



TOCCATAS AND MEDITATIONS

Boëllmann
Durufié
Guilmant
Ravel
Vierne
Widor

Dariia Lytvishko,
Organ



Toccatas and Meditations

- Maurice Ravel** (1875–1937)
Le Tombeau de Couperin (1914–17) (arranged for organ by Jörg Abbing)
- ❶ VI. Toccata 4:39
- Louis Vierne** (1870–1937)
Trois Improvisations (1929–30) (transcribed by Maurice Duruflé)
- ❷ III. Méditation 4:36
- Pièces de Fantaisie, Deuxième suite, Op. 53** (1926–27)
- ❸ No. 6. Toccata 3:38
- Maurice Duruflé** (1902–1986)
- ❹ **Méditation pour orgue, Op. posth.** (1964) 4:33
- Suite pour orgue, Op. 5** (1933)
- ❺ III. Toccata 9:03
- Alexandre Guilmant** (1837–1911)
Pièces dans différents styles, Livre 6, Op. 20 (1861)
- ❻ I. Première méditation 9:58
- Léon Boëllmann** (1862–1897)
Suite gothique, Op. 25 (1895)
- ❼ IV. Toccata 3:40
- Charles-Marie Widor** (1844–1937)
Organ Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 13, No. 1 (1872)
- ❽ VI. Méditation 3:21
- Organ Symphony No. 5 in F minor, Op. 42, No. 1** (1879)
- ❾ V. Toccata 5:34
- Louis Vierne**
Pièces de Fantaisie, Deuxième suite, Op. 53 (1926–27)
- ❿ No. 5. Clair de lune 8:45

Toccatas and Meditations

Boëllmann • Duruflé • Guilmant • Ravel • Vierne • Widor

Maurice Ravel's stormy *Toccata* is the sixth movement from the suite for piano, *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. Ravel dedicated the suite to his comrades in the First World War when he was a volunteer truck driver. The word *Tombeau* was used in French Baroque music as a funeral piece for deceased musicians. The first five movements are each dedicated to one of Ravel's friends who died in the war. The *Toccata* is dedicated to a soldier who had already died on 24 August 1914, the musicologist and critic, Joseph de Marliave, who was married to the pianist Marguerite Long. Long was very much appreciated by Ravel, and she premiered the piece in Paris on 11 April 1915. Ravel, who rarely commented on his own music, considered this work to be almost 'completed' and later also arranged it for orchestra. It is therefore not surprising that organists have also taken on this composition and emphasise the orchestral structure and sensuality of sound through sophisticated registration.

Louis Vierne's *Méditation*, from the *Trois Improvisations*, is heard here in Maurice Duruflé transcription. Duruflé changed some passages and also the order of the three improvisations. Vierne's life was characterised by great artistic achievements, but also by health problems and personal misfortunes. Born almost blind, it was only at the age of seven that an operation gave him sufficient vision, but this disappeared again in old age, leading Vierne to write his last compositions in Braille. At the age of six, he heard a concert by César Franck, which deeply affected him, and the lessons at the Paris Conservatoire, which only lasted four weeks due to Franck's fatal road accident, influenced him for the rest of his life. After playing the organ at Saint Sulpice, Vierne was appointed titular organist at Notre Dame de Paris in 1900. Without doubt, the six organ symphonies (all composed in minor keys) represent the most significant part of his *oeuvre*, but the *Messe solennelle* written in 1899 and the *Trois Improvisations* are also among the highlights of Romantic organ works. The last years of Vierne's life were burdened by increasing visual impairment, further physical ailments and depression. Directly after playing the final chord of an organ concert at Notre Dame on 2 June 1937, Vierne suffered a stroke and died. The funeral service took place there a few days later – at his request the organ, draped in black, remained silent, and Gregorian chants were performed instead.

Vierne's *Toccata* composed in 1926, is taken from his *Second Suite for Organ* (also called *Pièces de Fantaisie pour Grand Orgue*). Vierne dedicated it to his friend Alexandre Russell, who taught as an organist and composer at Princeton University. There is a very special detail in the registration Vierne requested: he asks for the addition of super couplers (octaves aiguës) in bars 148 (over the récit) and 156 (over the positif). It was his way of paying homage to American organ building, and it is the first time that Vierne has requested the use of these couplers in his *24 Pièces de Fantaisie*. It is surprising, however, that the specification for the 1868 renovation of the organ at Notre Dame in Paris, by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, on which Vierne had worked since 1900, did not include a super coupler.

The musical structure of the *Toccata* consists of three main sections (ABA') with a coda. Throughout the composition, Vierne uses B flat and D minor scales and the C sharp Phrygian mode. Vierne was not a proponent of structured harmonic composition. When studying his organ works, the first thing that stands out is the intense chromaticism and the way that he moves from one chord (or scale/key centre) to the next with virtually no warning or discernable methodology. This compositional technique makes his organ music spontaneous yet organic and exciting at the same time. (see: Rollin Smith, *Louis Vierne: Organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral* [New York: Pendragon Press, 1999])

The final Vierne piece is perhaps his most Impressionistic. His *Clair de lune* was composed ten years before Debussy's famous work of the same name and is the only piece not named *Méditation* or *Toccata*.

When Vierne suffered a fatal stroke at the organ console of Notre Dame on 2 June 1937, Maurice Duruflé was serving as his registrar. Born in 1902, Duruflé studied organ with Eugène Gigout, harmony with Jean Gallo and composition with Paul Dukas. From 1929 until his death in 1986, he was titular organist at Saint-Étienne-du-Mont in Paris and at the Conservatoire de Paris, and important organists such as Jean Guillou and Marie-Claire Alain were among his students. As an organist, he played concerts as an organ duo together with his second wife Madeleine Chevalier, especially in the 1960s and 70s. He was very critical of his own compositions and never performed the highly virtuosic *Toccata* recorded here in public.

Léon Boëllmann's *Toccata* from the *Suite gothique* is probably also known to many people who do not regularly listen to organ music. The *Toccata* is certainly one of the most popular and most frequently played toccatas of all time, even though Boëllmann otherwise remained rather unknown as a composer. For organists, this *Toccata* is a rewarding piece that is not too difficult to play. It begins modestly with a catchy theme, then, like a perpetuum mobile with the full sound of the Romantic organ, it ends triumphantly in a furious finale. Léon Boëllmann was only 35 years old when he died, but in his short life he wrote 160 compositions, most of them for organ, piano and symphony orchestra.

Charles-Marie Widor, who can be considered the founder of the 'French school of organ playing', also died in 1937. He was César Franck's successor as professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire and his students included many famous composers such as Nadia Boulanger, Louis Vierne, Darius Milhaud, Marcel Dupré, Edgard Varèse and Albert Schweitzer. The famous organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll was friends with the Widor family and he recognised the extraordinary musical talent of the young Charles-Marie, to whom he recommended the renowned organist Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens in Brussels as an organ teacher. Widor's earliest compositions probably also date from this early period, and some of these ideas found their way into his ten organ symphonies (a musical genre that he created). Widor was titular organist at Saint Sulpice in Paris for 64 years. The magnificent Cavallé-Coll organ there offered him every sonic possibility and inspired him to write his orchestral organ symphonies, the fifth of which is represented on this album by what is perhaps the most famous toccata of the 20th century.

When listening to the album of the extraordinary organist Dariia Lytvishko, the author of these booklet notes hears the words of Albert Schweitzer quoted by Charles-Marie Widor because of her almost unlimited technical possibilities, but also because of her highly emotional approach to music:

It is the feeling of the sublime and the infinite, for which words will always be an inadequate expression and which can only be truly expressed through art.

Thomas-Friedrich Kirchhoff

English translation: Naxos

Thank you!

Many thanks to the Pütter family and the Freundeskreis Bauernkirche Iserlohn for the opportunity to record this album on the wonderful Grenzing organ, donated by Gustav Pütter.

My special thanks go to Thomas Kirchhoff, who has helped me tremendously with his versatile support and commitment. His advice means a lot to me.

I would like to thank Professor Hans-Werner Huppertz for his patience during the recording and editing. He not only accompanied the recording process at the highest technical level, but also made it a wonderful experience for me.

My greatest thanks go to my parents Ilona Yelchenko and Vadym Lytvishko, to whom this album is dedicated.

Dariia Lytvishko

Disposition

Grenzing organ, Bauernkirche Iserlohn, Germany

Number of pipes: 2272

Weight of the organ: 14.5 tonnes

Design of the organ front: Francesca Molina, architect

Overall management: Andreas Fuchs, master organ builder

Length of the largest pipe: 560 cm

Length of the smallest pipe: 14 mm

I GRAND ORGUE

1. Montre 16'
2. Bourdon 16'*
3. Montre 8'
4. Bourdon 8'
5. Flûte harmonique 8'
6. Salicional 8'
7. Prestant 4'
8. Flûte Ouverte 4'
9. Doublette 2'
10. Mixture IV
11. Trompette 8'
12. Basson 16' *

III RÉCIT EXPRESSIF

1. Bourdon 16'
 2. Cor de Nuit 8'
 3. Gambe 8'
 4. Voix Céleste 8'
 5. Flûte octaviante 4'
 6. Octavin 2'
 7. Plein Jeu IV
 8. Basson 16'
 9. Trompette Harmonique 8'
 10. Hautbois 8' **
 11. Voix Humaine 8'
 12. Clairon Harmonique 4' **
- Tremblant

II A CHAMADE

1. Trompette en Chamade 16' *
2. Trompette en Chamade 8'
3. Trompette en Chamade 4' *

II B BOMBARDE

1. Bombarde 16'
2. Basson 16' *
3. Trompette 8' **
4. Trompette Harmonique 8' *
5. Hautbois 8' *
6. Voix Humaine 8' *
7. Clairon Harmonique 4' *

II C GRAND CORNET

1. Bourdon 16' *
2. Quinte Impériale 10 2/3'
3. Flûte 8'
4. Flûte Céleste 8' *
5. Tierce Impériale 6 2/5'
6. Grosse Quinte 5 1/3' **
7. Flûte 4'
8. Grosse Tierce 3 1/5' **
9. Quinte 2 2/3' **
10. Flûte 2' **
11. Tierce 1 3/5' **

IV ORGUE DE L'AUTEL

1. Flûte Poétique 8'
 2. Aeoline 8'
 3. Céleste 8'
 4. Flûte Poétique 4' **
 5. Aeoline 4' **
 6. Céleste 4' **
 7. Clarinette 8'
- Tremblant

PÉDALE

1. Montre 16'
2. Soubasse 16'
3. Bourdon 16'
4. Quinte Impériale 10 2/3' *
5. Bourdon 8' **
6. Principal 8' **
7. Tierce Impériale 6 2/5' *
8. Grosse Quinte 5 1/3' *
9. Flûte 4' *
10. Grosse Tierce 3 1/5' *
11. Bombarde 16' *
12. Trompette 8' *

* Transmission

** Extension

Dariia Lytvishko



Photo: Melissa R. Kavanagh

Dariia Lytvishko was born in Lutsk in western Ukraine in 1995. She received her first piano and organ lessons there. She has been living in Germany since 2014. She completed her professional training at the Volyn State College of Culture and Arts in Lutsk. She then studied church music at the University of Church Music Herford-Witten, where she received her bachelor's degree in 2019 and her master's degree in 2022. Lytvishko is now an internationally sought-after organist, performing in renowned churches and at major organ festivals throughout Europe. She has performed at Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral in London, the Temple protestant de l'Oratoire du Louvre in Paris, the Pantheon in Rome and at the Hauptkirche St Michaelis at the Hamburg Organ Summer. Her concert tours have taken her to France, England, Italy, Belgium, Monaco, Switzerland, Finland, Norway, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, Canada and the US. In addition to her concert activities, she works as a church musician in the Emmaus parish and at St Mary's Church in Herford. She also conducts the Quartett-Verein in Bad Oeynhausen. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, she has played in more than 40 benefit concerts, raising almost 70,000 euros for aid organisations. This is her debut album on Naxos.

The illustrious French organ tradition is celebrated in this album of toccatas and meditations, including masterpieces drawn from across the repertoire. Charles-Marie Widor was the founding father of the French Organ School, and his *Toccatà* from *Symphony No. 5* is a cornerstone of the repertoire. The *Méditation* by his contemporary Louis Vierne is among the highlights of Romantic organ works. Duruflé, Boëllmann and Guilmant are also represented, as is a beautiful Ravel arrangement. They're played on the magnificent Grenzing organ at Bauernkirche Iserlohn by Dariia Lytvishko – a Ukrainian-born virtuoso and one of the most lavishly gifted organists of her generation.

TOCCATAS AND MEDITATIONS

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| Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) | Alexandre Guilmant (1837–1911) |
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| – VI. Toccata (arr. Jörg Abbing) 4:39 | – I. Première méditation 9:58 |
| Louis Vierne (1870–1937) | Léon Boëllmann (1862–1897) |
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| | – No. 5. Clair de lune 8:45 |

Dariia Lytvishko

on the Grenzing organ, Bauernkirche Iserlohn, Germany

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet

Booklet notes in German are available at www.naxos.com/notes/551488.htm

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