GREGORIAN CHANT IN THE ORGAN SYMPHONIES OF WIDOR AND DUPRÉ,
A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED
WORKS OF J. S. BACH, S. BARBER, A. BRUCKNER, F. COUPERIN,
M. DUPRÉ, M. DURUFLE, C. FRANCK, W. A. MOZART,
O. MESSIAEN, J. PACHELBEL, M. REGER,
AND OTHERS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By

Paul Lindsley Thomas, B.A., B.M., M.M.

Denton, Texas

May, 1979

The lecture recital was given on November 20, 1979. The final movement of Widor's Symphonie Gothique, opus 70, the first movement of Widor's Symphonie Romane, opus 73, and the first movement of Dupré's Symphonie-Passion, opus 23 were performed following a lecture on Gregorian Chant in the organ symphonies of Widor and Dupré. The lecture included a brief historical discussion of the decline of organ literature following the French Classical School, the development of the Modern French Organ School beginning with the establishment of the organ department at the Paris Conservatory, the revival of plainsong and the establishment of the School of Solesmes, and the influence of César Franck and the organ symphony. The main body of the lecture included biographical sketches of Widor and Dupré, a discussion of the general characteristics of their organ symphonies, with the emphasis upon those movements specifically employing the use of Gregorian chant.
In addition to the lecture recital, three other public recitals were performed, two of which consisted of solo compositions for the organ, while a third program included works for organ and orchestra in which the performer was assisted by Dr. George Morey, who conducted the ensemble of Dallas Symphony players.

The first solo recital, including works of Bach, Mozart, Bruckner, Reger, Franck, Vierne, and Dupré, was performed on May 12, 1970.

On September 30, 1973 a program was performed which included three organ solo works by Couperin, Durufle, and Messiaen, and three works for organ and orchestral ensemble by Piston, Thomas, and Barber.

The third recital consisted of solo works for organ by Sweelinck, Pachelbel, J. S. Bach, Reger, Rachael, Thomas, and Sokola, and was performed on October 25, 1976.

The four programs were recorded on magnetic tape and are filed with the written version of the lecture material as a part of the dissertation.
Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the North Texas State University Library.
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

PAUL LINDSLEY THOMAS

in

Graduate Organ Recital

Tuesday, May 12, 1970 8:15 p.m. Main Auditorium

PROGRAM

Prelude and Fugue in C minor (S. 546) .......... Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Fantasy in F minor (K. 594) ................. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

\textit{Adagio-Allegro-Adagio}

Prelude in C .................................. Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)

Introduction and Passacaglia, from \textit{Monologe}, Opus 63 ...... Max Reger (1873-1916)

INTERMISSION

Prélude, Fugue and Variation, Opus 18 ................. César Franck (1822-1890)

Scherzo, from Symphony II, Opus 20 ................ Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

Variations on a Noel, Opus 20 .................... Marcel Dupré (1886-)

\textit{Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree}
\textit{Doctor of Musical Arts}
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

and

SAINT MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

present

PAUL LINDSLEY THOMAS
in
Graduate Organ Recital
assisted by
Dr. George Morey, Conductor
Members of the Dallas Symphony

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1973 - 8:15 P.M. - CHURCH

PROGRAM

Messe Solemelle à l'usage des Paroisses..............François Couperin
(1668-1733)

Kyrie
I Plein Chant du premiere Kyrie, en taille
II Fugue sur les jeux d'anches
III Récit de Chromhorne
IV Dialogue sur la Trompette et le Chromhorne
V Plein Chant

Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain, Op. 7..............Maurice Duruflé
(b. 1902)

La Nativité du Seigneur..................................Olivier Messiaen
(b. 1908)

I Desseins Éternels
II Dieu parmi nous

INTERMISSION

Prelude and Allegro for Organ and Strings..............Walter Piston
(b. 1894)

Arioso for Organ and Strings, Opus 7..................Paul Lindsley Thomas
(b. 1929)

Toccata Festiva for Organ and Orchestra, Opus 36....Samuel Barber
(b. 1910)

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
presents
PAUL LINDSLEY THOMAS
in
Graduate Organ Recital

Monday, October 25, 1976 - 8:15 p.m. - Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Toccata in a (L. 24) ..................................... Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck
(1562-1621)

Fantasia Chromatica .................................. Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck

Choral Partita: Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan” ..... Johann Pachelbel
(1653-1706)

Trio Sonata V in C (S. 529) .............................. J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

1 Allegro
2 Largo
3 Allegro

INTERMISSION

Fantasia and Fugue in D minor, Opus 135b ............ Max Reger
(1873-1916)

Orgelchorale, Opus 37 .................................. Günter Raphael
(1903-1960)

1 Herzliebster Jesu
2 Jesu meine Freude

Christmas Diptych, Opus 6 ............................ Paul Lindsley Thomas
(b. 1929)

1 Divinum Mysterium
2 Greensleeves

Passacaglia quasi Toccata na Tema B-A-C-H ............. Milos Sokola
(b. -1913)

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

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NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

Paul Lindsley Thomas, organist

in a

Graduate Lecture Recital

Monday, November 20, 1978—8:15 p.m.—Main Auditorium

GREGORIAN CHANT IN THE
ORGAN SYMPHONIES OF WIDOR AND DUPRÉ

Symphonie Gothique, opus 70 ....................... Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)

Final Movement: Moderato
  Allegro
  Moderato
  Andante
  Allegro

Symphonie Romane, opus 73 ......................... Charles-Marie Widor

First Movement: Moderato

Symphonie - Passion, opus 23 ....................... Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)

First Movement: Allegro agitato, ma non troppo vivo
  “Le Monde dans l'attente du Sauveur”

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts
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INTRODUCTION

During the century following the death of Johann Sebastian Bach, music for the organ suffered by the decline of polyphonic composition. In France, the decline both in quality and quantity of organ literature was directly due to the waning power and patronage of the church, and the pre-eminent interest in secular composition, in particular the opera and ballet. The classical French organ school of François Couperin, Nicholas de Grigny, and Pierre Du Mage, in whose music the sacred and secular elements are so delicately balanced, gave way in the latter part of the eighteenth century to an inferior school of clavecinists who transferred the technique and spirit of their instrument to the organ. Félix Danjou attributes this disintegration of true liturgical organ style to the fact that many important Parisian organ posts were held by these clavecinists, who were little interested in the liturgical music of the past.¹ In a recent

doctoral dissertation (1970), Benjamin Van Wye observes that he knows of no plainsong-based organ music in notation by a French composer of the eighteenth century.\(^2\)

However, contemporary accounts support the hypothesis that Gregorian chant was indeed used as a basis for improvised organ music during that period. Charles Burney describes the organ music at Notre Dame on the feast of Corpus Christi thusly:

> The chief use made of it [the organ] was to play over the chant before it was sung, all through the Psalms. Upon inquiring of a young abbé, whom I took with me as a nomenclator, what this was called? C'est prosing, he said. And it should seem as if our word prosing came from this dull and heavy manner of recital.\(^3\)

Burney also mentions visiting the celebrated organist Claude Balbastre during vespers at St. Roch, where he heard organ versets, some of which were based on plainsong, performed in alternatim:

> When the Magnificat was sung, he played likewise between each verse, several minuets, fugues, imitations, and every species of music, even to hunting pieces and jigs, without surprising or offending the congregations, so far as I was able to discover. In prosing, I perceived he performed the chant on the pedals, which he doubled with the lowest part of the left hand, and upon this basis played with learning and fancy. The base [sic] part was written in semibreves, like our old psalmody.


What was sung in the choir, without the organ, was inserted in the Gregorian character.⁴

Also supporting the hypothesis that plainsong was used as a basis for improvised organ music is Dom François Bédos's inclusion of a registration "pour toucher le plain-chant" in the third part of his L'Art du Facteur d'orgues (1766-1770).⁵

The French Revolution was responsible for the closing of the choir schools and the École Royale de Chant, which for hundreds of years had trained France's organists. Many churches were also closed or turned into stables, or Temples of Reason. When Napoleon's banquet celebrating his victory in Egypt was held in St. Sulpice (converted at that time to a Temple of Victory), Armand Couperin's son played dinner music on the organ.⁶

Beginning with the Concordat of 1801, a series of agreements with the Roman Catholic Church reestablished the church's position in France, but not until immeasurable harm had been done to the French organ tradition.

⁴Ibid., p. 24.


CHAPTER I

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FRENCH ORGAN SCHOOL

The first step in the return to liturgical organ style was taken in 1819, when organ playing was added to the curriculum of the Paris Conservatoire. François Benoist (1794-1878), the first organ professor, was highly regarded by his colleagues. In 1827 the musicologist François-Félicien David, himself on the Conservatoire faculty, wrote,

Technically France's instrumentalists leave nothing to desire. . . . The organists alone are deficient. Old Couperin predicted it; but men like Marchand, Calvière, Daquin and Balbèstre, who received so much praise, had only fingers: their exhibitions are not worthy of criticism. Their successors, with the exception of Séjan do not equal them. Today Mr. Benoist . . . is the only one worth mentioning; he can put us in condition to compete with Germany in this regard.¹

Numbered among Benoist's organ students at the Conservatoire were César Franck and Camille Saint-Saëns.

Although Benoist never held a church position and was active as a composer of opera, he did write three short organ

pieces based on plainsong themes and written in cantus firmus style.2

Of substantial influence in the reestablishment of plainsong-based organ music was Alexandre François Boëly (1785-1858), whose personal library contained many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century keyboard works. His acquaintance with Gervais François Couperin and his daughter Céleste-Thérèse, together with the style of many of his own compositions, indicate a thorough knowledge of the Couperin organ masses. Boëly sometimes used the cantus firmus in the soprano voice in shorter note values, thus adding to its melodic significance. He also wrote in the style of the Baroque chorale-prelude, using a plainsong cantus firmus, as in his Pange lingua.

The single most important step in the revival of Gregorian chant for liturgical use was taken in 1832, when members of the Benedictine order took over a deserted priory at Solesmes. They were charged by the Pope to restore the sound traditions of the sacred liturgy. Under their first abbot, Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875), the Solesmes monks studied the oldest and most reliable manuscripts for the purpose of determining the proper performance of the chant. In 1859, Dom Guéranger and Canon Gautier of Le Mans published a Méthode raisonnée de plain chant, which stated:

Plain chant is an inflected recitation in which the notes have an unfixed value, the rhythm of which, essentially free, is that of ordinary speech.  

French organist-composers became acquainted with the work of the important Solesmes' school at the École Niedermeyer (founded in 1853) for the training of church musicians, and at the Schola Cantorum (founded 1894), both schools located in Paris. The Schola Cantorum was an outgrowth of César Franck's organ class, and was founded by Vincent D'Indy and Charles Bordes, both members of that class. Both schools attempted to reform French church music not only by the return to plainsong and to Renaissance polyphony, but also by the cultivation of a contemporary liturgical organ repertoire based on Gregorian chant.

Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911), who was co-founder of the Schola Cantorum and also taught organ there, wrote a significant number of plainsong-based organ compositions, in particular opus 65, L'Organiste liturgique, a ten-part work published from 1884-1899. Guilmant often used harmonies based on the modality of plainsong in his organ compositions, and was the first to incorporate the free rhythm of plainsong as interpreted by the Solesmes school.

The most important impetus to the creation of new organ literature was a joint one brought about by the new symphonic

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organ of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811-1899), and the genius and example of César Franck. Cavaillé-Coll was an acoustician and a skilled engineer much influenced by Spanish organ design. His ancestry in the organ-building profession could be traced as far back as 1700.4 His organs at St. Denis (1841) and St. Vincent de Paul (1851) were remarkable for the completeness of their specifications and the high quality of workmanship, as well as for the introduction of the Barker lever. The use of compressed air to manipulate the mechanism of the instrument made possible organs of unlimited size.5

In 1852, on the organ at St. Vincent de Paul, which had an increased pedal board of two octaves,6 Jacques Lemmens, the Belgian organist, astonished his hearers with his artistry and the quality of his repertoire, while his playing of Bach was a revelation. In the audience were the important organists of Paris, including Franck, Gounod, Widor, Thomas, and the builder Cavaillé-Coll himself. Widor later wrote of that performance:

For Cavaillé-Coll, it was a burst of light. From this master virtuoso he discovered the direction he had


previously lacked—the controlling principles. After that St. Sulpice, Notre Dame, St. Ouen . . . For the artists it was a revelation. They began to write. In half a century France had regained its lost ground: no country possesses a richer literature.7

The first important compositions for the Cavaille-Coll organs were the Six Pièces d’orgue by César Franck, written in 1862 for his instrument at Ste. Clothilde. These were the first distinctive French romantic organ works of symphonic proportions, containing in the Prière, the Final and the first movement of the Grande Pièce Symphonique, the successful adaptation of the sonata-allegro form to organ composition. Writes Norbert Duforucq:

César Franck was a creator in the sense that he opened a domain to the organ which was unexplored until then. Symphonic music found itself introduced to the church by him. This entirely new concept is characterized by a more colored language, richer harmonic aggregations, and a more intimate liaison between the artist and the composer. The work is now a mirror that reflects the joys and torments as well as the ecstasies of the musician.8

Wrote Vincent d'Indy:

In the Grande Pièce Symphonique we find ourselves confronted for the first time in the progress of the master's work, with a true sonata, or rather a symphony, since it is the custom to describe in this way a sonata colored by various timbres. This is the first of all those organ symphonies which have since enriched modern music. . . .9

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While Franck's work is of primary importance in the development of the organ symphony, he did not stand alone. Alexandre Guilmant wrote in 1874 a *Première Sonate in D minor*, subtitled *Symphonie pour l'orgue*. Again, his final *Huitième Sonate* is subtitled *Deuxième Symphonie*. There is no doubt of their symphonic dimensions and intention. However, it is Charles Marie Widor who is today regarded as the inventor and principal developer of the French organ symphony.
CHAPTER II

CHARLES MARIE WIDOR

Charles Marie Widor was born in Lyons, France, on February 24. Dufourcq\(^1\) and Baker's Biographical Dictionary\(^2\) give 1844 as the year of his birth, while Cellier\(^3\) and Henderson\(^4\) give 1845. From Lyons, he went to Brussels to study organ with Jacques Lemmens, himself a pupil of the German organist Adolphe Hesse, whose musical lineage could be traced all the way back to the Leipzig Cantor, J. S. Bach.\(^5\) From Lemmens, Widor learned the German tradition of organ playing, particularly the use of the full pedal keyboard. In 1869, at the age of twenty-five, he was appointed to the position of Organist du Grand Orgue at Saint Sulpice in Paris, where for more than sixty years he presided over the magnificent

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\(^1\)Norbert Dufourcq, La Musique d'Orgue Française de Jehan Titelouze à Jehan Alain (Paris, 1949), p. 137.


\(^3\)Alexandre Cellier and Henri Bachelin, L'Orgue (Paris, 1933), p. 190.

\(^4\)A. M. Henderson, "Widor and His Organ Class," The Musical Times, LXXVIII (April, 1937), 344.

\(^5\)Ibid. The succession is from Bach to Kittel (1732-1809), Rinck (1770-1846), Hesse (1809-1863), Lemmens (1823-1881).
Cavaillé-Coll organ until three years before his death in 1937.

In 1890 he succeeded César Franck as professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire. In 1896 he relinquished this position to Alexandre Guilmant, becoming instead professor of counterpoint, fugue, and composition. Although Widor's immediate fame was as a performer and later as a composer, as a teacher he exercised considerable influence over future generations of organists and composers, including Louis Vierne and Marcel Dupré, as well as Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, Albert Schweitzer, and Nadia Boulanger.

Widor is best remembered today as the composer of ten symphonies for organ. In 1872 the French publisher J. Hamelle issued the *Symphonies*, Opus 13 (Nos. 1-4); in 1887, the *Symphonies*, Opus 42 (Nos. 5-8); and in 1900 the *Symphonie Romane*, Opus 73. B. Schotts Söhne published the *Symphonie Gothique*, Opus 70, in 1894.6

Except for selected movements from the organ symphonies, Widor's vast output is virtually unknown today. In his own day, his reputation and prestige were very great, akin to those enjoyed by Camille Saint-Saëns, who himself occupied an important organ post in Paris. In fact, when Widor became the Organiste du Grand Orgue of St. Sulpice in 1869, Cesar Franck

was at Ste. Clothilde, Alexander Guilmant at La Trinité, Eugène Gigout at St. Augustin, and Camille Saint-Saëns was at La Madeleine, an impressive group of organists for any city. These men and their pupils made Paris the cynosure of the organ-playing world and established the dynasty of the modern French organ school. In this remarkable nineteenth-century renaissance of organ building, composition, and playing, Widor was a central motivating force.

In his ten symphonies for organ, Widor was the first to use the designation and to exploit its possibilities. These works are "symphonic" by virtue of the manner in which Widor uses the tonal resources of the Cavaillé-Coll organ rather than by their adherence to traditional forms and procedures associated with the orchestral symphony. In this light, the term "symphony" is somewhat misleading. Only the final two symphonies have the overall four-movement form. Three symphonies have five movements (Nos. III, V, and VI), three have six (Nos. II, IV, VII), and two have seven movements (Nos. I and VIII). The internal forms of individual movements not only employ the traditional symphonic forms, such as marches, minuets, scherzos, and adagios, but also the traditional forms of organ music: toccatas, fugues, canons, and a passacaglia as well.

The organ symphonies of Widor, like their French orchestral counterparts in the symphonies of Berlioz, Bizet, and Saint-Saëns, typically revolve around the manipulation of
color, dynamics, and sonority, rather than following the formal structures of German symphonic form. Widor had at his disposal at St. Sulpice one of the finest Cavaillé-Coll organs in France, an instrument of five manuals, pedal, and a hundred stops, affording a large assortment of colors and combinations of colors. Usually Widor registers his movements in broad terms, indicating pitches and family of tones (for example, foundation stops or reeds), relying upon changes of manual to change color.\(^7\) This mixture of tonal colors graduated with subtle nuance is most typical of the symphonies.

Form in the overall sense is derived from the juxtaposition of strongly contrasting movements, which use a variety of rhythm, color, dynamic level, form, technique, and mood to achieve this contrast. Widor balances the duration of individual movements, curtailing slow movements, for instance, so they are not longer than faster movements.

While Widor's harmonic vocabulary is essentially conservative for the time, an interesting feature is his tendency to link chords by common tone rather than by root progression.\(^8\) He enriches his vocabulary with all available diatonic and chromatic non-harmonic tones, and tends to emphasize mediant and submediant chords. Irregular resolutions of dominant-seventh and augmented-sixth chords are also featured.\(^9\)

In the movements which utilize Gregorian Chant (seven in all), Widor uses modality, but within a tonal framework. Of

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 25. \(^8\)Ibid., p. 39. \(^9\)Ibid., p. 48.
these seven movements, six are found in the last two symphonies, the Gothique and the Romane. In his revision of the Second Symphony published by Hamelle in 1901, Widor substituted a movement based on the Salve Regina (Liber Usualis, p. 276) (Figure 1), using it to replace a vigorous scherzo in E major which is still found in the Marks edition. Widor

![Salve Regina](https://example.com/salve-regina.png)

Fig. 1—Salve Regina

sets the entire length of the cantus firmus in chorale-prelude style, the only example of its kind to be found in the symphonies. Since he gives each phrase of the chant its own setting, freely altering the accompaniment, the movement seems to lack the internal continuity of its Baroque counterpart.

The first eight symphonies are intended as virtuoso works for the organ. There is little to indicate that they might be used in the liturgical service, although we know that they were indeed so used. In his final two symphonies for organ, the Gothique and the Romane, Widor's style undergoes interesting changes. The harmonic language is significantly more chromatic, with unexpected modulations, and accompaniment figuration is often less clear-cut and more blurred, an impressionistic device. Most significantly of all, liturgical influences engendered by the Solesmes school and by the
liturgical revival induced Widor to quote Gregorian chant in his last two symphonies, as well as to revise the Second Symphony as mentioned earlier.

In the Symphonie Gothique, Widor begins his quest for a liturgical style, and in his final masterpiece, the Symphonie Romane, Widor achieves a splendid synthesis of the liturgical and concert styles. The Gothique and Romane symphonies are inscribed to two of the most beautiful churches in France, which also happen to possess outstanding examples of the Cavaillé-Coll organ: Saint-Ouen, in Rouen, and Saint-Sernin, in Toulouse. The Symphonie Gothique was composed by Widor for the opening ceremony after the rebuilding of the organ at Saint Ouen, and was given its premiere performance by him at this ceremony. It is a tone picture of his impressions of the monumental Gothic edifice.\(^\text{10}\)

Immediately apparent in the opening movement is the chromaticism and dissonance, the improvisational style, the presence of a second shorter rhythmical motif which is later combined with the first theme, sudden and remote modulations, and other evidences of a more advanced style, indicating Widor's awareness of the musical revolution going on around him. The second movement is a beautiful example of nineteenth-century cantilena writing. The third movement, written in

\(^{10}\)Marcel Dupré, "Program Notes" for Westminster Recording XWN 18871 of Widor Symphonies Nos. 5 and 9, played by Marcel Dupré on the Cavaillé-Coll organ at St. Sulpice.
fugal style in vigorous 6/8 meter, functions as a symphonic scherzo. The Christmas plainsong *Puer Natus Est* (L.U., p. 408) is introduced in long notes in the pedal. (See Figure 2).

![Figure 2—Christmas plainsong, Puer Natus Est](image)

The same Gregorian melody is used again in the final movement, introducing an element of cyclic form. The final movement is a set of six variations on the plainsong and on Widor's counter-melody, ending with a brilliant toccata utilizing both themes. Figure 3 is the beginning of the final movement of the *Symphonie Gothique*, which starts with the plainsong theme stated in the soprano voice of a four-part harmonic setting.

![Figure 3—Widor, Symphonie Gothique, Final Movement, measures 1-12](image)
The first variation begins with the countersubject in the soprano; the plainsong melody then enters in the alto as a cantus firmus. (See Figure 4.)

![Figure 4 - Widor, Symphonie Gothique, Final Movement, (Var. I), measures 13-24.]

Variation 1 ends with a restatement of the countersubject.

In Variation 2 the plainsong theme is stated in the soprano voice in whole notes in cantus firmus style, with a canon in the bass at the interval of three octaves and a two-voice accompaniment in the left hand. (See Figure 5.)
Variation 2 ends with a statement of the countersubject.

The beginning of Variation 3 is illustrated in Figure 6. This variation is based not upon the plainsong theme, but on the countersubject, which is imitated in canon at the octave and later accompanied first by single and then by double pedal.
In Variation 4 an apparently new melody is a paraphrase of the plainsong theme with additional interpolated notes. (See Figure 7.)
Points of imitation occur between various voice parts, as in measures 128-133. (See Figure 8.)

Fig. 8--Widor, Symphonie Gothique, Final Movement (Var. IV), measures 127-132.

Figure 9 is a part of Variation 5, which is a charming trio with canons at the octave and fifteenth based upon the plainsong theme. It ends with a statement of the countersubject.

Fig. 9--Widor, Symphonie Gothique, Final Movement (Var. V), measures 144-153.
The final variation begins with brilliant sixteenth-note figuration. In measure 184 the countersubject appears, played upon the Choir, as shown in Figure 10.

Fig. 10—Widor, Symphonie Gothique, Final Movement (Var. VI), measures 182-186.
It is restated in measure 199 upon the Great. Beginning with measure 204, a five-note motif based upon the plainsong theme is heard in alternation with a seven-note motif based upon the countersubject, as in Figure 11.

![Figure 11](image)

**Fig. 11—Widor, Symphonie Gothique, Final Movement (Var. VI), measures 205-210.**

Both of these themes are developed. At the climax of the variation, the plainsong theme is stated in octaves upon the pedals, beginning in measure 242, as in Figure 12.
In the coda which begins in measure 265, we hear a final restatement of the countersubject. The movement ends quietly amid short melodic phrases reminiscent of the plainsong theme.

In the *Romane* organ symphony, Widor arrives at a solution to the problem of the unmeasured rhythm of plainsong in organ music, one which demonstrates his awareness of the efforts of Guilmant, the Schola Cantorum, and the Solesmes restoration. While Widor had used plainsong in one movement of the *Second Symphony* (revised edition) and in the final two movements of the *Symphonie Gothique*, he used the chant in
long note values employing the cantus firmus technique. In the Symphonie Romane, however, he discards the conventional treatment. Instead he takes the opening phrase of the Gradual for Easter, Haec dies (L.U., p. 778), and in the free rhythms generally associated with plainsong uses this chant as the generating source of melodic material for three of the four movements. (See Figure 13).

![Fig. 13--The Easter Plainsong, Haec Dies](image)

Widor explains this new procedure in the preface to the Romane Symphony:

The Gothic Symphony is founded on the Christmas hymn Puer Natus Est; the present symphony has for (its) subject the Easter hymn Haec Dies. As in the case with the majority of vocal compositions intended for Petit Choeur, that is to say for four or five voices grouped, Puer Natus Est is symmetrical in form and of massive construction; it lends itself admirably to polyphonic treatment; it is an admirable subject for development. Haec Dies is of totally different character; a graceful arabesque illustrating a text of several words, about ten notes to each syllable; it presents a vocal phrase as difficult to fasten upon as the song of a bird: a sort of pedal-point adapted to an executant exempt from all rule. The only mode of fixing on the auditor's ear so undefined a motive is to repeat it constantly.\(^1\)

\(^{11}\)Charles Marie Widor, Symphonie Romane (Paris, 1980).
These solutions imposed by Widor make his final symphony unlike any of his previous works, indeed unlike any plainsong-based French music before it. It has a coherence and unity derived from its use of the Gregorian chant Haec Dies for three of its four movements. Although Widor did not mention it in his preface, the third movement of the symphony is based on Victimae paschali (L.U., p. 780), the sequence for Easter Day. (See Figure 14.)

![Figure 14—Victimae paschali, sequence for Easter Day](image)

In the first movement one is aware of the improvisational style, the chromaticism, the remote modulations, and pronounced dissonance. In addition there is considerably greater rhythmic freedom, including the simultaneous employment of different meters, as well as frequent changes in tempo and meter. There is also a tendency to use accompanying figuration for its blurring effect rather than for its clarity—an impressionistic device which one finds frequently in the works of Vierne. The entire movement, as Widor has suggested in the preface, is propelled by the constant reiteration of the plainsong theme Haec Dies in its numerous guises of infinite variety. The plainsong theme is first stated in measure 2 and repeated twice with melodic variation. (See Figure 15.)
Fig. 15—Widor, Symphonie Romane, First Movement, measures 1-5.

In measure 12 the first notes of the theme (a) are stated in the pedal. (See Figure 16.)

Fig. 16—Widor, Symphonie Romane, First Movement, measures 11-14.
The full theme is stated again at measure 17, and repeated. Beginning in measure 23, notes 1-15 (part b) of the plainsong theme are repeated and developed above a basso ostinato. (See Figure 17.)

Fig. 17—Widor, Symphonie Romane, First Movement, measures 21-24.
The full theme is again stated beginning in measure 31. In measure 37 a change of meter (12/8) and mood lead to a restatement of the portion of the theme. The agitated mood leads to a climax in which the full theme is stated in octaves in the pedal, beginning in measure 46. (See Figure 18).

Fig. 18—Widor, Symphonie Romane, First Movement, measures 46-49.
The agitated mood continues and finally begins to subside. The third section of the movement begins with measure 64, where the key returns to D major. Part b of the plainsong theme is repeated and developed over a basso ostinato, accompanied by an undulating figuration in the left hand. (See Figure 19.)

Fig. 19—Widor, Symphonie Romane, First Movement, measures 62-65.

The theme and the ostinato become increasingly fragmented, while the figuration gradually comes to a rest on the tonic chord.
The second movement is one of the most beautiful and lengthy examples of Widor's gift for cantilena writing. It is in a large three-part (ABA) form. The main theme is a harmonized setting of the first two phrases of the *Haec Dies* plainsong. (See Figure 20.) A melismatic counter-melody is derived from the plainsong theme, and the devices of ostinato and scintillating accompaniment figuration are used.

![Fig. 20—Widor, Symphonie Romane, Second Movement, measures 1-4.](image-url)
The third movement is more introspective, again in ABA form. While the themes are of Widor's own invention and no use of the Haec Dies plainsong is made, there are three references to Victimae paschali, one of which is shown in Figure 21.

Fig. 21—Widor, Symphonie Romane, Third Movement, measures 10-15.
The final movement is a splendid rhapsody on the *Haec Dies* theme, with an opening announcement of six measures in one voice (Figure 22), which is gradually expanded to four voices.

![Sheet music](image)

Fig. 22—Widor, *Symphonie Romane*, Final Movement, measures 1-5.

In measure 19 the figuration is repeated an octave lower, this time to chordal accompaniment. In measure 32 the second phrase of *Haec Dies* appears for the first time, in a subordinate key. An extended development takes place until measure 72, when the opening figuration returns in the original key, combined with the first phrase of the *Haec Dies*. (See Figure 23.)
The second phrase then follows in the same key as the first. An extended Coda section which begins with brilliant figuration becomes a triumphant Andante quasi adagio which subsides in a gradual relaxation of tension. A brief reference to the opening of the symphony is made, and the work ends in a beautiful tranquility. This final symphony of Widor combines a splendid synthesis of liturgical organ music based on a thorough knowledge and appreciation of the plainsong restoration, the resources of the Cavaille-Coll organ, and the techniques of the modern French symphonic style of organ music which he developed along with César Franck. It is
probably Widor's greatest and least appreciated work, but its significance goes far beyond its few performances today, because it represents the point of departure for later composers, in particular Widor's pupils, Charles Tournemire and Marcel Dupré.

In 1903, Pope Pius X promulgated the Motu Proprio, which has been a dominant factor in shaping the theory and practice of twentieth-century Catholic church music. It read in part,

Gregorian chant has always been regarded as the supreme model for sacred music, so that it is fully legitimate to lay down the following rule: the more closely a composition for church approaches in its movement, inspiration and savor the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes; and the more out of harmony it is with the supreme model, the less worthy it is of the temple.  

In their organ compositions employing plainsong, Widor and Guilmant had clearly anticipated this significant church document which had such great influence on those that followed in their paths.

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CHAPTER III

MARCEL DUPRÉ

Marcel Dupré was born in Rouen on May 3, 1886. Both his maternal and paternal grandfathers were associated with music in the Rouen churches, while his father was organist of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Elbeuf, a town near Rouen. In 1890, when Widor played the inaugural recital of the Cavaillé-Coll organ at St. Ouen, the Dupré family, including young Marcel, attended.¹ At seven, the boy began music study with his father, who devoted an hour every day to his lesson. The father was amazed to find how quickly young Marcel memorized, a trait he retained throughout his life.² At the age of eight he played his first recital at his father's church in Elbeuf. Louis Vierne often recounted the story of his first meeting with Dupré. In the summer of 1896, he happened to attend the small country church of St. Valery-en-Caux expecting to hear the inadequate playing of a country organist. Instead, he heard a well-played service which


included the rendition of a piece of Bach, and an improvisation. Following the service, Vierne went to the stairs which led to the organ loft and there met a boy of ten, wearing a sailor suit, descending the stairs. When Vierne asked the boy to take him to the organist of the service, the young Dupré informed him that he was that organist.\(^3\)

In 1898, Dupré, then twelve, was appointed organist of St. Vivien in Rouen and began organ study with Alexandre Guilmant, which he continued for ten years. Honors and distinctions came to the young Dupré in quick succession. In 1905 he won first prize in organ, and became Widor's assistant at St. Sulpice, in 1909 he won first prize in fugue (Widor's class), and in 1914 won the coveted Prix de Rome, although the outbreak of the war prevented him from actually going to Rome for study.\(^4\) From 1916 through 1920, he was deputy organist at Notre Dame during Vierne's illness, and stepped down upon Vierne's return. It was in 1920 that Dupré established his reputation by playing from memory the entire organ works of Bach in a series of ten recitals at the Paris Conservatoire.\(^5\) In 1921 he made his first North American recital tour, an outstanding success which led

\(^3\) Louis Vierne, "Reminiscences," The Diapason, XXX (April, 1939), 8.


to countless return engagements in later years. In 1926 Dupré was appointed professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire, and in 1934 he succeeded his old master Widor as organist of St. Sulpice, at which post he remained until his death in 1971.

As organist and teacher, Dupré exercised more influence than any other organist of his day; many of the most distinguished French and American organists of our time studied with him. Possessing an extraordinary organ technique as well as a highly musical and disciplined intellect, Dupré was without peer as an improvisor. There is little doubt that much of his organ composition owes its origin to this genius for improvisation. As a composer, he wrote the bulk of his work for the organ, twenty-six opus numbers in all, including two organ symphonies, Opus 23 and 26.6 He also wrote a Symphony in G minor for Organ and Orchestra, Opus 25, and a Concerto in E minor for Organ and Orchestra, Opus 31, as well as a number of works for chorus, for piano, and for voice. He transcribed sixteen organ concertos by Handel for organ solo, edited the organ works of J. S. Bach, Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt, Cesar Franck, and Alexander Glazunov,7 and wrote a number of educational works on improvisation, counterpoint, and fugue.8

7 Ibid., pp. 597-601. 8 Ibid., pp. 592-596.
In his use of form, Dupré was far more classical in his tastes, and far less experimental than was Widor. In his harmonic language, as well as in his use of rhythm and meter, Dupré exhibited a thorough knowledge of twentieth-century compositional technique. While Widor's style was influenced by Bach, Schumann, and later on by Franck, Dupré's work was influenced by the possibilities of his own facile technique and the innovations of his contemporaries, such as Stravinsky and Les Six. As in Widor's music, Dupré wrote in concert or symphonic style, rather than in liturgical or classical organ style. His music tends to be difficult technically except where it has a pedagogical intention, such as in the Seventy-nine Chorales or in *Le Tombeau de Titelouze*.

The circumstances surrounding the composition of his first organ symphony, known as the *Passion Symphony* (Opus 23), are significant. In 1921, Dupré had accepted the invitation of Rodman Wanamaker to play a series of concerts on the large organs which had been installed in the Wanamaker department stores in New York and Philadelphia. An important feature at the conclusion of these recitals was to be an improvisation on themes submitted at that moment. The themes submitted by local organists and other musicians at the recital December 8, 1921, at Wanamaker's Philadelphia store included

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9 For a description of these organs read Pagett, "Music of Dupré," pp. 24-29.

the following Gregorian chants: the Christmas Vesper humn Jesu Redemptor Omnium (Liber Usualis, p. 365), the Sequence hymn Stabat Mater Dolorosa, (Liber Usualis, p. 1424), the hymn for the Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament Adoro te devote (Liber Usualis, p. 1855), as well as the popular (non-Gregorian) Christmas hymn Adeste Fidelis. Dupré later reminisced about this concert:

On the 8th of December 1921, I gave a recital in Philadelphia on the largest organ in the world, the Wanamaker organ comprising 450 ranks. Among the themes proposed by the musicians of that city for an improvisation, four themes seemed to me to be a synthesis of the life and passion of Christ. I thought immediately of a plan for a symphony in four movements, which I improvised and later wrote down in the years 1923 and 1924.11

Dupré premiered the completed work on the new Henry Willis organ in Westminster Cathedral in London, 1924.12

The Symphonie-Passion is a four-movement large-scale programmatic work. The first two movements, "Le Monde dans l'attente du Sauveur" and "Nativité," portray the Advent of birth of Jesus, while the "Crucifixion" and "Résurrection" movements deal with those events in Christ's life. The work opens in D minor and ends in D major, with the middle movements in F# major and F minor.

11 Rollin Smith, "Program Notes" for Repertoire Recording Society recording of "Dupré in the 20's: Vol. 1," played by Rollin Smith on the M. P. Moller organ at Saint George's Church, New York City.

The opening movement is in classical sonata-allegro form. The principal theme consists of three short rhythmical motifs stated in measures 2, 5, and 7. (See Figure 24.)

The constantly changing and uneven rhythm, the shifting harmonies and irregular phrase lengths all suggest restlessness and instability. The first 76 measures are a development of these motifs and rhythmic patterns, which build to a great climax in measures 72-76. (See Figure 25.)
In measure 78, the first twelve notes of the Gregorian plainsong Jesu Redemptor Omnium are introduced in F major, serving as the movement's second themes. (See Figure 26.)
Statements of the *incipit* beginning on various degrees of the scale are treated canonically. At measure 103, rhythmical figuration reminiscent of the principal theme brings the exposition to a close. The development section, which is concerned with the rhythms and motives of the principal theme, begins in measure 113. (See Figure 27.)

Fig. 27--Dupré, *Symphonie-Passion*, First Movement, measures 111-119.
A sequential repetition of this section starts in measure 139 and builds to an exciting climax, bringing the development section to an end. The recapitulation begins in measure 170, where the principal theme returns in d minor, more vigorous and agitated than ever. (See Figure 28.)

Fig. 28—Dupré, Symphonie-Passion, First Movement, measures 170-175.

Beginning in measure 190, the first four notes of the plainsong theme are heard and repeated sequentially with increasingly greater urgency. In measure 211 the second theme (Jesu Redemptor Omnium) appears in D major, and is treated in canon at the twenty-second. (See Figure 29.)
The canon is repeated sequentially, leading at measure 232 to a brilliant coda of crashing chords utilizing the first four notes of the chant. (See Figure 30.) Three long-held dissonant chords lead to the final resolution in the tonic.

The second movement, entitled "Nativité," is in a large three-part form, as are the other two remaining movements. The first section is a "lullaby," followed by a "march of the shepherds and kings" leading to an "adoration" section where the Christmas hymn, *Adeste Fidelis*, is quoted and combined with the rocking motif of the "lullaby." In the third movement, the first section depicts the "march to Calvary."
Fig. 30—Dupré, Symphonie-Passion, First Movement, measures 230-236.

A relatively short recitative passage indicates the "crucifixion" itself and leads to the "descent from the cross," which briefly quotes the Stabat Mater Dolorosa. (See Figure 31.)

Fig. 31—Dupré, Symphonie-Passion, Third Movement, measures 90-97.
The final movement of the *Symphonie-Passion* is a long and exciting toccata. It is based on the Gregorian chant *Adoro te devote*, the hymn by St. Thomas Aquinas in honor of the Blessed Sacrament (*Liber Usualis*, p. 1855), which is used as a cantus firmus stated nine times in various voice parts, beginning in the pedal. The principal accompaniment is in a flowing eight-note figuration. (See Figure 32.)

The middle section, intended as a buildup for the concluding section, introduces the reeds, while the shifting tonality creates a feeling of restlessness. In the concluding section, where the wonderfully created sonorities lie conveniently under the hands, the chant is stated first by itself, then
in canon (Figure 33), and finally in a series of overlapping imitations of the incipit. It ends in large, crashing quarter-note chords reminiscent of the first movement. (See Figure 34.) The *Symphonie-Passion* is a work of great power and beauty, and combines the beautiful Gregorian melodies with religious drama. It is one of Dupré's most widely-known and effective large-scale works for organ.

Dupré's *Deuxième Symphonie* is an impressive three-movement work which is virtually unknown to organists and audience alike. It contains no Gregorian melodies and is written in the chromatic but tonal style of Dupré's early period, to which all of his best known works belong. These
include the two organ symphonies, The Three Preludes and Fugues, Opus 7, the Variations on a Noel, Opus 20, the Suite Brétonne, Opus 21, and The Stations of the Cross, Opus 29. In Dupré's middle and late organ works, the harmonic style becomes even more chromatic, while the texture tends to be more sparse and neoclassic. Dupré wrote no more organ symphonies, although he used Gregorian chant quite extensively in some of his later organ works.

While following the example of Widor in using Gregorian chant in the organ symphony, Dupré seems to adopt the pattern set in the Symphonie Gothique rather than that of the
Symphonie Romane. Dupré quotes and develops the chant themes, but fits them into his own forms, with his own motifs sharing equal prominence. By way of contrast, in Widor's Symphonie Romane the whole of the work seems germinated from the kernel of Gregorian chant, which pervades the entire piece both melodically and rhythmically.

Charles Tournemire's L'Orgue Mystique, a magnificent cycle of fifty-one organ suites for the church year, while lying outside the scope of this paper, is more closely related to the spirit of Widor's example, as set in the Symphonie Romane, than are the works of Dupré. Jean Langlais and Maurice Duruflé must also be mentioned, along with Tournemire, as co-creators of a significant body of organ literature in which Gregorian chant is utilized, although neither of them chose to do this in the medium of the organ symphony. To this day, the two organistes du grande orgue de St. Sulpice, the grand old man of the French organ school and his brilliant protégé, remain the leading exponents of the peculiar and unique cross-fertilization of two important nineteenth-century developments: the organ symphony and the rediscovery and growing liturgical use of Gregorian chant.
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