

D/CD 3049



# *French Fireworks*

*The Symphonic  
Organ*

*Michael Farris*

*plays*

*the Casavant Organ  
Cathedral of St. Peter  
Erie  
Pennsylvania*

*Widor*

*Franck • Alain*

*Vierne • Duruflé • Dupré*

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ORIGINAL DIGITAL RECORDING

**FRENCH FIREWORKS  
THE SYMPHONIC ORGAN**

D/CD 3049

**Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)**

- 1 Allegro, from Symphonie VI (8:27)

**César Franck (1822-1890)**

- 2 Fantaisie in A Major (14:14)

**Jéhan Alain (1911-1940)**

- 3 Deuxième Fantaisie (6:35)

**Louis Vierne (1870-1937)**

- 4 Final, from Symphonie VI (7:02)

**Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986)**

- 5 Scherzo op. 2 (6:00)  
6 Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain op. 7 (11:08)  
6.1 Prelude  
6.2 Fugue

**Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)**

- 7 Variations sur un Noël op. 20 (11:09)  
7.1 Theme  
7.2 Variation 1  
7.3 Variation 2  
7.4 Variation 3  
7.5 Variation 4  
7.6 Variation 5  
7.7 Variation 6  
7.8 Variation 7  
7.9 Variation 8  
7.10 Variation 9  
7.11 Variation 10  
7.12 Finale

**MICHAEL FARRIS**, playing the Casavant Organ in the Cathedral of Saint Peter,  
Erie, Pennsylvania

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 60:05

Printed in U.S.A.

The modern French organ school evolved out of traditions established during the middle and late nineteenth century. The introduction of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll's "symphonic style" organs into the major churches of Paris broadened the traditional scope of the instrument, and the magnificent acoustics of those buildings enhanced their effect all the more. The liturgical requirements for organ improvisation brought to the fore a group of skilled players whose credentials as complete musicians were impeccable. For nearly a century these men have had a strong influence on French musical training, since most of them sat on the faculty of the Paris Conservatory. Franck and Saint-Saëns were among the earliest, and in modern times Dupré, Messiaen, and Duruflé have been outstanding. Lesser known are the organ composers Widor, Vierne, Langlais, Tournemire, and Alain, all of whom have enriched the literature for the instrument.

Charles-Marie Widor is best known today for his ten organ symphonies. Of these the **Symphonie VI** is outstanding, and its first movement is a favorite rousing opener for recitals. The opening foursquare theme is followed by rapid triplet figurations, and the two contrasting textures are interwoven as the main theme gives way to variation treatment in subsequent development. A final statement of the main theme ends the piece.

Like so many of his organ works, Franck's **Fantaisie in A Major** is episodic in form. Here, meditative sections are juxtaposed against more active ones. The unifying element is the noble main theme, whose dual nature of both major and minor creates an unsettling ambiguity which does not resolve itself until the end.

Jéhan Alain's career was cut short by World War II, but it is evident even from his sparse output that his was a major talent. Much of his melodic inspiration derives from exotic modal constructions similar to those of Messiaen. Formally, his work unfolds through repetition and expansion of rhythmic and harmonic elements. Harmonically, his writing relies on juxtaposed triads, which are often enriched with simple chromatic lines. The **Deuxième Fantaisie** is an example of all of this, and its chant-like theme reaches its climax with an awesome declamation on the Trompette-en-chamade.

While Vierne's writing may be less formal than Widor's in the structural sense, it is years ahead harmonically. In fact, one may find fault in Vierne's harmonic rhythm, which often moves too quickly for clear audibility in large reverberant spaces. As a result, the listener is sometimes left in a sea of gorgeous harmonies, but the effect is

never unpleasant. The final movement (**Final**) of his **Symphonie VI** is the supreme virtuoso piece for organ. Its opening rapid-fire theme is stated and developed in detail. It then gives way to an extended middle section with a static pedal theme presented against a manual ostinato figure. The main theme returns and is eventually woven into the middle theme against rapid scale passages in the pedals. It takes great panache to carry off this work. Anything less does the music disservice, and lessening the tempo is an outright disaster!

Durufié's reputation as a master craftsman is based on less than three hours worth of published music! Notable among his non-organ works are the Requiem and Three Dances for orchestra. The **Scherzo op. 2** is an early work drawing on the harmonic idiom of Debussy. Whole tone sonorities dominate, and flute and string textures are the basis for organ registration. While most scherzos forge directly ahead in tempo, the free form of this piece projects subtlety through contrasting slow and fast sections.

The **Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain op. 7** is Durufié's homage to a fellow student killed in the war. Through a scheme of looping the alphabet back on itself, the letters ALAIN come out as ADAAF, and this figuration is presented in triplets in scherzo-like fashion. Later in the Prelude there is a quotation from Alain's "Litanies" played on the Cromorne stop. There are actually two fugues; the first is slowly paced, while the second is a masterful double fugue incorporating the first subject.

Dupré's **Variations sur un Noël** is freely based on the traditional French Noël Novelet. The melody is reworked so that it is easily adaptable to canonic and other variation treatment. The final section is an extended fugue followed by a rousing toccata.

There are very few venues in the United States which combine the right acoustics with the right instrument to permit a French organ program to be heard as it should be. **The Cathedral of Saint Peter** in Erie, Pennsylvania, is a Victorian Gothic structure dating from the nineteenth century with measured reverberation time in excess of three and one-half seconds. In 1977, the prestigious Canadian organ builders Casavant Frères installed a large three manual instrument designed along eclectic French lines. As such, it has all of the important resources of the Parisian Cavallé-Coll organs, including French chorus reeds, ample foundation tone, broad string sound, varied

mutation stops, and brilliant upperwork.

In recording the instrument, three spaced Milab DC-63 microphones were arrayed in a left-center-right configuration at a height of about fifteen feet above the nave. Various directional patterns were experimented with, and simple cardioid patterns were found to work best. These were aimed upward toward the organ in the east gallery of the Cathedral, some twenty feet away. The recordings were made late at night in order to be rid of traffic noise. The organ stoplist follows.

*John Eargle*

### Organ Stops

Casavant Organ — Opus 3353

#### *Grand Orgue:*

16' Violon	61
8' Montre	61
8' Flûte harmonique	61
8' Flûte à cheminée	61
4' Prestant	61
4' Flûte conique	61
2 2/3' Quinte	61
2' Doublette	61
Cornet V (TA)	200
Fourniture VI	366
Cymbale IV	244
16' Bombarde (1-12 L/2)	61
8' Trompette	61
8' Trompette-en-chamade	61
4' Clairon	61
Chimes (preparation only)	—

#### *Recit:*

16' Bourdon doux (bois)	61
8' Principal étroit	61
8' Bourdon	61
8' Viole de gambe	61
8' Voix céleste	61
4' Octave	61
4' Flûte octaviante	61
2 2/3' Nasard	61
2' Octavin	61
1 3/5' Tierce	61
Plein Jeu VI	366
16' Basson	61
8' Trompette	61
8' Hautbois	61
8' Vox humaine	61
4' Clairon	61
Tremblant	
8' Trompette-en-chamade (Grand Orgue)	—

*Couplers:*

Grand Orgue à la Pédale	8'
Récit à la Pédale	8'
Récit à la Pédale	4'
Récit au Grand Orgue	16'
Récit au Grand Orgue	8'
Positif à la Pédale	8'
Positif au Grand Orgue	8'
Récit au Positif	8'

*Positif:*

8' Montre	61
8' Bourdon	61
4' Prestant	61
4' Flûte à cheminée	61
2 2/3' Nasard	61
2' Doublette	61
2' Quarte de nasard	61
1 3/5' Tierce	61
1 1/3' Larigot	61
l' Sifflet	61
Fourniture V	305
8' Trompette	61
8' Cromorne	61
4' Clairon	61
Tremblant	
8' Trompette-en-chamade	—

*Pedale:*

16' Montre	32
16' Soubasse	32
16' Violon (Grand Orgue)	—
16' Bourdon dous (Récit)	—
10 2/3' Quinte (bois)	32
8' Octavebasse	32
8' Bourdon	32
4' Octave	32
4' Flûte	32
Fourniture V	160
32' Contre Bombarde (L/2)	32
16' Bombarde	32
16' Bombarde (Grand Orgue)	—
16' Basson (Récit)	—
8' Trompette	32
8' Trompette-en-chamade (Grand Orgue)	—
4' Clairon	32
Adjustable combinatons (capture type)	
Six per division	
Eight General	
Stops	57
Ranks of Pipes	82
Pipes in Organ	4434



Executive Producer: *Amelia S. Haygood*  
Engineer and Producer: *John Eargle*  
Digital Recording and Editing: *Sony*  
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Console: *custom design*  
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*This recording is dedicated to Russell Saunders,  
Professor of Organ at the Eastman School of Music.*

Michael Farris, winner of the Young Artist Competition of The American Guild of Organists, is Assistant Professor of Music at Thiel College in Greenville, PA. In September, 1987 he was chosen as one of "25 of Today's Young Performers Headed for Tomorrow's Stardom" in *Musical America* magazine's Young Artists special edition. Currently a doctoral candidate at The Eastman School of Music, Mr. Farris studies with Russell Saunders. He holds a Performer's Certificate from Eastman as well as that school's highest performance honor, the Artist's Diploma. Mr. Farris draws from various periods and styles for his concert programs. In 1979 in Dallas, he played the world premiere of William Bolcom's first of several gospel preludes with the composer present.







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