶ A series of programmatically/historically exploratory Petits Concerts at the Salle Érard footnoted the 1870s ...

'It was necessary for him to die in order to suspect his existence'.⁷ 'Alkan battled

⁴ Nick Hammond, 'A tour of Alkan's residences in Paris', Alkan Society *Bulletin* 95 (December 2017).

⁵ Stephanie McCallum, 'Alkan: Enigma or Schizophrenia?', Alkan Society *Bulletin* 75 (April 2007).

⁶ *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*, 4 May 1845.

⁷ *Le Ménestrel*, 1 April 1888.

all his adult life with problems many would characterise as an eccentricity of personality,' problems 'we should reassess as indications of a [serious] mental illness [affecting his ability to engage successfully with the world] which would have been continuously debilitating and very likely occasionally frightening' (Stephanie McCallum). 'I have lost the strength to be of any economic or political use' (to Santiago de Masarnau, March 1850. 'I'm becoming daily more and more misanthropic and misogynous ... nothing worthwhile, good or useful to do ... no one to devote myself to. My situation makes me horribly sad and wretched. Even musical production has lost its attraction for I can't see the point or goal' (to Ferdinand Hiller, April 1863).

Alkan promoted Jewish values and practised at least some of its obligations.⁸ In his music he introduced or paraphrased Jewish motifs and nuances, among the first of the Romantics to do so (trailing Beethoven's allusion to the sighing falling/rising contours of *Kol nidre* in the *adagio* of his C sharp minor Quartet, but ahead of others including Joachim and Moscheles). Pianists and organists will be familiar with the 'Prières', 'Ancienne Mélodie de la Synagogue' (referencing the *Ahavah Rabbah* mode), and the quasi-cantillation aura and curvature, akin to 'a distant memory or a sound from another world',⁹ of 'J'étais endormie mais mon cœur veillait ...' ('I sleep, but my heart waketh', *Song of Songs*, V:ii) from the Op 31 *Préludes* 'pour piano ou orgue' printed in 1847 but likely written earlier. Correspondingly the musing Levantine inflexions of the G minor Barcarolle closing the Op 65 *Recueil de Chants* (1864), and the barbed barbaresque finale of the 'Concerto' from Op 39. Alkan wasn't the first Jewish composer to embrace the organ. Nor in the assimilated Jewish climate of 19th century Paris was the organ denied its place in synagogues. Rather it was 'the emblematic instrument of the emancipation of the Jews [marking] the regeneration of the French citizen of Jewish religion'.¹⁰ When the 'great' Synagogue de la rue Nazareth, funded by

the banker and philanthropist James de Rothschild, was inaugurated in 1852, an organ was available, with Alkan, highly regarded by the Paris Consistoire, appointed as organist, a position, however, he swiftly resigned (reminiscent in manner, years earlier, of declining a professorship at the Geneva Conservatoire to which he'd been proposed by Liszt).

'Embracing the organ' needs a caveat. Of the works on this album only the *Petits Préludes* are described 'pour orgue'. The *Grands Préludes* Op 66 specify 'pour piano à clavier de pédales, ou piano à trois mains', similarly the *Impromptu* Op 69, the latter's 'pour orgue' qualification only being added to the cover of the posthumous Delaborde/Philippe 'nouvelle édition'. *Piano-pédaliers* of the type Alkan owned (his straight-strung, seven-octave Érard, No 24598, incorporating standard piano pedals, dating from February 1853) were pianos including a coupled pedal-board enabling thirty-two lower register chromatic notes (A1-e4) to be played with the feet, organ style. The two sound worlds, of course, are radically different, certain of Alkan's ideas clearly demanding the power, registrations and spatial environment of an organ, other (pianistically sourced) figurations calling for the dexterity, touch and response of a *pédalier*. Then there's the fact, necessitating score adaptation, that an organ's keyboard compass is less than a piano's. Whatever the medium, the innovative complexity and alacrity of footwork (unaccustomed as Parisians were to the prospect) is something to strike fear and disbelief - hence Alkan alternatively sanctioning a regular piano along with a duettist's 'third' hand to articulate event and stabilise ensemble.

Eleven *Grands Préludes* and a transcription (transposed down a semitone) of Handel's 'Thy rebuke hath broken His heart' (Psalm LXIX:xx) and 'Behold, and see' (Lamentations I:xii) from *Messiah* comprise Op 66, its publication listed in the *Bibliographie de la France*, 9 March 1867. Alkan dedicated the set to his 'colleague' and friend César Franck, *maître du Cavallé-Coll* and titular

⁸ David Conway, 'Alkan and his Jewish Roots', Alkan Society *Bulletin* 61, 62 (March, June 2003).

⁹ Jascha Nemtsov, 'Ein jüdischer Musiker im Zeitalter der Emanzipation', *Charles Valentin Alkan*, Musik-Konzepte Neue Folge 178 (August 2017).

¹⁰ Hervé Roten, 'The organ in the Jewish tradition', Institut Européen des Musiques Juives (nd).

organist at St Clotilde in the 7th *arrondissement*. Following Liszt's key plan in his *Études d'exécution transcendante* (falling fifths), rather than Chopin's sequencing in his *Préludes* (rising fifths) or Bach's in the *Forty Eight* (chromatic ascent), Alkan structures a series of pivotally-linked majors and relative minors: F/D minor, B-flat/G minor, E-flat/C minor, A-flat/F minor, D-flat/B flat minor, F-sharp [G-flat]/E-flat minor. No 1, 4/4, tersely homages the canonic subject/pedal solos of Bach's same-key 3/8 Toccata, BWV 540 (one of Alkan's *pédalier* warhorses for which he was much admired, programmed in the Petits Concerts), a *via lactea* of semiquavers and unisons cascading across the firmament. No 2, Ronald Smith declared,¹¹ celebrates Alkan's 'happy and glorious' 3/4 rhythm familiar from the first movement of the Op 39 'Concerto' (three crotchets/dotted crotchet > quaver > crotchet) along with mordent repetitions and a pedal part neatly illustrating that two feet are synonymous with two or more parts irrespective of physical distance or contortion. No 3, a 6/8 *andantino*, combines pedal recitative (*quasi ad lib*), tenor refrain (*sostenuto*), and soprano response (*dolce e legato*), the recitative returning at the end in imposing unisons across the octaves. To Smith No 4 suggested 'intense passion' seemingly locked within a 'frivolous façade' (*marcia*-like), a 'contradiction [releasing] tensions absolutely unique to this composer'. Cadentially the final six *tierce de picardie* bars oblige dynamically if without overly affirming the spirit of their *ancien* glow. In E-flat with a breath of Mixolydian flattened seventh, No 5 is pensive in mood and polyphony, its *sostenuto* middle section marked by rapid left-hand *tremolando*s reinforcing right-hand chords which change harmony but in the main preserve an inverted G-octave pedal-point. No 6 is another 6/8 *andantino*, marked by Alkan *piano*, *mais assez lourdement* ('quiet, but quite heavily'). Two separate ideas dominate, one *sostenuto molto* (*cantabile*, *dolce*, chromaticised/modulating, dotted rhythms, smooth, *minore*), the other *ppp staccatissimo* (detached, rests, *crescendo*, *maggiore*). The concluding *dolcissimo e sostenutissimo*, transmoded into C major, consolidates hallowed *pastorale* images from earlier.

¹¹ Alkan: *the Music*, London 1987.

No 7 is an *alla giudesca* - 'in the Jewish manner'. A congregational *andante* accidentally assimilated - the opening, devotionally hushed, for just the left hand (cantor?) - it ascends to a life affirming climax, its cumulative reverberations calling for space and air to decay naturally. 'Incisiveness' is the 'life-blood' of No 8, 'a darkly cogent piece'(Smith) where elements of sonata and motivic development are key to its architecture and rhythmic momentum. A curt pedal motif, binding the movement with near-Brahmsian determination,¹² underpins the first subject, *soutenu e noblement*. The second theme is a pianistic cantabile, indirectly quoted in the reprise. Smith believed that the final three *Préludes*, Nos 9-11, 'consummate three contrasted aspects of Alkan's genius: his inner calm, his wild abandon, and his mysticism'. No 9 is a Brucknerian *adagio* twenty years early (down to the German *langsam* marking), obsessive in its quietly throbbing 6/8 quaver repetitions, tender in melody, inspiringly glorious in its placed orchestral *fortissimo* climax. No 10 is Smith's lively 'Cossack dance' (Ukrainian Yiddish?), a 2/8 study in repetitive *staccatos* and slurs, relentless in beat and spiralling *hopak* style, urgently tensile. For Liszt's student José Vianna da Motta, who in 1906 arranged nine of the *Grands Préludes* for piano duet, No 11, opening germinally with a dark, cabalistic *recitativo* in F-sharp minor (pedals), represented 'the martyr's final, resigned monologue (Gethsemane)'. Via chromatic progressions and a blossoming dominant *point d'orgue* on C-sharp - offset by eighteen grinding *acciaccaturas* a semitone lower, eighteen being numerologically the Judiac symbol for 'life' - resolution, Christ risen from the dead, is attained, thundering in bronzed major. Questing recitative and harmonies (Handel's) prepare for E-flat minor and *arioso* in the transcription forming No 12. But with its half-close cadence, it never anchors, leaving the listener suspended. Subjectively, the pedal line (Handel's) might be heard/ thought of as an extreme rhythmic augmentation of the pedal figures in No 8.

Spiritually humble, the *Petits Préludes* (printed 1859) are spare, aphoristic, white-note *invenzioni* for manuals alone. Deceptively simplistic, they essay the

¹² Cf the fugue from Brahms's *Handel Variations* (1861).

eight authentic and plagal modes of Gregorian plainchant. Respectively Dorian D (No 1), Hypodorian D (No 2), Phrygian E (No 3), Hypophrygian E (No 4), Lydian F (No 5), Hypolydian F (No 6), Mixolydian G (No 7), Hypomixolydian G (No 8). Given how 'meticulously worked out' they are – a 'super-saturation of symmetry and patterning' – one recent analyst calls the series 'the *ne plus ultra* of Alkan's experiments in his *genre ancien* idiom'.¹³

Inscribed to the composer's ageing old master, François Benoist, the E-flat *Impromptu* (a humoured label, 1866), is another matter, conceived and 'pianostrated' on a scale reminiscent of the complexes met in the Op 39 Études nine years earlier. It's based on Heine's *Marseillaise* of the German Reformation, Luther's 16th century hymn *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* - 'Un fort rempart est notre Dieu', 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God'. Following Schubert's *Wanderer* Fantasy and Liszt's *Ad nos, ad salutarem undam* and B minor Sonata, earlier still the *sonata quasi una fantasia* format of Beethoven's Op 27 pair, the work is a rigorous variation-immersed 'sonata' subdivided into four *l'istesso tempo* movements of differing metre, played without a break but demarcated by pauses. I, 'tema' (pedals), twelve 'divisions', E-flat 2/2 - in the guise of a *passacaille*, the chorale functioning registrally as an *ostinato* real and inverted. II, double 'scherzo', E-flat 6/8, C major 12/8 - the 'waterfalls' of Chopin's Third Scherzo ghosting the first half, rhythmic augmentation and diminution against torrents of right-hand semiquavers, flooding the second. III, 'slow movement', *dolce ed espressivo*, C minor 3/4 - the chorale, initially plain, ultimately bizarre in harmonisation, traversing a range of canonic treatments and segmentations, etchings of *legato*, *staccato* and tart grace-notes vitalising pigment and character. A strident brocade of theatre transitions into IV, 'fugue', E-flat 2/2 - supremely displaying Alkan's polyphonic majesty, Bach and Handelian Beethoven stretching the canvas indelibly. *Ein feste Burg* is metamorphosed into a *staccato*-sprung subject, three cells from the first bar impelling the whole organically. The peroration is monstrous, terrifying, wondrous, extraordinary

¹³ Michael W Beauvois, 'Alkan's Petits Préludes for organ: a case study of composition by constraints', *Music & Science*, 29 January 2018

... consuming instrument, player and building ... floor to cupola vibrating to eternity - no delay long enough (even the six seconds of Dudelange's Église Saint-Martin, the venue of this recording) to stem the adrenalin rush. Yet at the very end it's the fading descent of the chorale against a trinity of velvet-cloaked E-flat chords that has the last word.

Alkan is buried in the Cimetière de Montmartre, a slab of grey Tarn granite from the Massif Central marking the spot. Four mourners attended his funeral.

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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 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 Sézerie: 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

- and voiced in both German and French style; extension and differentiation of the numerous reed chorus (23 stops in all) of both German romantic and French symphonic style on all manuals;
- a strong fundamental tone based on 32' (Untersatz 32' from CC, full-length Contrabombarde 32')
- octave mutations 5 1/3' and 3 1/5' and low-pitched, partly progressive mixtures;
- revoicing of the whole organ, carried out without compromise according to romantic voicing techniques;
- new four-manual console with electronic combination action, MIDI-interface and replay system.

Thus, since 2002, the organ has become an ideal instrument for the stylistically authentic performance of German, French and English repertoire from the romantic symphonic era.

© Amis de l'Orgue Saint-Martin Dudelange

Hauptwerk / Grand orgue 1.Manual; 61 keys; 100 mm

| | |
|---------------------|---------|
| Prinzipal | 16'* |
| Bordun | 16'* |
| Majorprinzipal | 8'* |
| Minorprinzipal | 8'* |
| Seraphon Gedackt | 8'* |
| Fugara | 8'* |
| Gemshorn | 8'* |
| Rohrflöte | 8'* |
| Quinte | 5 1/3' |
| Octav | 4'* |
| Flöte harmonique | 4'* |
| Terz | 3 1/5' |
| Quinte | 2 2/3'* |
| Octav | 2'* |
| Terz | 1 3/5' |
| Großmixtur 3-4 fach | 2 2/3' |
| Mixtur 4-5 fach | 2' |
| Bombarde | 16' |
| Trompete | 8'* |
| Horn | 8' |
| Clairon | 4' |

Positiv (Swellbox) 2.Manual; 61 keys; 100 mm

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Bordun | 16'* |
| Gamba (Ext. Gamba 8') | 16' |
| Prinzipal | 8'* |
| Seraphon Flöte | 8'* |
| Gamba | 8'* |
| Vox coelestis | 8'* |
| Quintatön | 8'* |
| Lieblichgedackt (Ext. Bordun 16') | 8'* |
| Octav | 4'* |
| Flauttraverso | 4'* |
| Gamba (Ext. Gamba 8') | 4' |
| Nasard | 2 2/3' |
| Quintgamba | 2 2/3' |
| Piccolo | 2'* |
| Gamba (Ext. Gamba 8') | 2' |
| Tierce | 1 3/5' |
| Terzgamba | 1 3/5' |
| Plein-jeu 5-6 fach | 2 2/3' |
| Cor anglais | 16' |
| Tuba mirabilis (300 mm) | 8'* |
| Trompete | 8'* |
| Clarinette | 8'* |

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

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Quintatön | 16' |
| Geigenprinzipal | 8'* |
| Flüte 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'* |
| Gedacktbas | 8' |
| Cello | 8'* |
| Zartgedackt (<i>Tr. Lieblichgedackt 8' II</i>) | 8'* |
| Flüte | 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, has been described by ABC Radio National as “one of the great organists of our time” and by Limelight (Australia) as “indisputably one of the world’s finest organists.” Critics have consistently praised Nolan’s artistry, with BBC Radio 3 Record Review admiring his “miraculous playing,” and Gramophone Magazine (UK) commenting “Joseph Nolan cannot be matched for his towering technique, vivid virtuosity, and inspired interpretive insight”.

In a review of the Nolan/Signum album-Midnight at St Etienne Du Mont, Paris-American Music Magazine, Fanfare, writes “Joseph Nolan has attracted widespread attention as the Australian counterpart of Cameron Carpenter....displaying jaw-dropping virtuosity, with both finger-work and footwork that leave one astonished at his dexterity.”

Renowned for his interpretations of Widor’s complete organ works for Signum Classics, Nolan’s recordings have been acclaimed by Gramophone Magazine as “the current yardstick for all Widor recordings”. Musicweb International describes the Widor cycle as “the benchmark set”, while Classicalsource heralded the release as “a landmark”, awarding it five stars and Editor’s Choice. In a comparative review of the Widor symphonies featuring some of the most illustrious figures past and present in the organ world, The New Criterion, New York, remarked, “The Nolan set in particular is very fine”.

The cycle has won two Gramophone Critics’ Choice awards and garnered a wealth of five-star reviews from respected publications including BBC Music Magazine, The Criterion (New York), MusicWeb International, and ClassicalSource. Nolan’s recordings have a global reach, broadcast on BBC Radio 3, Pipedreams USA, Radio France, Radio Sweden, and ABC Classic. Notably, Nolan’s recording of Widor’s Symphony No. 5 at La Madeleine in Paris was named Apple Classical’s Editor’s Choice, chosen over 169 other entries.

As an exclusive artist with Signum Classics—a winner of Gramophone Magazine’s

Label of the Year (2017)—Nolan’s discography features some of the world’s most revered organs in iconic venues such as St Sulpice, La Madeleine, and St Etienne du Mont in Paris; St Sermin, Toulouse; St François de Sales, Lyon; St Bavo, Haarlem; St Ouen, Rouen; Buckingham Palace, London; and Eglise St Martin, Dudelange, Luxembourg.

Limelight Magazine has awarded Joseph recordings three Editor’s Choice awards. Joseph is also the first-and only organist-to have been awarded Limelight’s coveted Recording of the Month for his album entitled-Midnight at St Etienne du Mont-the Parisian ecclesiastical home of Maurice Duruflé. Musicweb International selected Joseph’s recording of German Romantic repertoire from St Bavo Haarlem as a Recording of the Year with legendary critic, Marc Rochester, hailing the recording as ‘The Organ Disc of the Decade’.

Nolan is also highly sought after as a soloist with major orchestras. His Sydney Opera House debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, joined by renowned mezzo-soprano Susan Graham and conductor David Robertson, drew accolades from Limelight, The Sydney Morning Herald, and ArtsHub, who declared “Nolan has an unequivocally fine ear for French repertoire....I have never heard the Sydney Opera House organ sounding better.”

In 2024, Nolan made his debut as a featured artist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, performing in the world premiere of Mary Finsterer’s Stabat Mater at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Melbourne. This performance subsequently won Performance of the Year and Work of the Year at the 2024 Arts (APRA) awards in Melbourne.

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

Most recently, Nolan made a highly successful debut as a featured soloist in the

2025/2026 Singapore Symphony Season at Victoria Hall in October 2025.

Joseph's formative years were shaped at The Royal College of Music in London, where he studied with 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.

Following being appointed to Her Majesty's Chapel Royal at St James's Palace in 2004, Joseph also performed at Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace, including giving the inaugural concert celebrating the refurbishment of the Grand Ballroom Organ in Buckingham Palace. Joseph holds the honour of being the first organist to release a commercial recording of the Grand Ballroom Organ at Buckingham Palace for Signum Classics.

In 2008, Nolan was recruited as Master of Music at St George's Cathedral in Perth, Western Australia, by the Dean of the Cathedral, Dr John Shepherd (now Dean Emeritus). Nolan was entrusted with the ambitious task of cultivating a world-class Cathedral music program while continuing his international performance and recording career. Almost immediately upon his arrival in Perth, Nolan established the Cathedral Consort and St George's Cathedral Concert Series, building up choral standards that enabled Nolan to lead the St George's Cathedral Consort in works such as Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra at Perth Concert Hall in 2019, broadcast live on ABC Classic.

Nolan has also led the Cathedral Consort in many Australian and West Australian premieres such as Monteverdi *Vesper's* with period instruments, Pachelbel's *Vespers*, and Alexander Levine's *The Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom*.

Christopher Martin Jenkins, the legendary cricket commentator for BBC Radio's Test Match Special, and chief cricket correspondent for The Daily Telegraph and the The Times, wrote in his autobiography "A Cricketing Life"—"The present musical director, the organ recitalist, Joseph Nolan, has raised standards to exquisite levels

and made it more easily possible for the fortunate congregations in a faraway city to experience that sense of the infinite that is the essence of faith".

Under Nolan's leadership, the Cathedral Consort has performed at the Perth Festival, for Musica Viva, and collaborated with UK groups, The Hilliard Ensemble, The Academy of Ancient Music, and The King's Singers. Gloria, a collaboration with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, St George's Cathedral Consort, and contemporary dance group Co3, conducted by Nolan, received unanimous five-star reviews and won the 2023 Australian Performing Arts Mainstage award.

In April 2024, Nolan conducted a concert version of *Gloria*—this time featuring Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Handel's *Dixit Dominus*—at Perth Concert Hall, a performance voted as one of Australia's top ten concerts of 2024 by Limelight. Nolan has also conducted the West Australian premiere of Mary Finsterer's *Stabat Mater*, with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra and St George's Cathedral Consort at Winthrop Hall, UWA, in April 2025. Limelight awarded the concert five stars writing Nolan led "an extraordinary performance of an extraordinary work." The concert was broadcast by ABC Classic in May 2025.

In recognition of Nolan's significant contribution to French music, The Government of France honoured Joseph Nolan with the medal of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2016. The University of Western Australia awarded Nolan the prestigious higher doctorate, the Doctor of Letters, in 2018. His career has been featured in major interviews and articles on ABC Radio National (Australia), Gramophone, Choir and Organ, The Organ, The Age (Sydney), Classical Music, and The Australian.

In January 2026, Nolan will record a commercial album for Signum Classics at the world-famous Berliner Dom, home to the renowned 1905 Sauer Organ. Future engagements will see Joseph Nolan make his debut as conductor with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra at the New Zealand Festival in Wellington and return as a featured soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in four concerts at Melbourne Town Hall.



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This recording is dedicated to my dear friends, Julian and Alexandra Burt and their daughter, Georgiana Burt.

Recorded 20-24 January 2025 at:

Eglise Saint-Martin de Dudelange, Av. Grande-Duchesse Charlotte 3597
Dudelange, Luxembourg

Producer | Tim Oldham

Recording Engineer | Tom Lewington

Recording Assistant | Mike Hatch

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Critical Praise

"Joseph Nolan cannot be matched for his vivid virtuosity, towering technique and inspired interpretative insight-and is the current yardstick for all Widor recordings"

- Gramophone Magazine

"★★★★★ Joseph Nolan's swirling, swashbuckling Widor series showcases the tangy palette and earthy roar of the fabulous Cavaille-Coll organ at La Madeleine, Paris. In a word - glorious!"

- BBC Music Magazine

"In recent years, Saint-Sulpice's current organiste-titulaire, Daniel Roth, as well as Joseph Nolan, Christian Schmitt, and the late Pierre Pincemaille have recorded the (Widor) symphonies. The Nolan set in particular is very fine."

- The New Criterion-New York

Gramophone Magazine Critics Choice 2019

