

Symphonie Romane

ORGAN MUSIC BY DUPRÉ, WIDOR AND TOURNEMIRE



Peter Stevens



MARCEL DUPRÉ (1886–1971)

- 1 Cortège et Litanie (Op. 19, No. 2) 6' 19

CHARLES-MARIE WIDOR (1844–1937)

SYMPHONIE ROMANE (Op. 73) 33' 12

- 2 Moderato 8' 01
3 Choral 9' 25
4 Cantilène 5' 58
5 Finale 9' 48

CHARLES TOURNEMIRE (1870–1939)

- 6 Fantaisie-Choral
(L'Orgue Mystique, No. 25: In Festo Pentecostes) 9' 08

MARCEL DUPRÉ

DEUXIÈME SYMPHONIE (Op. 26) 20' 14

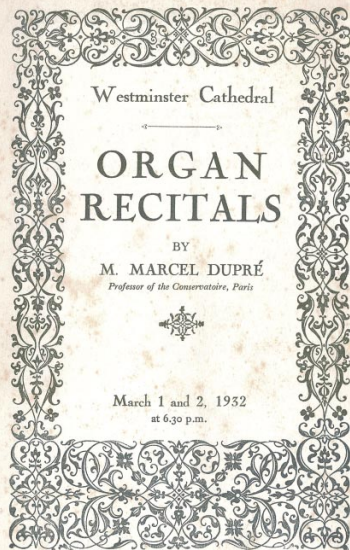
- 7 Preludio 9' 05
8 Intermezzo 4' 50
9 Toccata 6' 19

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The dawning of the twentieth century heralded one of the most diverse and revolutionary periods in cultural history, and Paris found itself at the crossroads. The shimmering textures of Debussy and Ravel came into stark contrast with Stravinsky's brutal *Le Sacre du Printemps*, whose infamous premiere in 1913 shocked the city; the aftermath of the First World War saw artists find consolation in creating an alternative reality through surrealism; the disciples of Erik Satie came together – however briefly – as *Les Six*; and, in the organ lofts of Paris, a succession of luminaries was employed in the service of the Church. The first three decades of the century saw Widor in the latter half of his six-decade tenure as *titulaire* at St Sulpice; Vierne was appointed to Notre-Dame in 1900; Tournemire was at the height of his improvisatory powers at Sainte-Clotilde; in 1926 Marcel Dupré was named Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatoire; and, in 1930, one of his most illustrious

pupils, the 21-year-old Olivier Messiaen, was appointed to La Trinité on the condition that he did not upset the congregation with too much *musique dissonante*.

Marcel Dupré succeeded Widor as *titulaire* at St Sulpice in 1934, remaining in post until the day of his death on Pentecost Sunday 1971. He composed prolifically and toured internationally, particularly to America, and became one of the most celebrated organist-composers of the twentieth century. Despite being arguably his most popular work for the organ, *Cortège et Litanie* has existed in four different versions. It was originally composed in 1922 as incidental music for a play; asked by a friend to supply music for a theatrical performance in Paris, Dupré happily obliged, and wrote a set of five pieces for a small ensemble of eleven players. It was only later, on one of his many concert tours to the United States, that it took on a new life. Dupré played the piece on the piano for a group of friends; so impressed was his concert promoter that he wrote to Dupré, informing



PROGRAMME PRICE 3d.

The programme from the first of Marcel Dupré's two organ recitals on the completed Grand Organ of Westminister Cathedral in 1932, including the Cortège et Litanie

MARCH 1, 1932

✱
1st Recital

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | MARCHE PONTIFICALE | Ch. M. Widor |
| 2 | PRELUDE AND FUGUE IN G MINOR | Marcel Dupré |
| 3 | (a) DIALOGUE | Clérambault |
| | (b) NOEL WITH VARIATIONS | Daquin |
| 4 | IMPROVISATION ON A THEME SUBMITTED | Marcel Dupré |
| | (Interval for Collection) | |
| 5 | PASSACAGLIA AND FUGUE IN C MINOR | J. S. Bach |
| 6 | (a) LARGHETTO | Wesley |
| | (b) CANON IN B MINOR | Schumann |
| 7 | CORTÈGE ET LITANIE | Marcel Dupré |
| 8 | FINALE IN B♭ | César Franck |

him that the *Cortège et Litanie* had been added to his concert programmes later in the tour. Left with no choice, he transcribed the work for organ whilst travelling. The following year, the composer was persuaded to make a further version for organ and orchestra, and this was performed on the giant organ at the Wanamaker Store in Philadelphia, with the orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. But it is the version for organ solo that remains the best-known rendering of the piece.

Notwithstanding its origins in the theatre, the *Cortège et Litanie* bridges the gap between the sacred and the secular. The *Cortège* – meaning, in this sense, a procession – opens with a luminous chorale played simply on a single string stop. The theme is given more expansive treatment on lush string sounds, with allusions to the chimes of a distant bell. The *Litanie* begins distantly, with a simple incantation repeated fervently. Rising in intensity and harmonic tension, the two themes are eventually combined, and a kaleidoscopic final page brings the piece to an ecstatic close.

‘He stirs the soul to the depths, he transports it into the regions of the infinite, and casts it, transfixed, into the world beyond.’ So Widor’s *Symphonie Romane* was described by one French writer in 1903. Charles-Marie Widor’s ten symphonies stand at the heart of the French Romantic repertoire, but the last two stand apart from the other eight, dedicated as they are to Widor’s view of the ‘organ art as holy’. Whilst the *Symphonie Gotbique* of 1895 is based on chants for Christmas, the *Symphonie Romane* of 1899 takes as its foundation the chants for Easter morning. The year before completing the work, Widor wrote of his plans for his ‘tenth and last symphony for organ’; from the start, he intended the *Romane* to stand as the summation of his symphonic output, and even though he lived for almost another four decades, it remained his last word in the genre.

The *Symphonie Romane* is dedicated ‘to the memory of Saint Sernin of Toulouse’, taking inspiration from the monumental eleventh century Romanesque basilica, with its round arches

*The Basilica of
St Sernin, Toulouse,
as painted by Claire
Arnoux in 1845*



and soaring nave. Meanwhile, in the preface of the first published edition, the composer compares the *Hæc dies* chant (on which the symphony is based) to birdsong; besides looking back to the chant of the early Church and medieval architecture, Widor seems to be looking forward to the chant-infused compositions of Tournemire, as well as hinting at the religious and ornithological works of Messiaen.



Based on the first two phrases of *Hæc dies*, the first movement opens with an introductory flourish, settling on a top F sharp, underneath which the chant is heard for the first time. Fragments of it are present throughout the movement, building to a shattering climax with the chant thundered out in the pedals. The music subsides back to its original key, concluding in luminous D major. The second movement, entitled *Choral*, begins with the *Hæc dies* presented in four-

part harmony. One of Widor's most striking effects in the symphony is the high, rhapsodic passage for flutes – perhaps an overt allusion to the idea of birdsong? – before the chant returns beneath a delicate latticework of arpeggios. An elusive final cadence brings the movement to a wistful close.

The *Cantilène* stands as the exception amongst the four movements of the *Romane* in that it is based not on the *Hæc dies* but on the *Victimæ Paschali laudes*, the great sequence from the Mass of Easter Sunday. An improvisatory melody on the clarinet alternates with appearances of the chant on the flutes. The brilliant *Final* opens with the *Hæc dies* delivered as what has been described as an 'urgent litany'. Unusually, this movement contains not one climax but several waves of them, each one more important than the last. The true summit of the whole piece comes after an epic crescendo bristling with rhythmic energy; the tempo broadens out to a majestic *Andante quasi adagio*, and the chant is heard several times across two pages of the most profound music Widor

ever wrote. After unwinding over a long pedal note, a final echo of the first movement leads the symphony to its radiant conclusion.

Charles Tournemire remains a mysterious figure amongst composers – even the precise date and cause of his death are uncertain – but he occupies a crucial position as the link between Franck and Messiaen. In 1898 he became *titulaire* at Sainte-Clotilde, a position that he held for the rest of his life, and which his teacher Franck had held until his own death in 1890. Like Widor, he composed in all genres, although it is chiefly for his organ music that he is remembered today. His skill as an improviser was legendary; happily, some of his improvisations were recorded in 1930 and 1931, and their transcriptions (by Maurice Duruflé) have entered the repertoire of organists around the world. Olivier Messiaen went occasionally to hear Tournemire improvise during Masses at Sainte-Clotilde, and remembered that, like his own, Tournemire's improvisations were at their most beautiful

when he was in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

This profoundly liturgical mindset led to the composition of the work for which Tournemire is best known: *L'Orgue Mystique*. Written over the course of a decade between 1922 and 1932, this massive cycle consists of fifty-one suites of pieces for use during the Mass, based on the Gregorian propers for the day. In each suite, four brief, chant-derived movements – *Introit*, *Offertoire*, *Élévation* and *Communion* – are followed by a large-scale *pièce terminale*, to be played at the end of Mass. These final movements have a variety of titles: *Triptyque* for Trinity; *Clameurs et Choral* for Septuagesima; *Verrière* for Quinquagesima.

The *Fantaisie-Choral* for Pentecost is one of the most substantial sorties of *L'Orgue Mystique*, befitting one of the most important days of the liturgical year. Opening with gently swirling triplet semiquavers – tongues of fire, perhaps? – in the bright key of A major, the Sequence for Pentecost Sunday, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, emerges through the haze. A

*Charles Tournemire
pictured in 1930*



slower, expansive interlude of rich harmonies and dense textures interrupts the semiquaver movement, which soon resumes a semitone lower than at the opening. In time, a second theme emerges: *Veni Creator Spiritus*, the Office Hymn for Pentecost. The two themes are worked through as the harmony becomes fierier, and they eventually come together in a colossal climax, the hymn being played on the manuals, and the sequence in the pedals. So far, so conventional. But then Tournemire reveals the deeply spiritual nature of his composition: rather than ending in a blaze of Pentecostal triumph, the music is transformed via an unexpected diminuendo into a radiant return of the interlude, this time transfigured by more exotic harmonies, and soaring higher than it did in its earlier guise. Coming to rest on octave C sharps, the faintest echo of a third piece of chant is heard: the *Te Deum*, a hymn of thanksgiving reserved for the most solemn occasions, which Tournemire uses as a unifying theme throughout *L'Orgue Mystique*. An exquisite final cadence returns the church to a mood of silent

contemplation after the splendours of High Mass. This is liturgical music *par excellence*; one can easily imagine Tournemire in his organ loft after Mass at Sainte-Clotilde, sitting silently on the bench after the congregation has dispersed, the empty church filled with clouds of incense, the stone walls bathed in light filtered through stained glass...

Dupré's *Deuxième Symphonie* was written in 1929, seven years after the *Cortège et Litanie*, and the composer himself gave the first British performance of the piece in Alexandra Palace on 16 March 1930. In contrast with the religious allusions of the *Cortège*, however, it is a secular work through and through, showing Dupré at the height of his powers: punchy, confident and virtuosic. The opening *Preludio* is constructed from four ideas: the initial motif comprising an aggressive rhythm followed by a descent; a shuttling back and forth of semiquavers between two pairs of flutes; jazz-influenced harmonies written for the *voix célestes*; and a fanfare-like rhythm that goes on to dominate the final page.

The witty *Intermezzo* that follows is far from a conventional 'slow movement'. Its dainty, almost sarcastic opening melody returns in several guises, including being surrounded by swirling triplets and hammered out in parallel octaves on full organ, before its last appearance accompanied by an obsessively repeated anapaest rhythm. The closing *Toccata* is visceral and hard-hitting, its main theme being introduced under strident bare fifths. A more lyrical second subject is followed by a dark central episode. The earlier material soon returns, and the symphony ends in a blizzard of jangling fifths in C sharp major.

Widor, Tournemire and Dupré occupy a pivotal place in the French Romantic organ literature. They looked back as well as looking forward; they were happy to delve into nineteenth century harmony and medieval plainchant, and, yet at the same time, they pushed the boundaries of what was possible on the organ both musically and technically. When Widor was born, Mendelssohn still had three years left



Marcel Dupré (left), Charles-Marie Widor (centre) and others pictured outside the Paris Trocadéro in 1926

to live; Dupré died in the year that Led Zeppelin released their fourth studio album. Yet during those astonishing decades at the beginning of the twentieth century, when all three could be heard in the organ lofts of Paris, these extraordinary men created some of the most fascinating – as well as the most beautiful – music ever composed for the organ. This collection barely scratches the surface.

PETER STEVENS

THE RUFFATTI ORGAN OF BUCKFAST ABBEY

Buckfast Abbey is delighted to have the first organ in the United Kingdom by the renowned Italian organ builder Fratelli Ruffatti.

The instrument consists of a substantial Quire Organ (four divisions and pedal) located on both sides of the Quire and the upper triforium, and a Grand-Orgue in the West Gallery (two divisions and pedal). The scale of the instruments allows a rich variety of tonal colour, which encourages creativity in the accompaniment of the Monastic Community and Abbey Choir, as well as providing the versatility necessary for a wide range of organ repertoire. An exciting feature of the two spatially separated instruments is the possibility of playing antiphonally, as well as the ability to play the instruments together (from one or both consoles).

A notable feature of the Quire Organ is an Italian-inspired Positivo division, which includes a number of special effects including a Nightingale, Cymblestern, Glockenspiel, Drum and Bagpipes: stops common in Italian organs of the Renaissance and unique tools in improvisation and organ repertoire of the period.

The organ features two high-pressure reed stops: a bright Pontifical Trumpet *en chamade*, protruding horizontally from the West Gallery casework, and a darker, more tuba-like Abbatial Trumpet, located in the triforium.

The tonal character of the Grand-Orgue in the West Gallery is inspired by the French Romantic tradition, and the scalings and manufacturing practices of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. The pipes feature the characteristic arched and protruding upper and lower lips. The instrument is contained in two cases and designed to be in harmony with the surrounding architecture, so as not to obscure the stained glass. Since the organ speaks directly on the longitudinal

axis of the building, it supports congregational singing well, and whilst the instrument can be used independently, its tonal qualities integrate well with the Quire Organ, forming one homogeneous, cohesive instrument.

Two four-manual consoles control the instruments: one located in the West Gallery, and a moveable console, with electronic height adjustment, located in the Quire.

The instrument is used daily to accompany Mass and Vespers, and features regularly in our concert series. For further information, visit www.buckfast.org.uk/music

PHILIP ARKWRIGHT



Detail of the Gallery Organ casework, featuring the distinctive arched upper and lower lips characteristic of the work of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll

QUIRE ORGAN SPECIFICATION

POSITIVO *Unenclosed* Manual I

Principale	8'
Bordone	8'
Voce Umana	8'
Ottava	4'
Flauto Veneziano	4'
Decimaquinta	2'
Decimanona	1 ½'
Sesquialtera II	2 ⅔'–1 ⅓'
Ripieno III (26-29-33)	⅔'
Cromorno	8'
<i>Tremulant</i>	
Abbatial Trumpet (Solo)	8'
Pontifical Trumpet (Solo)	8'
Glockenspiel	30 bells
Nightingale	5 pipes
Cymbelstern	12 pipes
Drum	3 pipes

Bagpipe C	4'
Bagpipe F	3'
Bagpipe G	2 ⅔'

GREAT *Unenclosed* Manual II

Bourdon	16'
Principal	8'
Bourdon	8'
Spitzflöte	8'
Octave	4'
Blockflöte	4'
Quint	2 ⅔'
Superoctave	2'
Mixture IV (19-22-26-29)	1 ½'
Terz Zimbel III (29-31-33)	½'
Trumpet	8'
Clarion	4'
Abbatial Trumpet (Solo)	8'
Pontifical Trumpet (Solo)	8'
<i>Sub Octave</i>	
<i>Unison Off</i>	

SWELL *Enclosed* Manual III

Flûte à Cheminée	8'
Gemshorn	8'
Viole de Gambe	8'
Viole Céleste	8'
Prestant	4'
Flûte Creuse	4'
Nazard	2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Octavin	2'
Tierce	1 $\frac{3}{5}$ '
Plein Jeu IV (15-19-22-26)	2'
Basson	16'
Trompette Harmonique	8'
Hautbois	8'
Clairon Harmonique	4'
<i>Tremulant</i>	
<i>Sub Octave</i>	
<i>Unison Off</i>	
<i>Super Octave</i>	

SOLO *Enclosed* Manual IV

Lieblich Bourdon	16'
Orchestral Flute	8'
Doppelflöte	8'
Salicional	8'
Unda Maris	8'
Flûte Douce	8'
Flûte Céleste	8'
Flauto d'Amore	4'
Harmonic Nazard	2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Harmonic Piccolo	2'
Harmonic Tierce	1 $\frac{3}{5}$ '
Bassett Horn	8'
Vox Humana	8'
<i>Tremulant</i>	
Abbatial Trumpet	8'
Pontifical Trumpet	8'
<i>Sub Octave</i>	
<i>Unison Off</i>	
<i>Super Octave</i>	

PEDAL *Unenclosed*

Contra Bourdon	32'
Contrabass	16'
Subbass	16'
Bourdon (Great)	16'
Lieblich Bourdon (Solo)	16'
Quint	10 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Octave	8'
Flûte Ouverte	8'
Nazard	5 $\frac{1}{3}$ '
Superoctave	4'
Flûte	2'
Mixture IV (12-15-19-22)	2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '
Fagott	32'
Bombarde	16'
Basson (Swell)	16'
Trompette	8'
Schalmei	4'

GALLERY ORGAN SPECIFICATION

GRAND-ORGUE *Unenclosed*

Bourdon	16'
Montre	8'
Flûte Harmonique	8'
Bourdon	8'
Prestant	4'
Flûte Octaviant	4'
Cornet III	2 $\frac{2}{3}$ '-2'-1 $\frac{3}{5}$ '
Doublette	2'
Plein Jeu III-V (15-19-22)	2'
Clarinete	8'
<i>Tremblant</i>	
Abbatial Trumpet (Solo)	8'
Pontifical Trumpet (Solo)	8'
<i>Sub Octave</i>	
<i>Unison Off</i>	

EXPRESSIF *Enclosed*

Violoncelle	8'
Violoncelle Céleste	8'
Cor de Chamois	8'
Cor de Chamois Céleste	8'
Prestant	4'
Trompette	8'
Clairon	4'

Tremblant

Sub Octave

Unison Off

Super Octave

PÉDALE *Unenclosed*

Soubasse	16'
Bourdon (Grand-Orgue)	16'
Basse	8'
Bourdon	8'
Flûte	4'
Bombarde	32'
Bombarde	16'
Trompette	8'

ACCESSORIES

Expressif on Manual III

Grand-Orgue on Manual II

Gallery Organ on Manual I

Sustain on each manual

All Swells to Swell

Pedal off *Thumb piston*

Reeds off *Thumb piston*

Mixtures off *Thumb piston*

Quire organ tutti *Thumb piston*

Full organ tutti *Thumb piston*

STATISTICS

81 speaking stops

100 ranks of pipes

5,542 pipes and 42 bells





PETER STEVENS

Peter Stevens is Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral. Born in Lancashire in 1987, he was educated at Chetham's School of Music, subsequently holding organ scholarships at Manchester Cathedral, St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, and King's College, Cambridge. He came to Westminster Cathedral in 2010, taking up his present position the following year. In addition to accompanying the Cathedral Choir in their daily services, recordings and concerts, he has given solo recitals across the UK and Europe. In 2013 Peter became Director of the Schola Cantorum of the Edington Festival, following three years as Festival Organist. His teachers have included Thomas Trotter, David Briggs, and Colin Walsh.



Recorded at BUCKFAST ABBEY, 11–12 September 2020

Recording Engineer DAVID HINITT

Recording Producer JONATHAN ALLSOPP

Assistant Producer MATTHEW SEARLES

Executive Producer PHILIP ARKWRIGHT

Booklet Proofreader AARON KIELY

Organ maintained by GARY OWENS

*Front illustration: Depiction of Christ in stained glass
(St Benedict's Chapel, Buckfast Abbey)*

Photography © Buckfast Abbey Media Studios (pages 4, 25, 34–35, 38, 40–41), Westminster Cathedral Archive (page 8), Didier Descouens (page 11), Frédéric Blanc (page 16), Bibliothèque nationale de France (page 20), and Ben Durrant (page 36).

© Ad Fontes 2021

© Ad Fontes 2021

All rights of the producer and of the owner of the recorded work reserved. Unauthorised copying, hiring, renting, public performance and broadcasting of this record are prohibited.

Manufactured in the EU
www.adfontes.org.uk



*Peter Stevens at the
Quire console during
recording sessions*

SYMPHONIE ROMANE

Organ music by Marcel Dupré, Charles-Marie Widor and Charles Tournemire

Peter Stevens *organ*

Peter Stevens plays works by three towering figures of the French organ world. Charles-Marie Widor's *Symphonie Romane* is a radiant meditation on the Gregorian chants of Easter Sunday, and the *Fantaisie-Choral* from Tournemire's *L'Orgue Mystique* is a deeply spiritual reflection on two of the best-known chants of Pentecost: *Veni Sancte Spiritus* and *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Two contrasting pieces by Marcel Dupré bookend the programme: his *Cortège et Litanie* is probably his best-loved work for the organ, while the uninhibited confidence of the *Deuxième Symphonie* shows a different side of the composer's personality; its visceral and hard-hitting textures given electrifying voice by the Ruffatti organ of Buckfast Abbey.



Total running time: 68' 55

www.adfontes.org.uk