

**THE ORGAN SYMPHONIES OF WIDOR (1844-1937) AND THE
CAVAILLÉ-COLL ORGAN OF SAINT-SULPICE**

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation for the study

The writer has always had a very keen interest in the music of the French Organ School of the 17th century up to the 20th century. Organ tutoring under Professor Deon Lamprecht and Professor Wim Viljoen developed a further and greater interest in this school of organ playing. An in-depth study and playing of works of composers like François Couperin, Daquin, Marchand, Franck, Widor, Dupré and Messiaen also inspired the writer to do a study on a specific composer of this country, namely Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937).

The contribution of Widor to the French Organ School of the 19th and 20th centuries is monumental. Widor had a great influence on many composers such as Louis Vierne (1870-1934) and Marcel Dupré (1886-1971) to name but a few, especially in the field of the Organ Symphony, the remarkable genre of organ music of which he was the creator.

The more the writer reads, listens and plays the organ works of Widor, the greater the gap and shortage of reading material on the life and/or works of this virtuoso organist and composer becomes evident. This study is a small attempt in trying to close and narrow this vacuum.

1.2 Aim and purpose of the study

It is the aim and purpose of the study to:

- provide an overall view on the life, influences and organ works of Widor;

- help contribute to the ever growing interest, awareness and promotion of Widor's music;
- shed new light on Widor's accomplishments as organist, composer and teacher which was under so much undeserved obscurity for such a long time.

1.3 Research method

For this thesis, a survey was made of the life and works of Widor. To this aim, a study has been made of the literature on the following:

- important figures such as Cavallé-Coll, Lemmens and others to enlighten the roles of these persons in Widor's life;
- historical instruments on which Widor played and the influence thereof on his organ works.

An analysis of the scores of the Organ Symphonies has been made to highlight some prominent characteristics of these works and also the discussing of the performing and interpretation thereof. The latest edition of Widor's organ symphonies (Dover Publications 1991) were used for analysis.

The writer listened to recordings of Widor's organ works performed by the following artists:

- Marie-Claire Alain (1981 & 1992)
- Marcel Dupré (1957)
- David Hill (1985)
- Michael Murray (1984)
- Wolfgang Rübsam (1988)

1.4 Sources

Written material on Widor is either very scarce or very difficult to obtain. The astonishing thing is that only two persons have ever written monographs on him.

The only two books of such nature that are known to the writer are a biography by

Andrew Thomson, *The Life and Times of Charles-Marie Widor* (1987), and a doctoral thesis, *The Life and Work of Charles-Marie Widor* (1985), by John Richard Near.

Scores and excerpts from the Organ Symphonies are those by Dover Publications (New York, 1991). It is compiled in two volumes, which are Symphonies I-V (Series I) and Symphonies I-VIII, *Symphonie Gothique* and *Symphonie Romane* (Series II).

A few short articles have been consulted which give but a brief history on the life and works of Widor.

Books such as biographies on César Franck (1822-1890) by Vallas (1951) and Smith (1983) were also used seeing that he lived and worked in the same era as Widor, and that the latter's name is frequently mentioned in these books.

The writer also consulted books on the organ's development through the centuries and their construction to help illustrate the type of organ which Widor and his contemporaries knew and used.

1.5 Presentation of the script

This script is divided into the following chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: A concise biography on Widor.
- Chapter 3: A brief discussion on the life and influence of Cavaillé-Coll.
- Chapter 4: A general history and discussion of the organ of Saint-Sulpice.
- Chapter 5: The Organ Symphonies - a short and general discussion as well as guidelines to the performing and interpretation thereof.
- Chapter 6: Conclusion
- Appendix A: A catalogue of Widor's works - this includes all his published works, some of which are not known to the public in general.
- Appendix B: The titles and keys of the movements of the Organ Symphonies.

1.6 Final aim of the study

This thesis is not a style-analysis of any kind, but should rather be viewed as a general study of Widor concerning him as an organist and composer. Thus it is not the intention of the writer to replace the growing number of biographies, articles and other reading material available whereby the reader's knowledge of Widor can be increased further.

CHAPTER 2

WIDOR: A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY

Charles-Marie-Jean-Albert Widor was born on 21 February 1844 in Lyon, France. His origins were Hungarian on his father's side, François Charles, who was organist of Saint-François in Lyon. Widor's father was an organist of considerable ability and his reputation reached the ears of important figures such as the organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll (1811-1899). The latter stated the following concerning Charles-Marie's father (Thomson 1987: 5):

We know M. Widor ... who is both extremely talented as a musician and possesses extensive knowledge of the theory and practice of organ building.

It is thus inevitable to state that Charles-Marie received his first music lessons from his father. In a letter dated 8 August 1930 Widor himself made the following statement (Near 1993: 46):

I was scarcely four years old when my father put me at the keyboards of the organ for the first time, thus beginning my musical education.

At the age of eleven, Widor was sent to a secondary school named the Collège Ampère de Lyon, where he played the organ on Sundays, during mass and vespers. Here he was also awarded a scholarship which he easily obtained (Near 1993: 46).

Cavallé-Coll, an old friend of the family, recommended that the young Widor continue his studies under the Belgian organist Jacques-Nicholas Lemmens (1823-1881), who was teaching in Brussels at the time (Thomson 1987:6). After Widor passed his Baccalaureat in Classics, Cavallé-Coll's plan was set in motion. As a French national, Widor was not

eligible to enrol at the Brussels Conservatoire, but Lemmens agreed to accept him as a private pupil (Thomson 1987: 7).

In Brussels, Widor also studied composition privately with François Féti s (1784-1871), who was the Director of the Brussels Conservatoire. Under the guidance of Féti s, Widor received a thorough training in the basic principles and inner dynamics of composition (Kooiman 1995: 56; Thomson 1987: 7).

The year of study in Brussels seemed to have been a very important and deciding era in Widor's life and he had great admiration for his teachers (Near 1993: 47):

When my studies were finished, my father, who was very close to Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, decided on the advice of the latter, to send me to perfect my musical studies in Brussels with two illustrious masters, who were [Cavaillé-Coll's] friends: one professor of organ, was Lemmens, and the other professor of composition and director of the Conservatory, was Féti s. I was to stay in Brussels a year, from 1862 to 1863. The year of study that determined my career.

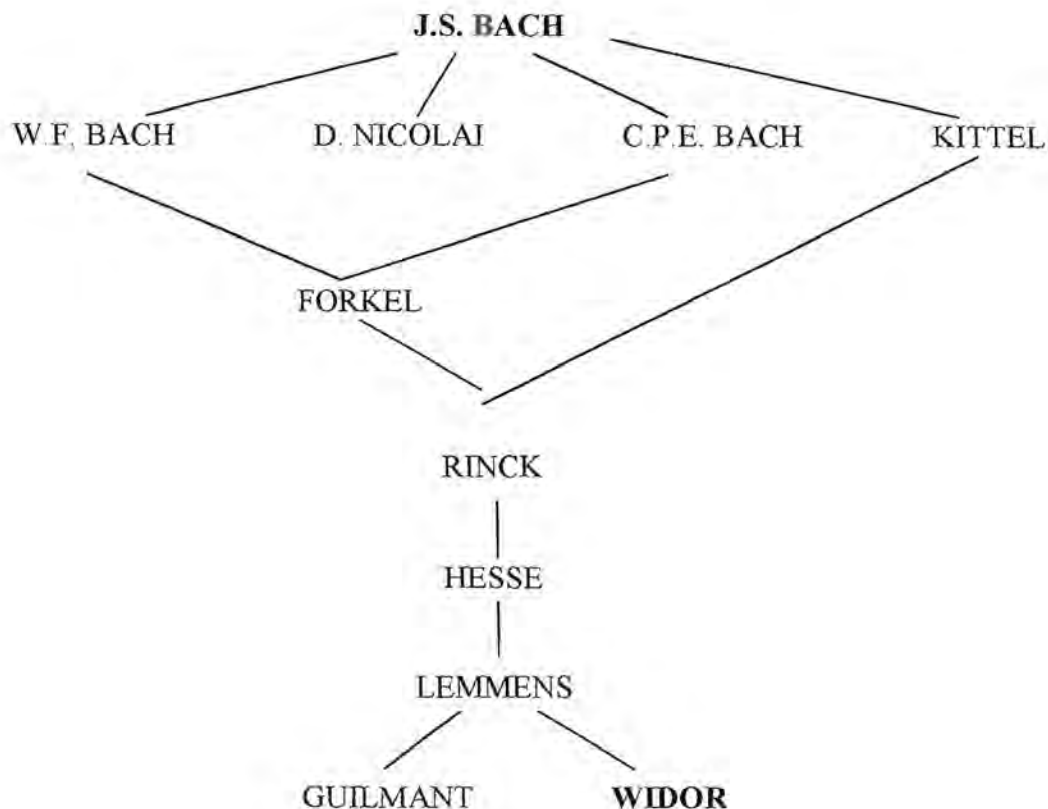
At the conclusion of his studies, Widor left Brussels bursting with confidence and ready to demonstrate the fruits of his dedicated months of study and practice.

Thomson (1987:9) describes Widor's return to France as follows: "Widor returned to Lyon to take over the position of organist of Saint-François from his father, who was doubtless proud to give way to his gifted son." After his return to Lyon, Widor was strongly promoted by Cavaillé-Coll. As a result he was one of the organists who played at many inaugural concerts on Cavaillé-Coll's new organs such as that at Notre Dame de Paris in 1868, and in 1870 at the monumental organ of Saint-Sulpice, where he later became organist at the age of twenty-six (Kooiman 1995:60). He held this post for the next 64 years where he quickly acquired the reputation of a virtuoso, displaying an exceptional pedal technique and a speckless articulation.

Widor became a lieutenant in the Artillery during the Franco-Prussian War, in the beginning of the 1870s. At the end of this siege, Widor's service in the military ended. It was during this period that he started working on the four *Symphonies pour orgue*, Op. 13 (Near 1993: 50-51).

Upon the death of César Franck in 1890, Widor was appointed professor of organ and improvisation at the Paris Conservatory (Vallas 1951: 253). Thus, Widor acquired the leadership of France's official organ instruction, where he was active from 1890-1896.

Widor proclaimed himself to be in a direct line of descendance from Bach. The line of descent given by the German musicologist-organist Hans Klotz in the magazine *Musica Sacra* in March/April of 1988 is a considerable refinement of the pedigrees given by Widor and his pupil Dupré (Kooiman 1995: 60):



Widor's extraordinary technical prowess and radical but sound pedagogical training won him universal admiration. In 1937, Louis Vierne (1870-1937), Widor's prize student, estimated that Widor's greatest legacy was to create the most brilliant school of organists in the world in this period.

The better-known musicians that came out of Widor's classes in these years include the following (Near 1993: 54):

- Henri Busser (1872-1973)
- Gabriel Dupont (1878-1914)
- Henri Libert (1869-1937)
- Henri Mulet (1878-1967)
- Charles Quef (1873-1931)
- Charles Tournemire (1870-1937)

As professor of Composition, Widor taught and directed the development of many composers, the better-known being (Near 1993: 54)

- Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)
- Arthur Honegger (1892-1955)
- Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)
- Edgard Varèse (1883-1965)

Widor retired from this professorship on 7 October 1927, after 31 years (Thomson 1987: 87).

During the last 37 years of his life, marking the beginning of the 20th century, Widor devoted less time to composition, though revision of his music seemed always to occupy him. At the age of 70 he was elected as one of the "immortal" members of the Institute of France in 1914.

In the same year he became perpetual secretary of the Academy of Fine Arts. He founded and co-directed the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau in 1921 and he established educational branches of the Academy of Fine Arts in London and Madrid. He had survived more transitions in French government, more wars, crises and changes in the social fabric than any other French musician in history (Near 1993: 55). Despite advancing years, Widor continued to take his composition class at the Conservatoire which was then under the guidance of Paul Dukas.

Writing books also absorbed Widor's energy. In 1923 he had brought out his little *Initiation musicale*, which filled an important gap in French education, namely its underdevelopment of popular music appreciation. As Thomson (1987: 89) states clearly: "He revels in the broad sweeps of musical history from ancient times, yet expressing himself with great concision." He also, in collaboration with Albert Schweitzer, edited the complete organ works of Bach in eight volumes.

Widor, in all humbleness, had become a pillar of French civilization. Near (1993: 55) mentions a few reasons why:

He attained the highest rank of grand-officer in the French Legion of Honor; he was elected honorary member of foreign academies and orders all over Europe; and the Municipal Council of Paris bestowed upon him its highest tribute, the 'Grande Medaille d'or'.

On the last Sunday of 1933, Widor tendered his resignation as organist of Saint-Sulpice. Two farewell concerts, at Saint-Sulpice on 19 April and the Salle Erard on 9 May 1934, marked the end of his professional career. (Thomson 1987: 92; Near 1993: 56.)

Widor passed away on Friday 12 March 1937 as an important figure in the world of music. Not only did he make a great impression on the musical societies of his day, but also earned admiration from all over Europe and the world. Near (1993: 56) states in his conclusion:

Widor could have no regrets; he left a legacy rich in accomplishment and deed. His great fame had spread all over the European continent and beyond: organist and improviser par excellence, venerable teacher of organ and composition, celebrated composer, benevolent and foresighted administrator. He had commanded the respect of great men: musicians, litterateurs, artists, politicians, the socially elite, and royalty.

CHAPTER 3

CAVAILLÉ-COLL (1811-1899)

3.1 A short history

At the centre of French organ music in the 19th century stands the work of the organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll (1811-1899). His extraordinary combination of mechanical genius and artistic vision made possible the achievements of César Franck, Charles-Marie Widor and their school (Thomson 1987: 1).

Cavallé-Coll was born on 4 February 1811 in Toulouse and was a descendant from a family of organ builders. Already at the time of his youth, he showed a keen interest in Mathematics, Physics and Engineering. He later moved to Paris where he made his début by winning a competition to rebuild the Clicquot-Lefèvre organ in the Abbaye de Saint-Denis, completing it in 1841 (Thomson 1987: 1). This was also the first organ to be built with mechanical-pneumatic action which made increased windpressure possible.

Disposition of the Saint-Denis organ (1841)

Bombarde

Bourdon	16'
Bourdon	8'
Flûte	8'
Prestant	4'
Quinte	$2\frac{2}{3}'$
Doublette	2'

Grand Cornet	VIII-r
Bombarde	16'
1ère Trompette de bombarde	8'
2me Trompette de harmonique	8'
1er Clairon harmonique	4'
2me Clairon octaviant	4'

Récit (Top manual)

Bourdon	8'
Flûte harmonique	8'
Flûte octaviant harmonique	4'
Octavin harmonique	2'
Quinte	2 ² / ₃ '
Trompette harmonique	8'
Clairon harmonique	4'
Voix humané harmonique	8'

Positif (Middle manual)

Bourdon	16'
Bourdon	8'
Salicional	8'
Prestant	4'
Flûte	4'
Nazard or Quinte	2 ² / ₃ '
Doublette	2'
Tierce	1 ³ / ₅ '
Cymbale	IV-r
Fourniture	IV-r

Flûte harmonique	8'
Flûte octaviante harmonique	4'
Flageolet harmonique	2'
Trompette harmonique	8'
Cromorne	8'
Clairon octaviant	4'

Grand-Orgue (Lower manual)

Montre	32'
Montre	16'
Bourdon	16'
Montre	8'
Viole	8'
Bourdon	8'
Flûte traversière harmonique	8'
Flûte traversière harmonique	4'
Prestant	4'
Quinte	2 ² / ₃ '
Doublette	2'
Grosse Fourniture	IV-r
Grosse cymbale	IV-r
Fourniture	IV-r
1ère Clairon harmonique	8'
2me Clairon octaviant	8'
Basson et Cor Anglais	8'
Clairon octaviant	8'
Cornet à pavillon	8'

Pedal

Flûte ouverte	32'
Flûte ouverte	16'
Flûte ouverte	8'
Flûte ouverte	4'
Grosse nazard	5 ¹ / ₃ '
Basse-contre	16'
Basson	8'
Bombarde	16'
1ère Trompette	8'
2me Trompette	8'
1er Clairon harmonique	4'
2me Clairon octaviant	4'

Accessories

1. Expression (swell-pedal)
Récit - echo
2. Récit au Grand-orgue
3. Bombarde au grande-orgue
4. Grand-orgue (Great to Pneumatics)
5. Positif au Grand-Orgue (Fonds)
6. Positif au Grand-orgue (Anches, treble)
7. Positif au Grand-orgue (Anches, bass)
8. Tirasse (all manuals of pedals)
9. Octaves graves (sub-octave on all manuals)

Although four manuals are indicated, the organ consists only of three manuals; the registers of the Bombarde are playable from the Grand-orgue.

This specific Bombarde is thus a precursor of the Grand-Choeur which is later to be found on the Saint-Sulpice organ.

Cavaillé-Coll was the builder of France's finest organs. In a relatively short time he provided a large number of important Parisian churches with organs (Kooiman 1995: 59):

1846	La Madeleine
1852	Saint-Vincent-de-Paul
1859	Saint-Clotilde
1862	Saint-Sulpice
1868	Notre-Dame
1869	La Trinité

Cavaillé-Coll was thus undoubtedly the parent of the romantic organ. He envisaged the organ as something quite different from anything that had gone before, entirely romantic in concept. (Clutton & Niland 1982: 23.)

Many essays on acoustics were also written by Cavaillé-Coll. His approach is both scientific and musical. Some of his writings include:

1. *Etudes Experimentales sur le tuyaux d'orgue*
2. *De la determination du ton normal*
3. *De la determination des dimensions des tuyaux par rapport a leur intonation*
4. *Note sur une soufflerie de precision*
5. *De l'orgue et de son architecture.*

3.2 Influence on Widor

Since at least 1844, François-Charles (Widor's father) had been acquainted with Cavaillé-Coll, who was of the same age. Cavaillé-Coll's visits to Widor's place of birth, Lyon, left vivid impressions on the young Widor. It was also Cavaillé-Coll who suggested that Widor continue his studies under the distinguished organist Jacques-Nicholas Lemmens.

Cavaillé-Coll wrote to Lemmens on 30 January 1863 (Near 1993: 47):

One of our good friends, Mr. François-Charles Widor - organist of the good sort in Lyon, and to whom I have given the advice of sending you his son, an intelligent lad and already well known, this worthy friend asks my advice in order to know definitely where he is supposed to apply... The young man is very well brought up and I believe that he has a good aptitude. The parents are good people and merit every consideration. When you write to me, tell me a word about what papa Widor will have to do for his son...

At the conclusion of his studies in Brussels, Widor returned to Lyon to take over the position of organist of Saint-François from his father.

Cavaillé-Coll lost no time in promoting his young protégé, frequently summoning him to Paris and other parts of France and abroad to assist in the proving and testing of his new organs. For this purpose, the organ builder employed not only the pupils of Lemmens, but also the best products of Benoist's class: Lefébure-Wély, Franck, Saint-Saëns and Chauvet. (Thomson 1987: 9.)

In a letter dated 3 August 1863, Cavaillé-Coll sent Lemmens the programme that Widor played on the organ of Saint-Sulpice (Near 1993: 47):

*Performance of organ music given by
Mr. Charles Widor from Lyon
on the Great Organ of Saint-Sulpice
Tuesday, 28 July 1863, at 2 o' clock.*

Order of performance:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>1. Allegro (Haendel)</i> | <i>5. Prière (Lemmens)</i> |
| <i>2. Variations (Hesse)</i> | <i>6. Concerto (Bach)</i> |
| <i>3. Sonate (Andante) (Widor)</i> | <i>7. Final (Lemmens)</i> |
| <i>4. Fanfare (Lemmens)</i> | |

Cavaillé-Coll now had new talent to draw upon for the inaugurations of his instruments. For Widor this meant increasing opportunity and public exposure. Widor once mentioned (Near 1993: 47): “Cavaillé-Coll made the habit of taking me with him each time he had an organ to inaugurate, and I became, as it were, his ‘official inaugurator’.”

In 1866, Cavaillé-Coll moved to new manufacturing premises. There Widor met many great figures such as Rossini, Liszt, Gounod and Ambroise Thomas. He also came in contact with distinguished physicists and acousticians such as Helmholtz, Foncault and Lissajous during this time.

Through two truly providential initiatives, sending Widor to study in Brussels and nominating him for the post of organist at Saint-Sulpice, Cavaillé-Coll proved to be an affectionate, faithful and even clairvoyant guide, decisively fashioning a career that would be of legendary length (Near 1993: 50; Thomson 1987: 17).

Widor continued to inaugurate Cavaillé-Coll’s organs, of which over 600 were installed throughout France and Europe during the builder’s lifetime. In 1879, Widor gave the opening recital on the new organ at the Brussels Conservatoire where Lemmens was teaching (Thomson 1987: 35).

As the century ended, Cavaillé-Coll reached the end of his life on 13 October 1899. He died as a poor businessman with serious financial problems. He had priced himself out of the market by refusing to compromise his exemplary standards of craftsmanship and materials. Widor played the organ for his well-attended funeral at Saint-Sulpice. (Thomson 1987: 56-57.)

3.3 Influence on organ building

An authentic interpretation of the organ music of Widor is dependent upon an understanding of the mechanical and tonal characteristics of the French organs of the second half of the 19th century, particularly those instruments built by Cavaillé-Coll.

A comprehensive explanation and summary of the characteristics of the Cavaillé-Coll organ are effectively given by Norbert Dufourq in his article *La musique d'orgue française* (1949) (Smith 1983: 48-50):

3.3.1 Tonal characteristics

With its carefully graduated stops, which make possible the slow build-up of massive crescendos or the most subtle of tone colours, the organ became an extremely expressive instrument with a large spectrum of tonal variety in the hands of Cavaillé-Coll (Smith 1983: 48).

Cavaillé-Coll modified the balance of sonorities in his instrument. He was not content to endow it with a swell box (a chamber with walls formed by shutters movable at the will of the performer) enclosing all of the pipework of one manual - the third, or Récit - which, from then on, grew unexpectedly; he transformed the composition of the very organ which had been standardized by the organ builders of the time of Louis XIII [1601-1643]. He abandoned the essential characteristics of the organ of Robert Clicquot - the Plein jeu. Compound and simple mixtures, Fournitures and Cymbales, Nasards, Larigots and Tierce séparée - all of those stops which represented the family of harmonics intended to enrich the fundamental pitch - disappeared. If he still maintained a Plein jeu or a Cornet on one of the divisions of the instrument, it was less to preserve the sonorities of the classic organ than it was to balance the reeds and add brilliance to their upper register. From then on the polyphonic organ disappeared. It was succeeded by a symphonic organ that was infinitely less clear, more compact, without doubt of greater brilliance but also of lesser stature. Numerous foundation stops borrowed from foreign organs replaced the abandoned registers. Cavaillé-Coll enriched each manual with stops called harmoniques or octavians which were to be used as solo stops. The Flûte harmonique, the most prevalent type, added a freshness of colour to a fullness of sound. Finally, the differently timbred old reeds were replaced by sonorous batteries (16', 8', 4') which, when combined, increased the power of the tutti. To the old reeds, such as the Cromorne, the Voix humaine or the Trompette, were added some free reed stops intended to imitate orchestral instruments: the Clarinet and English Horn. Not the least of those innovations credited to Cavaillé-Coll was an enrichment of the pedal division with several 16' foundation stops and an enlargement of its composition. From then on, this became fundamental just as it had been with builders

in Germany for two centuries. Thus, the symphonic organ was created. After 1840, the extreme diversity (32' to 1') of foundation stops, mutations and reeds, was succeeded by a profusion of stops of the same family - foundation and reeds - which directed everything toward the single 8' pitch. This uniform instrument which followed a horizontal plan, succeeded the organ arranged in pitch according to the gradation of harmonics.

3.3.2 Mechanical characteristics

By the middle of the 19th century, the organ console and its appointments attained a uniformity of design hitherto unknown in the organ world.

The order of manuals, from lowest to highest, was invariably (I) Grand-Orgue, (II) Positif and (III) Récit. On four-manual consoles the Bombarde was located between the Grand-Orgue and the Positif; the fifth manual, the Grand-Choeur, was positioned below the Grand-Orgue. As much as Cavaillé-Coll changed the sound of the traditional organ, so too he improved the mechanical action of the instrument (Smith 1983: 48).

The large instrument built by Cavaillé-Coll for the Abbey of Saint-Denis (1841) marked a turning point in the history of the organ. This builder's new concept was the source of all music composed from the first years of the Second Empire (1852-1870) until the war of 1914-1918. First, he perfected the wind supply and the mechanism, both of which left something to be desired. He gave his organ new lungs in the form of reservoirs and boxes intended to equalize the bellows. He increased the wind pressure in diverse pressures. Moreover, he gave his organ some motory nerves, under the form of a pneumatic machine which bears the name of its inventor - Barker - and which permits, if not always a lighter touch, at least the coupling of several manuals without making the touch heavier. Some iron pedals or tirasses, placed at the level of the feet permitted one to introduce or to cancel certain stops by a simple pressure. Finally, although the manual keyboards did not undergo any transformation, they were constructed with greater care and their range extended to 56 notes. The impracticable row of pegs, which the organist had to play with his feet, was replaced by the long keys of the German pedal keyboard, and it is this which - facilitating pedal virtuosity and introducing in France the use of the heel in pedal playing - gave the bass an importance previously unknown.

3.3.3 The *Pédales de combinaison*

Across the front of the console, immediately above the pedalboard, were iron type of pedals which controlled certain mechanical contrivances designed to assist the organist in manipulating the stops and couplers. These pedals were held depressed by being moved to the left or right under a notch. The subtle use of these *pédales de combinaison* gave the French symphonic organ composers command of their tonal resources and enabled them to make rapid crescendi from the soft voices of the enclosed *Récit* to the full power of the organ with just a few movements. The *pédales de combinaison* were arranged in groups and the order within each group was determined by the order of the manuals - from the lowest to the highest. (Smith 1983: 50.)

Tirasse: These are pedal couplers which coupled each manual to the pedalboard. When engaged, the *tirasse* mechanically and visibly pulled down the manual key which corresponded to the pedal note.

Octaves graves: These are sub-octave couplers, affecting the same manual, which depress the note an octave below the note played.

Anches: This term, although strictly translated as 'reeds', included those ranks above 4' pitch as well as mixtures and reeds. The *Hautbois* (Oboe) and *Voix humaine* were always excluded from this category. The drawknobs for this group of stops were lettered in red and a ventral pedal controlled the wind supply to the pipes. Any combination of these *anches* could be prepared in advance and, even though the drawknob was drawn, the pipes would not speak until the corresponding *pédale de combinaison* was depressed. (Smith 1983: 50.)

Accouplements: These couplers permit one manual to be played simultaneously with another. Accomplished by direct mechanical linkage, this coupling device visibly operates the keys of the manuals involved. If the *Récit* were coupled to the *Positif* and the organist played on the latter manual, the identical keys of the *Récit* would go down.

If the Positif were then coupled to the Grand-Orgue and the organist played on that manual, both the keys of the Positif and those of the Récit (if coupled to the Positif) would go down. If the Tirasse Grand-Orgue or pedal coupler, described above, were depressed and a pedal note played, the corresponding note on all three keyboards would also go down. (Smith 1983: 50.)

Expression de Récit: This is the pedal at the far right of the console, controlling the vertical shutters of the chamber in which the pipes of the Récit were enclosed. These shutters were kept tightly closed by a spring. When the box was opened, the organist's foot had to remain on the pedal unless it were hitched into one of the two notches at the side which held the shutter either half-open or fully open. (Smith 1983: 50; Williams & Owen 1988: 153-161.)

CHAPTER 4

THE ORGAN OF SAINT-SULPICE

4.1 A short history

The outstanding merit of the Cavallé-Coll organ, as seen through the eyes of his contemporaries, was demonstrated by the great school of organ composition which grew, literally around it, of which Widor and Franck are among the earliest and most illustrious. It was an entirely symphonic concept, closely connected with the romantic movement. During this time Cavallé-Coll left to France a vast collection of instruments of superb and almost indestructible craftsmanship. One such instrument is the monumental organ at Saint-Sulpice of which Widor was the most artistic and accomplished organist. (Clutton & Niland 1982: 24.)

Cavallé-Coll built many important organs in the seventy years when he was active as an organ builder, but the Saint-Sulpice is probably the most considerable. The importance of this organ is not in its unique mechanical characteristics, but mostly in the fact that it is the first real symphonic organ that was built by Cavallé-Coll. This organ would also serve as an inspiration for organs to come such as the Henry Willis organ in the Royal Albert Hall, London.

The Cavallé-Coll organ in Saint-Sulpice is an example of one of the great engineering feats of the nineteenth century, and as illustrative of its period's technology as Ctsebius's hydraulicon had been in the 4th century A.D. (Williams 1980: 171).

The organs of Saint-Sulpice was played by many famous organists such as Nivers (1632-1714), François Couperin (1668-1733) and Clérambault (1676-1749).

In 1862 Cavallé-Coll was commissioned to rebuild Cliquot's *Grande Orgue* situated in the west gallery. After this it was restored several times by Cavallé-Coll who did the last major rebuilding of the organ (Havenstein 1987: 41). It was then that this organ finally attained its highest degree of perfection.

The inauguration of the newly rebuilt organ took place on 29 April 1862, and was played by three organists, namely César Franck, Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) and Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911) (Smith 1983: 15). At the time of the inauguration, this organ was the largest in France and included one hundred registers, five manuals and a pedalboard.

There was also a second recital on 2 May, during which Boulogne, Lemmens and Guilmant performed. In a source by Antoine Elward dated 11 May 1862 the organ at Saint-Sulpice is described in brief (Smith 1983: 14):

The organ of Cavallé-Coll is so complicated that when combining the innumerable stops of which it is composed, it takes more than a month's work to become familiar with. Alexandre Guilmant hardly had two hours practice!

The organ at Saint-Sulpice was one of the first organs Widor played when he returned from his studies in Brussels. As Near (1993: 47) states:

Widor left Brussels bursting with confidence and ready to demonstrate the fruits of his concentrated months of study and practice. It had been only fifteen months since the inauguration of the new organ at Saint-Sulpice, Cavallé-Coll's unquestioned masterpiece. What better place could he [Cavallé-Coll] offer the young organist to demonstrate all he had learned.

Quite prophetically, Cavallé-Coll put Widor where he was to spend a very lengthy career as organist. On 31 December 1870, after the death of Lefébure-Wély (1817-1869), Widor was immediately appointed as acting organist in his place. The official position as *titulaire* was on 13 January 1879 (Thomson 1987: 17).

Widor played the organ at Saint-Sulpice until his death. Every day he would spend long hours at the console improvising or playing his newly composed works for organ. The sight of Widor at his elegantly designed semicircular console was most impressive. Thomson (1987: 20) describes Widor at his organ:

He kept its metal parts well polished and covered it with a red carpet when not in use. While he prepared his registration, he would chat and joke with his friends, but when he played, his concentration was total.

Shortly after his resignation in 1933, Widor stated that he was not wealthy enough to add the other pedal stops that he had always wanted. In honour of his life's service, the parish presented the stops in Widor's name. Two pedal principals (16' and 8') enlarged the great instrument to 102 stops. (Near 1993: 56.)

On Sunday, 13 October 1991, the great Cavallé-Coll organ of Saint-Sulpice, Paris, was reinaugurated in a solemn Mass after a three-year period of restoration.

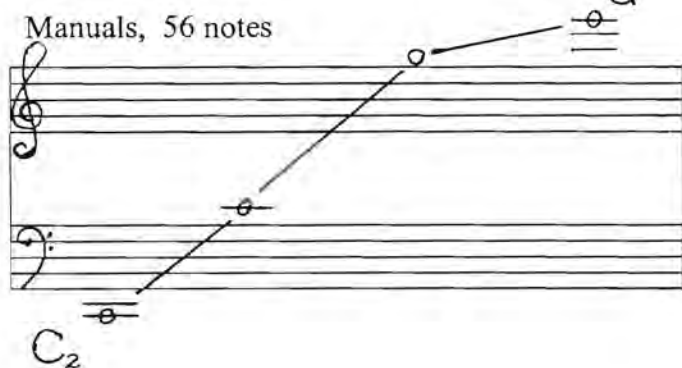
4.2 Disposition of the organ

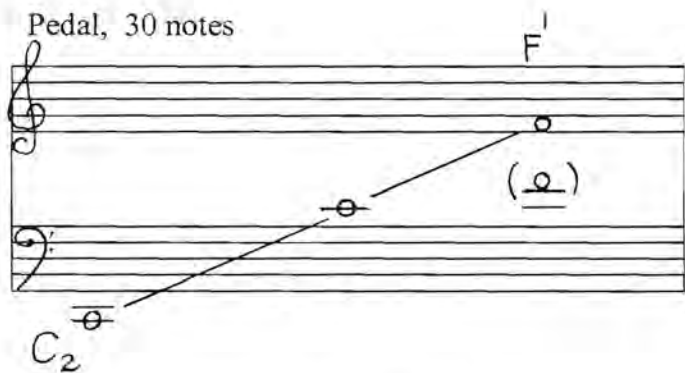
After the rebuilding of the organ by Cavallé-Coll, it was inaugurated on 20 April 1862. It currently consists of 102 registers and nearly 7000 pipes laid out in seven storeys. Adolphe Hesse said that it was the most perfect, most harmonious, the largest and really the masterpiece of modern organ building (Thomson 1987: 18).

Compass:

Manuals: C₂ - G³

Pedal: C₂ - F¹ G³





Grande-Choeur (First Manual)

Salicional	8'
Octave	4'
Grosse Fourniture	IV-r
Grosse Cymbale	IV-r
Plein jeu	IV-r
Cornet	V-r
Bombarde	16'
Basson	16'
1 ^{re} Trompette	8'
2 ^e Trompette	8'
Basson	8'
Clairon	4'
Clairon-Doublette	2'

Grand-Orgue (Second manual)

Principal harmonique	16'
Montre	16'
Bourdon	16'
Flûte conique	16'
Montre	8'
Diapason	8'



Bourdon	8'
Flûte harmonique	8'
Flûte traversière	8'
Flute à pavillon	8'
Grosse quinte	$5\frac{1}{3}'$
Prestant	4'
Doublette	2'

Bombarde (Third manual)

Sousbasse	16'
Flûte conique	16'
Principal	8'
Bourdon	8'
Flûte harmonique	8'
Gambe	8'
Violoncelle	8'
Kéraulophone	8'
Grosse quinte	$5\frac{1}{3}'$
Prestant	4'
Flûte octavante	4'
Octave	4'
Grosse tierce	$3\frac{1}{5}'$
Quinte	$2\frac{2}{3}'$
Octavin	2'
Cornet	V-r
Bombarde	16'
Trompette	8'
Baryton	8'
Clairon	4'



Positif (Fourth manual)

Violon-Basse	16'
Quintaton	16'
Flûte traversière	8'
Quintaton	8'
Salicional	8'
Viole de gambe	8'
Unda maris	4'
Dulciana	4'
Quinte	$2\frac{2}{3}'$
Doublette	2'
Tierce	$1\frac{3}{5}'$
Larigot	$1\frac{1}{3}'$
Piccolo	1'
Plein jeu harmonique	I-IV-r
Euphone	16'
Trompette	8'
Clarinette	8'
Clairon	4'

Récit (Fifth manual)

Quintaton	16'
Flûte harmonique	8'
Bourdon	8'
Violoncelle	8'
Voix céleste	8'
Prestant	4'
Flûte octaviante	4'
Dulciana	4'
Doublette	2'



Octavin	2'
Fourniture	IV-r
Cymbale	V-r
Cornet	V-r
Bombarde	16'
Cor anglais	16'
Trompette harmonique	8'
Trompette	8'
Basson-hautbois	8'
Cromorne	8'
Voix humaine	8'
Clairon	4'

Pédale

Principal-Basse	32'
Contre-Basse	16'
Sousbasse	16'
Flûte	8'
Violoncelle	8'
Flûte	4'
Contre-Bombarde	32'
Bombarde	16'
Trompette	8'
Ophicléide	8'
Clairon	4'

Pédales de combinaison

Orage]	Tirasses
Grand-Choeur		
Grand-Orgue		

Anches Pédale

Grand-choeur	}	Octaves Graves
Grand-Orgue		
Bombarde		
Positif		
Récit		

Grand-Orgue	}	Jeux de Combinaison
Bombarde		
Positif		
Récit		

Grand-choeur	}	Accouplements au Grand-choeur
Grand-Orgue		
Bombarde		
Positif		
Récit		

Temblant du Récit

Expression du Récit

4.3 Influence on Widor's organ works

Widor was undoubtedly tempted by the quasi-orchestral voicing of stops, the sonorous choruses and the sonic combinations that was characteristic of Cavaillé-Coll's instruments. Widor had a very good knowledge of orchestration and was also the author of a treatise on the subject. He thus took advantage of this new world of symphonic organ sound which gave him new ideas to use in his compositions. He was no mere imitator, but sought to restore greatness to the instrument in the new language of the 19th century Cavaillé-Coll organ (Thomson 1987: 13).

The seemingly unlimited resources of the Saint-Sulpice organ opened an immense span to Widor's creative thought. Cavallé-Coll's organ became to him the equivalent of an orchestra with its innumerable timbres and prodigious range of effects (Near 1993: 51):

If I had not felt the seduction of these timbres, the mystic spell of this wave of sound, I would not have written any organ music.

Widor quite rightly said: 'The organ of Aristide Cavallé-Coll remains the true organ, the organ of J.S. Bach' (Williams & Owen 1988: 264).

Once he also mentioned that he was "seduced" by the Cavallé-Coll organ of Saint-Sulpice and it was through this that he had already composed eight organ symphonies at the time (Near 1993: 56).

Dumesnil in his *Portraits de musiciens français* said at his visit to Saint-Sulpice (Near 1993: 56):

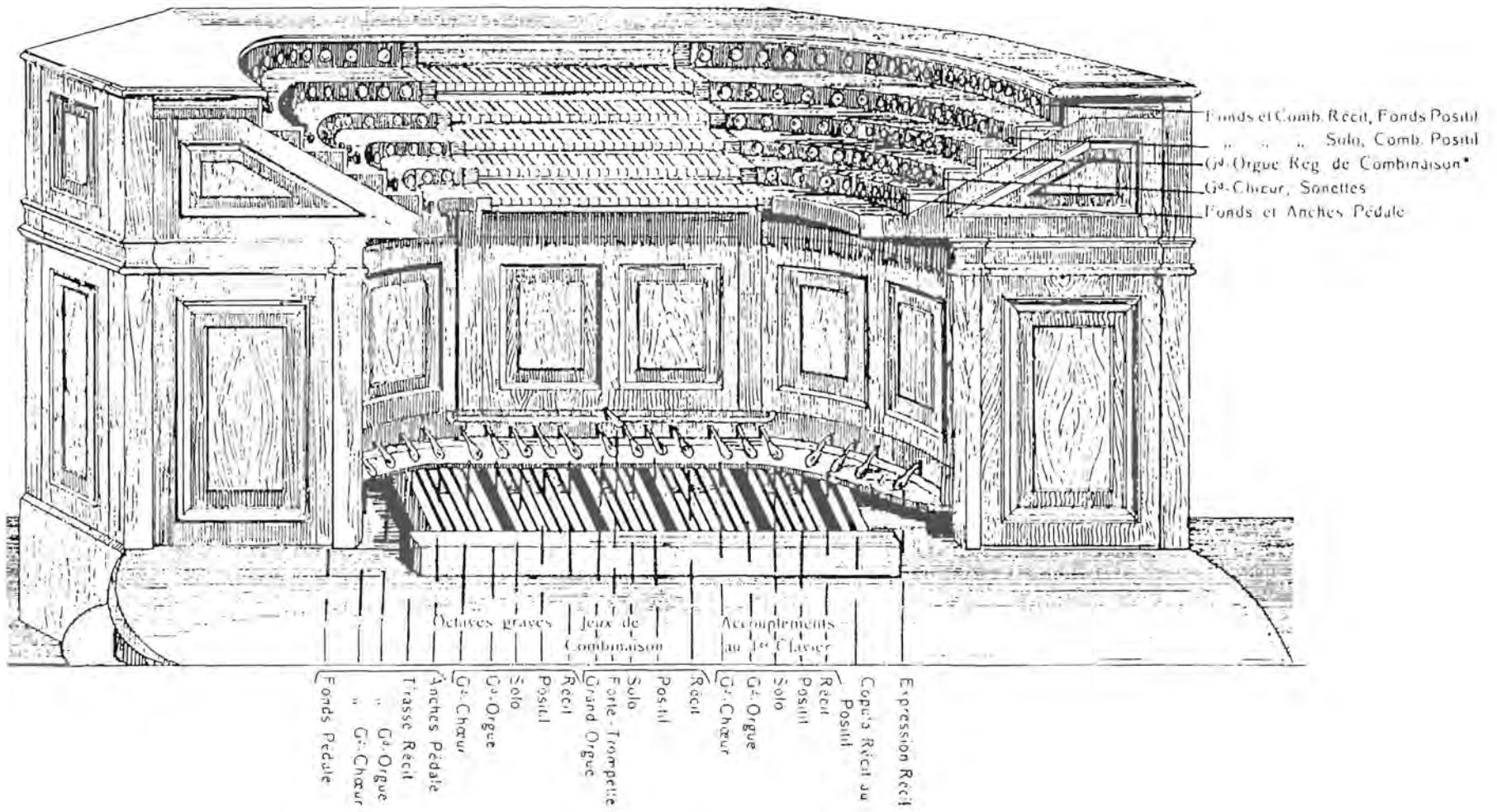
Indeed, it was necessary to see Widor before the five manuals, pedal clavier, and stops – arranged in hemicycles – of the great Saint-Sulpice organ. There, dominating some 20 metres above the nave that extended in front of the gigantic instrument, Widor was king. He reigned, and he had his court of musicians, the faithful, friends, and the inquisitive.

It is unquestionable that the organ symphonies were the direct result of work done during Widor's first year and a half at the organ of Saint-Sulpice. He made the following statement (Near 1993: 51):

It's when I felt the 6,000 pipes of the Saint-Sulpice organ vibrating under my hands and feet that I took to writing my first four organ symphonies (published together by Maho). I didn't seek any particular style or form. I wrote feeling them deeply, asking myself if they were inspired by Bach or Mendelssohn. No, I was listening to the sonorousness of Saint-Sulpice, and naturally I sought to extract from it a musical fabric – trying to make pieces that, while being free, featured some contrapuntal

procedures... My first four organ symphonies appeared original although being of classical style.

Figure 1: The console of the Saint-Sulpice organ (Smith 1983: 51)



CHAPTER 5

THE ORGAN SYMPHONIES

5.1 Introduction

Widor is known to be the creator of the Organ Symphony. He developed and created a style in agreement with the new resources offered by the instruments of his time. Widor, in a preface to a revised edition of his earlier organ symphonies in 1887, claimed the following (Archbold 1995: 253):

Such is the modern organ: essentially symphonic. A new instrument needs a new language, another ideal than that of scholastic polyphony. We no longer invoke the Bach of the fugue; rather, the melodist who so moves us, the supreme master of expression.

In 1902, Louis Vierne had rightly estimated Widor's organ symphonies as "the greatest monument raised to the glory of the organ since J.S. Bach" (Near 1994: 454).

An enormous breadth of scale of the movements from Widor's symphonies is achieved by wide-ranging tonal relationships paying homage to Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. This indicates the importance he attached to organ composition. His scheme for the cycle of eight symphonies is based on a rising scale of tonalities from C to B, with Nos. 4 and 5 sharing the key of F. Widor's symphonies had some precedents in works such as Alkan's *Symphonie for Piano Solo*, Op. 39 (1857), which was dedicated to Fétis, and Frank's *Grande pièce symphonique* from *Six Pièces* (1860-1861). (Thomson 1987: 13, 21.)

The often repeated opinion that Widor's organ symphonies are better understood as

“suites” rather than as “symphonies” is an idea not without some justification when considering his earlier compositions. In these youthful works, a heightened degree of thematic integration is applied. Marcel Dupré referred to his symphonies simply as “collections.” (Thomson 1987: 10-11.)

The dating of the symphonies are problematic, for no manuscripts sources are known. It is believed that the different movements of the symphonies were written separately for use in services and recitals over a period of 12 years. Widor revised these movements constantly during 1900-1901 and the periods 1914-1918 and 1920. (Thomson 1987: 11.)

The opus numbers and publishing dates of the symphonies are as follows:

- Op. 13: Nos. 1-4 (1872)
- Op. 42: Nos. 5-8 (1887)
- Op. 70: *Symphonie Gothique* (1894)
- Op. 73: *Symphonie Romane* (1900)

The Op. 13 consists of a wide variety of different styles: Baroque, Classical and Romantic. Each of these works includes movements of fully worked-out Baroque contrapuntal and fugal writing, showing the influence of Fétis, as well as the influence of Mendelssohn’s organ works. (Thomson 1987: 12; Near 1993: 51.)

The four symphonies of the Op. 42 set show evidence of having been written as a unity rather than as individual works. They are also more genuinely symphonic than the Op. 13 in their contrasts and conflicts of ideas. (Thomson 1987: 21-23.)

The *Symphonie Gothique* in C minor is dedicated to the church of Saint-Ouen, Rouen, with its celebrated Cavallé-Coll organ which had been inaugurated by Widor in 1890. This work is an extraordinary conception with its four movements which are highly contrasted. It displays something of the eclecticism of the Op. 13 set. (Thomson 1987: 66; Archbold 1995: 251.)

The *Symphonie Romane* in D major is dedicated to a church and its saint, Saint-Sernin in Toulouse. The plainchant for Easter Day, *Haec dies*, plays a fundamental role in all the movements. Here Widor's powers of variation and development creates no sense of monotony. (Thomson 1987: 67; Archbold 1995: 251.)

It is clear that in the last two symphonies Widor reached a higher degree of maturity in his approach to the organ symphony. In a review of the 1901 revision issued by Widor of his first eight organ symphonies, Vierne stated the following concerning the last two symphonies (Archbold 1995: 249):

The productions of Widor's maturity constitute a third group of symphonies of an appreciably different character than the proceeding ones, with an inspiration perhaps even more elevated and more serene. With these compositions, of which the 'Symphonies gothique and romane' are the most striking examples, Widor returns to the traditions of yesteryear, to grave and solemn ways, to themes of austere serenity and all imbued with the plainchant of the old organs of bygone days. Certainly he does not abandon any of the hard won modern features, but he imposes on them a classic turn and shape.

5.2 Characteristics of the Organ Symphonies

It will be noted that the tempo-indication sometimes differs from the title of the movement e.g. Symphony IV, Op 13:3 is *Andante cantabile* but the tempo-indication also specifies *dolce*.

5.2.1 Use of plainchant

Widor's own intensive use of plainchant surely testifies to the deepening of his religious faith. In these works he uses the plainchant themes according to the cyclic principle of Franck and his school as unifying factor in a multitude of transformations (Thomson 1987: 65). For the *Symphonie Romane* Widor uses the subject of the Easter hymn *Haec*

dies. According to him this theme has “an elegant arabesque embellishing a text of a few words, a vocalise as elusive as a bird’s song, a sort of pedal-point passage conceived for an uninhibited virtuoso” (Dover 1991: 196). It seems that Widor used the plainchant to impress the theme on the listener’s memory by repeating it constantly in the *Symphonie Romane* and also in the *Symphonie Gothique*.

Example 1 shows Widor’s indication of his various versions of the theme *Haec dies* as it appears in his preface to his *Symphonie Romane* (Widor 1991: 196):

Example 1



In Example 2 Widor exposes the *Haec dies* theme immediately in the first entry of the LH in bar 2 on the *Grande orgue*, indicated as “Quasi recitativo, espressivo, a piacere”.

Example 2 *Symphonie Romane* Op.73:1 (*Moderato*): 1-5



5.2.2 Moto perpetuo

Widor often employs a unique style of composition in some of his Organ Symphonies, i.e. moto perpetuo. He uses this element in simple musical material made into a brilliantly effective work by purely musical means. Characteristic is his use of *staccato* semiquavers over a tune in long notes or set off by rhythmic motifs. Widor modulates to different keys very often, sometimes to very distant ones, but retains the basic pattern and structure of the moto perpetuo-figure. See Examples 3 and 4:

Example 3: Symphony IV, Op. 13:4 (*Scherzo*): 0-14

opus 42

Allegro vivace. ♩ = 120.

Example 4: Symphony V, Op.13:5 (Toccata): 1-6

Allegro. (♩ = 118)

fff

1 2

3

4 5

6

5.2.3 Influence and combining of different style-periods

Widor had a vast knowledge of music and was greatly influenced by the different music periods from the Baroque to Romanticism right through to his time. He combines the different styles in a very subtle manner and transforms them into a language of his own, creating an effect of continuity in character.

In Symphony IV, he uses the majestic style of the French Overture with heavily dotted Lullian rhythms.

Example 5: Symphony IV, Op.13: 1 (*Toccata*): 0-12



The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system (measures 0-4) is marked *fff*. The second system (measures 5-9) is marked *DOTTED RHYTHMS*. The third system (measures 10-12) continues the piece. Handwritten numbers 4, 9, and 12 are written on the right side of the score to indicate measure boundaries.

The fourth movement of Symphony VII has the appearance of a rigid Baroque structure i.e. harmonic progression and the basso continuo-like accompaniment. On the other hand a Romantic intimacy of feeling is conveyed by the expressive melody and flow of murmuring semiquavers outlining sensuous harmonies (Thomson 1987:38):



Example 6: Symphony VII, Op.42: 4 (*Allegro ma non troppo*): 0-11

Allegro ma non troppo (♩ = 102.) *legato assai*

0 5

6 8

9 11

Ped. GPR

5.2.4 The use of canon

In Examples 7 and 8 it is evident that Widor was a master in the art of writing canons and it forms an important part in most of his Organ Symphonies. It seems that Widor's specific interest is in the use of the canon at the octave over pedal-points. The right hand is usually imitated by the left hand, while the pedal is stagnant or moving very slowly. It seems that Widor prefers that the RH plays on the *Récit*, while the LH plays on another manual, i.e. the *Positif* or the *Grand Orgue*.

Example 7: Symphony III, Op13 (*Adagio*): 1-22



Handwritten musical score for Example 7, showing measures 1-22. The score is written for organ with three staves: Right Hand (RH), Left Hand (LH), and Pedal. The RH part is marked 'R' and 'RECIT' with a circled 'R'. The LH part is marked 'GR' and 'GRAND ORGUE COUPLED WITH RECIT' with a circled 'GR'. The Pedal part is marked 'Ped. GR' and 'PEDAL-POINT' with a circled 'P'. The tempo is marked '(♩ = 46)'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'mp', 'f', 'pp', and 'p'. The word 'seven - do' is written in the LH part at measure 16. Measure numbers 1, 7, 8, 15, 16, and 22 are indicated on the right side of the score.



Example 8: Symphony IV, Op.13 (Scherzo): 98-110

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a measure number on the left and right sides. The notation includes various dynamics (pp, P), articulations (trills, accents), and performance instructions (Hautbula, Trompe). The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is common time (C).

System 1 (Measures 98-101):
- Measure 98: Hautbula part with *pp* dynamic and *R* (ritardando) marking.
- Measure 101: Trompe part with *trill* marking.

System 2 (Measures 102-104):
- Measure 102: Piano part with *P* dynamic.

System 3 (Measures 105-107):
- Measure 105: Piano part with *trill* marking.
- Measure 107: Hautbula part with *R* marking.

System 4 (Measures 108-110):
- Measure 108: Piano part with *P* dynamic.

5.2.5 Influence of folk music

Widor had a very keen interest in the folk music of his country as depicted in his use of a naïve folk-type melody in Symphony IV. Note how Widor embellishes the simple melody with flowing notes.

Example 9: Symphony IV, Op.13:3 (*Andante cantabile*): 0-12



Dolce. (♩ = 54.)

3

4 7

8 12

cresc. *poco rit.*

5.2.6 Pedal-points

The pedal-point is applied in richly elaborate textures on which different and even distant harmonies are built. In Symphony VIII (example 10), the pedal-note forms a foundation on which many chromatic harmonies are built as in bars 67-72. It is also used as a foundation for the treatment of canons.

Example 10: Symphony VIII, Op. 42:5 (*Variations*): 67-72

The musical score consists of three systems, each with two staves. The first system (measures 67-68) features a pedal point (PR) in the bass. The second system (measures 69-70) features a grand pedal point (GPR) in the bass. The third system (measures 71-72) continues the texture. The score includes complex harmonic textures with triplets and chromatic harmonies.

In Example 11 the pedal-note forms a basis which allows the use of a variety of harmonies which include a series of descending chromatic harmonies reaching very distant keys, e.g. bars 101-102.

Example 11: Symphony VIII, Op. 42 (*Variations*): 94-106

94

97

98

100

101

103

104

106

sf

dimin.

supprimez peu à peu

les Anches de la Pédale, du Grand-orgue et du Positif.

sempre dim.

5.2.7 The use of march-effects

March movements and effects in the symphonies are mostly characterized by ceremonial splendour as is visible in Examples 12 and 13. It is believed that these works found their prototypes in Meyerbeer's operas, which Widor admired (Thomson 1987: 12). Also characteristic of these movements is the use of the main theme in massive chords and the melodic impulse continuing in unbroken flow throughout.



Example 12: Symphony I, Op.13:5 (*March Pontificale*): 1-14



The musical score for Example 12, Symphony I, Op.13:5 (*March Pontificale*), measures 1-14. The score is written for piano and bass clef. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 63$. The dynamics are *ff* (fortissimo) and *Ped. GPR* (pedal). The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 1-7, and the second system covers measures 8-14. The music is characterized by dense, rhythmic patterns and massive chords. Handwritten numbers '1', '7', '8', and '14' are present on the page.

The lesser-known *Marcia* gives the idea of a continuing pulse in the melody supported by simple yet effective harmonies.

Example 13: Symphony III, Op.13:3 (*Marcia*): 0-16



(♩ = 112)
fff

GPR

5

Ped. GPR

6

11

12

PR

GPR

16

Detailed description: This block contains three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system (measures 0-5) features a treble and bass clef with a common time signature. It includes dynamic markings 'fff' and performance instructions 'GPR' and 'Ped. GPR'. A handwritten number '5' is placed to the right of the system. The second system (measures 6-11) continues the piece with similar notation and a handwritten number '11' to the right. The third system (measures 12-16) includes a triplet marking and performance instructions 'PR' and 'GPR', with a handwritten number '16' to the right. The music consists of chords and melodic lines in both hands.

5.2.8 The influence of other composers

The rich influence of composers from different periods is visible and can be heard in some symphonies. Here are a few examples:

5.2.8.1 J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

Note the contrasting rich texture of the five-part counterpoint in the Symphony VIII (*Adagio*), that gives it a Bachian gravity, which is also found in Bach's Prelude in B minor (BWV 544).

Example 14a: *Symphonie Romane*, Op.73:2 (Choral): 22-25



The musical score for Example 14a consists of two systems of three staves each. The first system covers measures 22 and 23, and the second system covers measures 24 and 25. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one flat, and various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes. A large handwritten 'R' is present in the left margin of the first system. The score demonstrates a complex five-part counterpoint texture.

Example 14b

PRAELUDIUM et FUGA

pro Organo pleno

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
BWV 544

MANUAL

10

PEDAL

49

5.2.8.2 F. Liszt (1811-1886)

The finale of the Symphony III is an outstanding movement with its manual writing and striking harmonic progressions showing the clear influence of Liszt's *Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este*.

Example 15a: Symphony III, Op.13:6 (*Finale*): 0-10

G Fonds de 1, 4 et 16 - *P* Fonds 8 - *R* Fonds et Anches de 4, 4 et 16 - *Péd.* Basses de 4, 8 et 16.

Allegro molto quasi presto. (♩ = 98)



Handwritten musical score for Example 15a, showing measures 0-10 of the finale of Liszt's Symphony III. The score is in G major, 3/4 time, and marked "Allegro molto quasi presto." with a tempo of quarter note = 98. It features a piano introduction with dynamics like "pp" and "p", and includes performance instructions such as "R" (ritardando), "GPR" (grand piano), and "Péd." (pedal). Handwritten numbers 4, 5, 7, 8, and 10 are placed next to the staves to indicate measure boundaries.

Example 15b: Liszt: *Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este*: 133-144

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Liszt's *Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este*, measures 133-144. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The first system (measures 133-136) features a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The bass staff contains a complex arpeggiated pattern. Handwritten annotations include '133' on the left and '136' on the right. Performance instructions include 'un poco rallentando e smorzando' and 'Ped.' with an asterisk. The second system (measures 137-140) continues the arpeggiated pattern. Handwritten annotations include '137' on the left and '140' on the right. Performance instructions include '(15) sempre dolcissimo e legato', 'pp', and 'Ped.' with an asterisk. The third system (measures 141-144) concludes the passage. Handwritten annotations include '141' on the left and '144' on the right. Performance instructions include 'Ped.' with an asterisk. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

5.2.8.3 G. Fauré (1845-1924)

The church of Saint-Sulpice had two organs: the large Cavallé-Coll and a chamber organ built by Nicolas Somer (?) in about 1747. This small organ was originally located in the palace of Versailles, where it was played by W.A. Mozart (1756-1791) and W. Gluck (1714-1787). The organ was later sold and somehow found its way to Saint-Sulpice. It was used to accompany a choir of 200 voices. In October 1871, Fauré was appointed “Petit Organist” (“Little Organist”) of the chamber organ where he and Widor indulged themselves with friendly contests of improvisation on their respective instruments. They each found inspiration in the works of the other. The *Moderate Cantabile* from the Symphony VIII shows the influence of and resemblance to Fauré’s “In Paradisium” from his *Requiem* (1886) with its suave melody and accompanying broken chords.

Example 16a: Symphony VIII, Op.42:2 (*Moderato Cantabile*): 1-3



Moderato cantabile ♩ = 70. GR

1

R

PP

3

Ped. GR

Example 16b: Fauré: “In Paradisium” from *Requiem*



Andante moderato ♩ = 58 SOPRANO p dolce

In Pa - ra - disium

God's ho - ly

p dolce simile

5.2.9 Chorale-like passages

The use of this element in Widor's symphonies became models for the similar movements in Vierné's symphonies. Widor sometimes uses chorale-like passage as a bridge-passage between different sections in a symphony.

Example 17: Symphony VII, Op.42:2 (*Choral*): 1-15

G Fonds de 8 et de 16 – P Voix céleste – R Flutes 4 et 8 – Ped. Basse de 16.

Andante, (♩ = 52)



1 5

6 10

11 15

Pol. GR

f

p

p

f *a tempo*

rit.

f

p

f

5.2.10 The use of polyrhythm

In Symphony VI Widor uses a striking passage in which a chorale-type melody is alternated between the RH, LH and Pedal from bar 164. A turbulent “Fantasia” is combined in between a constant flow of triplets in the LH against *staccato* quavers in the Pedal, while the RH plays the main theme of the movement.

Example 18: Symphony VI, Op.42:1 (*Allegro*): 160-170

160

163

164

167

168

170

R. Hautbois et flûtes 4,5
P. Fonds de 4 et de 8.

P

R

P

R

5.2.11 Carillon-effects

Widor is known to bring off a very exciting climax with a brilliant carillon-effect usually achieved by prolonged repeated figures as in the LH in bars 222-225 and bars 226-228. Widor mostly uses descending patterns as in the RH in bars 210-213 and small scale-like figures in bars 222-229 to achieve the affect of ringing bells. In Symphony VII he specifically employs syncopation in the chords of the LH and in the Pedal in bars 210-220.

Example 19: Symphony VII, Op.42:6 (Finale): 207-229



The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). Handwritten annotations in black ink highlight specific musical features:

- System 1 (Measures 207-213):** The right hand (RH) features descending patterns. A bracket labeled "SYNC" spans measures 210-213 in both hands. The left hand (LH) has syncopated chords, also marked with "SYNC".
- System 2 (Measures 214-219):** The RH continues with descending patterns. The LH features syncopated chords.
- System 3 (Measures 220-224):** The RH contains three ascending scale-like figures, each enclosed in a box and labeled "SCALE". The LH has chords with a "cresc." marking and "REPEATED FIGURES" written below.
- System 4 (Measures 225-229):** The LH features "REPEATED FIGURES" in the bass clef. The RH has a descending scale-like figure. The system concludes with a fortissimo (**fff**) dynamic marking in both hands.

5.2.12 Pianistic influences

The influence of the piano is very much visible in the Organ Symphonies, seeing that Widor himself was a very accomplished pianist. Widor makes use of textural variety (bars 60-62), including rapid scalic passages (bars 59 and 62) and typical pianistic chordal writing (bars 64-65).

Example 20: Symphony VIII, Op.42:5 (*Variations*): 57-66



The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). Handwritten annotations in blue ink highlight specific features:

- System 1 (Measures 57-59):** A box labeled "SCALIC PASSAGE" with a *p* dynamic marking is placed over the right-hand part in measure 59.
- System 2 (Measures 60-63):** A box labeled "TEXTURAL VARIETY" spans measures 60-62. A "SCALIC PASSAGE" annotation is placed over the right-hand part in measure 62. The letters "PR" are written above the right-hand part in measures 62 and 63.
- System 3 (Measures 64-66):** A box labeled "PIANISTIC CHORDAL WRITING" spans measures 64-65. The letters "GPR" are written above the right-hand part in measures 65 and 66.

5.2.13 Use of a melody or theme in octaves

Often the melody or theme can be heard in octaves in Widor's Organ Symphonies. It is usually found in massive chord structures as in bars 1-6 and 18-19, and/or where the pedal note is doubled as in bars 18-20.

Example 21: Symphony VI, Op.42:1 (*Allegro*): 1-23

The image displays a handwritten musical score for Example 21, consisting of three systems of music. The first system, labeled '1' on the left and '7' on the right, features a grand staff with the annotation 'fff THEME IN OCTAVES' written across the upper staves. The second system, labeled '8' on the left and '15' on the right, shows dense chordal textures. The third system, labeled '16' on the left and '23' on the right, continues the dense texture. A handwritten square box is present in the upper left corner of the page.

5.3 Performing and Interpretation

5.3.1 Introduction

It is interesting and important to note that Widor gave specific guidelines as to how his music should be performed and interpreted. Widor believed that the way a piece is performed is just as important as the way a piece is composed (Near 1994: 455). A rather complete picture of Widor's approach can be deduced by adhering to the following basic principles by Widor himself (Kooiman 1995: 61):

- strict legato in all voices through frequent use of silent finger substitution;
- precisely regulated values of repeated notes;
 - In fast or moderate tempos when the note is short, the first of two repeated notes loses half of its value; in slower tempos and on longer notes, a quarter or an eighth. In slow tempos as a rule it is good to use the shortest note that occurs in the piece as the norm in these instances.*
- tying of common notes;
- avoidance of all superfluous movements;
- slow practice of all legitimately necessary movements;
- a precise and lively attack without avoiding noises caused by the organ mechanism;
- positioning the organ bench so that the knees form a right angle with the upper leg when the feet are on the outer edges of middle C# and D#;
- the use of generally slow tempos in Bach works, which consist of the following basic principles:
 - one note too fast, corresponding to our "Andante," one rather slow, which was actually "Adagio." "Vivace" did not mean fast as it does nowadays, but to play fast in the sense of lively.*
- simple registration.

5.3.2 Metronome markings and tempo

In the 1887 edition of the symphonies, Widor added his metronome markings to the individual movements. He mentions that they are only relative and guidelines, and should be seen as indicating the character of the work rather than the speed. It is also interesting to know that Widor's playing according to his students was sometimes slower than his actual metronome markings. (Near 1994: 456-457.)

5.3.3 Tempo modifications and signs of articulation

Near (1994: 456-461) describes, according to Widor's guidelines, a few of the tempo modifications that are found in the organ symphonies and gives a brief discussion and explanation with regard to the interpretation.

5.3.3.1 Allargando

Widor tells us that this indicates the slight holding back of a phrase in order to emphasize the degrees of its progression or design, or to prepare an important re-entry. It can also be used to give the impression of a *crescendo* on an inexpressive keyboard.

5.3.3.2 A piacere

Widor states: "This group [of notes] cannot be counted." It usually appears at the beginning of a phrase or passage of free fantasia-like writing, in a transition, at the end of a phrase or musical design, or over a group of rapid notes occurring suddenly.

5.3.3.3 Staccato

This aspect is very confusing in Widor's organ works. Both dots and vertical wedges are mixed throughout editions of the symphonies after 1901, and he describes both in the same manner. The interpretation of this assumes that *staccato* can vary, but the general

rule is that notes that are marked *staccato* lose half their value. Widor revised the all-*staccato* articulation such as that of the Toccata of Symphonie V by imposing slurs to reinforce the beat. In each case a slur is placed over the first two notes of a ligature that continues *staccato*. The interpretation assumes that the second of the two notes is marked *staccato* under the slur – only the first note retains all of its value and proceeds *legato* to the following note.

5.3.3.4 **Tenuto**

Widor describes the effect as similar to the *grand détaché* of the violin. The whole bow is used playing a series of notes, almost without the bow leaving the strings. The value of the notes played is almost three-quarters of the note value to allow an articulation before any notes or chords that follow.

5.3.4 **Repeated notes**

Similar to the rule for *staccato* notes, the tendency is that repeated notes lose half their value, the rests between repeated notes having a duration absolutely equal to the half value lost.

5.3.5 **Common notes**

- Two voices following one another on the same note must be tied.
- When the movement of one voice runs into a neighbouring voice, the neighbouring voices preserve their duration as the moving voice merges with it.

5.3.6 **Ornaments**

5.3.6.1 **Trills**

Widor states: “The trill lasts as long as the note that it ornaments; in general one begins

slowly and accelerates little by little to the maximum speed.”

5.3.6.2 Turns

This ornament is not problematic in Widor’s music. He sometimes indicates chromatic inflection on some trills and also on turns.

5.3.7 Registration

Widor gives the first rule in this aspect: “that the clarity of playing never be altered by the registration”. When once asked about his opinion regarding registration, he replied that he regarded it a “religion.”

5.3.8 Crescendo and decrescendo

All *crescendo* and *decrescendo* indications, no matter how lengthy, are to be effected only by manipulation of the expression pedal, which is situated above the pedalboard. This applies unless the *crescendo* leads to a *fff* where the mixtures and reeds (*anches*) of the Pedal (e.g. Contra-Bombarde 32’, Bombarde 16’, Trompette 8’, Ophichléide 8’, Clairon 4’, etc.) and Positif (e.g. Euphone 16’, Clarinette 8’, Trompette 8’, Clairon 4’, etc.) are to be added on the strong beats. For the *decrescendo* they are to be retired in reverse order, on weak beats. For the *grande crescendo* Widor does not often indicate where the specific entry should take place, but instead uses a long hairpin. He sometimes precedes the *fff* with a *ff*, indicating the place where the Positif *anches* (reeds) and other compound registers are to be added. Interesting is also the fact that certain markings such as *f*, *p* and *pp* are sometimes found for the *Récit* in the Organ Symphonies of Widor; they represent the three stationary positions of the expression pedal on the Saint-Sulpice organ. (Near 1994: 465.)

5.3.9 Manual couplings

Widor worked out precise and detailed system for couplers. He is, however, not always consistent in their application in the score. It is important to know that throughout the symphonies Widor thought in terms of terraced dynamics, from which results the normal scheme of GPR, PR, R (meaning, G for Grand Orgue, P for Positif and R for Récit). This means that GPR indicate that all three manuals are to be coupled, and PR means that the Positif and Récit are to be coupled. (Near 1994: 456-466.)

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

It is very clear that Widor was no minor church composer who had spent his life working in a dark organ gallery. Here was a man whose genius earned him great respect among his fellow musicians and the public at large. Growing up in a musical environment and atmosphere ensured his doubtless success as a performer, teacher and composer par excellence.

The symphonic timbre of the symphonic organ, which Widor admired, was created by his friend and mentor, Cavallé-Coll. He had a vast influence on the life of Widor and in a subtle way even directed it to become what Widor ultimately became. Cavallé-Coll was not slow in realizing that to bring organ music to new heights in a new age, it had to be achieved by a sound of power, and in some ways, even imitating the orchestra.

The influence of the Saint-Sulpice organ was an immense and major factor in the birth of the Organ Symphony. It was at the console of this magnificent instrument where Widor became motivated and inspired to put pen to paper, and to create a genre of organ music never heard or seen in notation before.

It is hard to believe that Widor's Organ Symphonies were damned as "contrapuntally belabored products of a flat and scant musical imagination, the bastard nature of which is evident from the title alone" (Near 1994: 454). (It is only after years of research by a handful of dedicated students that the actual meaning of these works came into their full right. | (Conclusion)

The Organ Symphonies contain a wide variety of moods, atmospheres and characters. Each of them consists of serious movements, reflecting influences of composers such

as Bach, Fétis, Liszt and Fauré as discussed in Chapter 5. The Opus 13 set reflects the work of a young composer in its complexity of fugal and part writing, although maturity can already be detected in some of the movements. The atmosphere of a typical French salon is barely veiled in many of Widor's slow movements, while ceremonial splendour and pomp is found in most of his march movements.

The Organ Symphonies also portray the astonishing achievement of a French composer who did not have a solid tradition of the symphony in his country up to, and during, his lifetime. Thus, establishing a foundation for himself, Widor created a genre of his own, which was to become a prototype for future organ music of composers such as Dupré and Vierne.

During research for this thesis, the writer came to the conclusion that, in spite of everything that is known about Widor and his works, this composer certainly deserves more credit. His works are worth more exposure through performance, research and tuition. In this regard the younger generation should be a deliberate target group, because among those interested in more serious music, Widor is only associated with his famous *Toccata* from Symphony V.

It is therefore hoped that this thesis should not only be a small contribution to the Widor literature, but that it will also serve as an inspiration to further awareness of and motivation for this great musician.

APPENDIX A

A LIST OF WIDOR'S MAIN PUBLISHED WORKS

Chamber

- Piano Quintet No. 1, Op. 7, 1868
Piano Trio, Op. 19, 1874
Violin Sonata No. 1, Op. 50, 1881
Piano Quartet, Op. 66, 1891
Piano Quintet No. 2, Op. 68, 1894
Violin Sonata No. 2, Op. 79, 1907
Cello Sonata, Op. 80, 1907

Choral

- Deux motets, Op. 18, 1874
Trois motets, Op. 23, 1875
Messe, Op. 36, 1878
Psaume CXII, 1879
Ave Verum Corpus, c. 1930

Orchestral

- Grande Phantasia* for organ and orchestra, 1865

Symphonie No. 1, Op. 16, 1873
Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 39, 1876
Violin Concerto, 1877
Cello Concerto, Op. 41, 1878
Symphonie No. 2, Op. 54, 1882
La Nuit de Walpurgis, Op. 60, 1888
Fantaisie for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 62, 1889
Symphonie No. 3 for Organ and Orchestra, Op. 69, 1894
Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 77, 1905
Sinfonia Sacra for Organ and Orchestra, Op. 81, 1907
Symphonie Antique for Chorus and Orchestra, 1911

Organ solo

Symphonies Nos. 1-4, Op. 13, 1872
Symphonies Nos. 5-8, Op. 42, 1887
Symphonie Gothique, Op. 70, 1894
Symphonie Romane, Op. 73, 1900
Suite Latine, Op. 86, 1927
Trois nouvelles pièces, Op. 87, 1934

Piano solo

Suite, Op. 58, 1887

Songs

- Six mélodies, Op. 14, 1872
Six mélodies, Op. 22, 1875
Trois mélodies, Op. 28, 1876
Deux duos, Op. 30, 1876
Trois mélodies italiennes, Op. 32, 1876
Trois mélodies italiennes, Op. 35, 1878
Six mélodies, Op. 37, c. 1877
Deux duos, Op. 40, 1876
Six mélodies, Op. 43, 1878
Six mélodies, Op. 47, 1879
Deux duos, Op. 52, 1881
Six mélodies, Op. 53, 1881
Soirs d'étés, Op. 63, c. 1889

Stage

- La Korrigane*, ballet, 1880
Conte d'avril, incidental music, 1885
Les Jacobites, incidental music, 1885
Maître Ambros, drame lyrique, 1886
Jeanne d'Arc, ballet-pantomime, 1890
Les Pêcheurs de Saint-Jean, drame lyrique, 1905
Nerto, drame lyrique, 1924

APPENDIX B

THE TITLES AND KEYS OF THE MOVEMENTS IN THE ORGAN SYMPHONIES

TITLE	KEY
Symphony No.1 in C minor, Opus 13 No.1 (1876)	
I Prélude	C minor
II Allegro	A-flat major
III Intermezzo	G minor
IV Adagio	E-flat major
V Marche Pontificale	C major
VI Meditation	E-flat major
VII Finale	C-minor
Symphony No.2 in D major, Opus 13 No.2 (1876)	
I Prélude	D major
II Pastorale	G major
III Andante	B-flat major
IV Scherzo	E major
V Adagio	B-minor
VI Finale	D major



TITLE	KEY
Symphony No.3 in E minor, Opus 13 No.3 1876)	
I Prélude	E minor
II Minuetto	B minor
III Marcia	F-sharp major
IV Adagio	A major
V Fugue	E minor
VI Finale	E minor
Symphony No.4 in F minor, Opus 13 No.4 (1876)	
I Toccata	F minor
II Fugue	F minor
III Andante cantabile	A-flat major
IV Scherzo	C minor
V Adagio	A-flat major
VI Finale	F major
Symphony No.5 in F minor, Opus 42 No.1 (1880)	
I Allegro vivace	F minor
II Allegro cantabile	F minor
III Andantino quasi allegretto	A-flat major
IV Adagio	C major
V Toccata	F major



TITLE	KEY
Symphony No.6 in G minor, Opus 42 No.2 (1880) I Allegro II Adagio III Intermezzo IV Cantabile V Finale	G minor B major G minor D-flat major G major
Symphony No.7 in A minor, Opus 42 No.3 (1880) I Moderato II Chorale III Andante IV Allegro ma non troppo V Lento VI Finale	A minor A major F-sharp minor A minor C-sharp major A minor
Symphony No.8 in B major, Opus 42 No.4 (1880) I Allegro risoluto II Moderato cantabile III Allegro IV Prélude V Variations VI Adagio VII Finale	B major E major B minor A minor D minor F-sharp major B minor

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