

2020 Vierne Complete Organ Works

JOSEPH ADAM

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Pièces de fantaisie, Livre I, op. 51 (1925-26)

Prélude

Andantino

Caprice

Intermezzo

Requiem æternam

Marche nuptiale

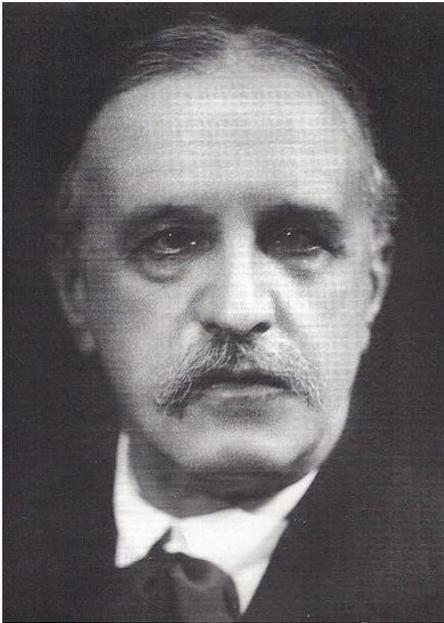
Louis Vierne

1870–1937

LOUIS VICTOR JULES VIERNE was born on October 8, 1870 in the ancient city of Poitiers in central France. *I came into the world almost blind on account of which my parents felt a very keen chagrin: because of this fact, I was surrounded by a warm and continual tenderness which very early predisposed me to an almost unhealthy sensitivity... This was also to follow me all my life, and was to become the cause of intense joys and inexpressible sufferings.* (Louis Vierne: “Journals”) Vierne’s musical talents were soon recognized by his maternal uncle, Charles Colin, a professor of oboe at the Paris Conservatoire, and an accomplished organist as well. Colin undertook the boy’s first instruction in music, and instilled in him the dream of one day studying with the revered César Franck at the Paris Conservatoire.

Having undergone several operations which restored some sight to the young boy, it was nonetheless decided that he should learn to read braille. In 1881, Vierne became a student at the *Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles* (National Institute for Blind Youths) in Paris. Music instruction formed a central part of the famous school’s curriculum – each student was required to learn to play the piano and an additional orchestral instrument (Vierne was assigned the viola), and to sing in a choir. Instruction was provided by some of the finest professional musicians in the country, in effect turning the Institute into a preparatory conservatory with a rigorous yet effective course of study. Vierne achieved his early dream of becoming a student at the Paris Conservatoire upon his graduation in 1890. Alas, only a few short weeks later, César Franck died.

Fresh from the immense success of the second set of four symphonies, Charles-Marie Widor was appointed as Franck’s successor, where he inherited a class of students still grieving the recent death of their beloved maître César Franck. The reservation the class held for their new master soon dissipated with their realization of Widor’s mastery of the organ, and the high demands, strict but always tempered with kindness, that he placed on his



students. He became much like a father-figure to Vierne, and was soon giving him private lessons in composition in addition to organ.

Through the 1890s, Widor did much to encourage Vierne's budding career. He commissioned and published Vierne's opus 1, a charming Allegretto for organ, and soon had Vierne assisting him with the preparatory students in his organ class as well as duties at the great organ at St. Sulpice. The year 1900 brought the death of Eugène Sergent, organist of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris for fifty-one years, and the latest of a long string of strikingly mediocre musicians that had served the cathedral since the late 18th century. With the strong encouragement of Widor, Vierne became one of ninety-eight candidates for the position, and after a long and exhaustive competition emerged as the unanimous choice of the committee comprised of the greatest musicians of the day. Upon assuming his new position, Vierne found intense inspiration not only in his surroundings, but especially in the magnificence of the organ, which had been completely rebuilt by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll during 1863–68 and, along with St. Sulpice, numbered amongst the famous builder's most

significant masterpieces. Vierne remained in service at Notre-Dame literally to the end of his life, suffering a fatal stroke at the console during his 1,750th recital on June 2, 1937.

In spite of the professional and personal satisfaction Vierne enjoyed, his life was not one of uninterrupted triumphs. He would recall the year 1906 as "the beginning of the catastrophes... For thirty years they have succeeded each other without interruption." He fractured his leg after stepping into a pothole in the street, narrowly avoiding a career-ending amputation; a year later he nearly died from typhoid fever; his marriage crumbled and ended in divorce in 1909 (his wife had been having a long affair with Cavaillé-Coll's successor, Charles Mutin, who had acted as Vierne's best man at his wedding in 1899; Vierne had dedicated his Symphony No. 2 to Mutin in 1903).

There was further heartache in 1911 with the death first of Vierne's mother, then Alexandre Guilmant, Widor's successor at the Conservatoire, to whom Vierne was still assistant and to whose succession he might legitimately aspire. Against all expectation, he was passed over in favor of Eugène Gigout. Vierne was a victim of political maneuverings on the part of Gabriel Fauré, director of the Conservatoire and decidedly no fan of Widor's. Vierne became Guilmant's successor at Vincent D'Indy's Schola Cantorum, and so continued the tradition of instruction established by Widor and Franck. Later, Fauré came to regret his decision, and sent students to Vierne at the Schola Cantorum, and the friendship and respect between the two musicians was restored.

Vierne composed the first suite of what would eventually be four volumes of *Pièces de Fantaisie* – fantasy pieces – during late summer of 1926 while on vacation, completing them in December. They were published in time for an extensive North American tour undertaken in the first months of 1927; Vierne gave the premier performance on an afternoon recital on February 4, 1927, in the Wanamaker department store auditorium. Many details are unknown about Vierne's tour, including the total number of recitals given, though there are at least four documented performances of the suite, always played complete.

Similar, though much larger in scale than their predecessors, the 24 *Pièces en style libre* – 24 Pieces in free style – these pieces were written with a large three-manual organ in mind. Most require a great pianistically-inspired virtuosity – like most French organists of the era, Vierne was an accomplished pianist, and composed a significant number of idiomatic works for the piano, both solo and chamber music. These suites include some of the composer's most famous works, indeed, even the most famous of the entire symphonic organ repertoire.

The *Prélude* which opens the suite is a sober and understated carillon-like staccato toccata in C Major, with a soft, warm registration of flutes, strings, and oboe.

The *Andantino* was dedicated to Vierne's student, the Count de Saint-Martin, a wealthy dilettante and Vierne's eventual successor at Notre-Dame. In the parallel A minor to the opening, it displays a simply harmonized chorale form on flutes and gamba. Here, chromaticism and syncopated rhythm vie in expressiveness. The major sections are interrupted twice by two more dynamic short sections on solo flutes, before a final restatement in the parallel major key on the celestes.

The *Caprice* is a two-part pastoral movement on a single somewhat modal theme; the melody is stated in the soprano over an accompaniment in parallel voices, all on soft foundation stops. A highly chromatic development concludes with a restatement in the tenor, accompanied by long, very mobile arabesques and a solo staccato pedal drawing in imitation of the melody.

Like a scherzo in 2/4, staccato and accentuated, the *Intermezzo* is a lively ostinato piece, played on a colorful registration of flutes, strings and mutations – Vierne was extremely fond in his later years of very piquant registrations. The contrasting sections are more simply melodic and dreamy, played on a calmer registration. The piece ends with a leaping staccato run in parallel motion, crowned by two chords with double pedal.

Dedicated to the memory of Vierne's recently-deceased younger brother Édouard, the *Requiem aeternam* is no restful portrayal of the afterlife, but more of a reflection of the resigned grief of a devoted survivor. Introduced by a haunting figure repeated numerous times, with naturally chromatic writing, this piece is the only example of Vierne's use of the *Voix humaine* in his works, an intensely nasal reed almost always used with the tremulant. The chorale theme is harmonized simply over an accompaniment of parallel voices in a tight texture. Of a progressively intense and compelling density, this Requiem ends almost in relief, quietly on the voix celestes.

The suite concludes with an unusual *Marche nuptiale*, with large, almost violent chords and impetuous underlying pedal runs. A somber, meditation section introduces a rhythm in dotted notes before going in to a sort of toccata that gradually asserts itself in triplets. The final statement of the initial theme is transformed into a majestic carillon-tocatta with full organ. Upon the premiere performance, the critic of The New York Times wrote that the "Marche Nuptiale, by reason of its dissonances, would be taken by some persons as a warning to delay the wedding day."

— notes by Joseph Adam

JOSEPH ADAM was first appointed Cathedral Organist at St. James Cathedral in 1993, and was named Director of Music in 2018. There he leads a program that includes three adult choirs and three youth choirs that provides music for nearly 600 services annually, as well as an extensive concert series that presents a wide range of choral and organ programs.

A dedicated educator, for twenty years he taught organ and harpsichord as a faculty member at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma. Continuing this work, he is Artist in Residence in Organ at the University of Washington. As Resident Organist of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra since 2003, he performs regularly as a member of the keyboard section of the orchestra, undertaking organ, harpsichord, piano and celesta parts, as well as annual solo recitals.

His playing received international attention when he was awarded the First Prize in the St. Albans International Organ Competition in 1991, one of the most prestigious organ competitions in the world. His subsequent performances have included recitals in notable venues throughout Europe and America. His performances this season include recitals at St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle, St. Cecilia Cathedral in Omaha, and Stanford University. He recently gave performances of the Poulenc Concerto and Respighi Suite for Organ and Strings with the North Carolina Symphony at the new Cathedral of the Holy Name of Jesus in Raleigh.

Joseph Adam was educated at The University of Iowa, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Washington, and concertizes as a member of the Windwerk Artists cooperative.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Most Reverend Paul D. Etienne, *Archbishop of Seattle*
The Very Reverend Michael G. Ryan, *Pastor of St. James Cathedral*
Corinna Laughlin, *Pastoral Assistant for Liturgy*
Joseph Adam, *Director of Music & Cathedral Organist*
Samuel Libra, *Associate Cathedral Organist*
Stacey Sunde, *Director of Youth Music*
Marjorie Bunday, *Music Office Assistant*

About the Cathedral Organs

Hutchings-Votey; Boston, Mass.; 1907

4 manuals and pedal, 51 ranks



St. James' Hutchings-Votey organ was designed by George Hutchings in close collaboration with the Cathedral's first organist, Dr. Franklin Sawyer Palmer. It was Dr. Palmer's input that led to the position and orientation of the organ in the West Gallery rather than hidden in chambers on the East and West towers. The on-site tonal finishing of the organ was completed by Ernest M. Skinner, who had formerly worked for Hutchings and had recently started his own organ company. The organ, still in largely original condition, remains one of the last extant four manual organs built by the Hutchings-Votey company and is a treasured example of some of the finest organ building of the early twentieth century.

The Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy Millennium Organ Manuel Rosales; Los Angeles, California; 2000

3 manuals, 48 ranks

The Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy Millennium organ was built by Rosales Organ Builders of Los Angeles in 2000. It consists of 48 ranks of pipes over three manual divisions and pedal; five ranks of pipes have been incorporated from the 1926 Casavant organ that stood behind the former high altar in the east apse of the cathedral. The new organ was carefully designed to provide musical leadership from the east apse for liturgies, to accompany the Cathedral choral ensembles, and to provide for a more authentic performance of Baroque music for liturgical and concert use. A four-manual master console provides a single organist with complete control over the tonal resources of both the Rosales organ and the Hutchings-Votey organ in the west gallery.



ROSALES ORGAN BUILDERS, INC., OPUS 30, 2000

3 manuals, 48 ranks, Compass 61/32

II	GRAND ORGUE	PÉDALE
	16' Montre (<i>en façade</i>)	32' Bourdon (<i>ext., H-V</i>)
	8' Montre (<i>en façade</i>)	16' Montre (<i>G-O</i>)
	8' Bourdon	16' Soubasse
	8' Flûte douce (<i>1926</i>)	16' Bourdon (<i>Récit</i>)
	8' Flûte céleste (<i>1926</i>)	8' Octave (<i>en façade</i>)
	4' Prestant	8' Flûte (<i>Solo</i>)
	4' Flûte conique	8' Violoncelle (<i>Solo</i>)
	2-2/3' Octave Quint	8' Basse (<i>ext.</i>)
	2' Doublette	4' Flûte en façade (<i>Solo</i>)
	IV-V Plein jeu	16' Bombarde (<i>5", in Solo box</i>)
	16' Contre basson	16' Basson (<i>G-O</i>)
	8' Trompette	8' 1ère Trompette (<i>ext.</i>)
	4' Clairon	8' 2ème Trompette (<i>Solo</i>)
	Trémolo	4' Clairon (<i>Solo</i>)
		Clochettes
		Rosignol
IV or I	SOLO EXPRESSIF	
	16' Flûte en façade	
	8' Violoncelle	
	8' Flûte Harmonique	
	4' Octave	
	V Cornet (<i>f⁰-g³</i>)	
	8' Trompette	
	8' Clarinette	
	4' Clairon	
	Trémolo	
		COUPLERS
		Grand-Orgue / Pédale 8'
		Récit / Pédale 8', 4'
		Solo / Pédale 8', 4'
		Récit / Grand-Orgue 16', 8', 4'
		Solo / Grand-Orgue 16', 8', 4'
		Solo / Récit 16', 8', 4'
		Récit / Récit 16', 4'
		Solo / Solo 16', 4'
		Grand-Orgue / Solo 8'
III	RÉCIT EXPRESSIF	
	16' Bourdon (<i>1926</i>)	
	8' Diapason	
	8' Flûte traversière	
	8' Viole de Gambe (<i>1926</i>)	
	8' Voix céleste (<i>1926</i>)	
	4' Octave	
	4' Flûte octavante	
	2-2/3' Nasard	
	2' Octavin	
	1-3/5' Tierce	
	II-IV Plein jeu harmonique	
	8' Trompette	
	8' Basson-Hautbois	
	8' Voix humaine	
	Trémolo	

HUTCHINGS-VOTEY ORGAN COMPANY, OPUS 1623, 1907

Restored by Marceau & Associates and Frans Bosman, 1996

4 manuals, 52 ranks, Compass 61/30

II	GREAT	8'	Cornoepen (6")	
	16'	Diapason (<i>en façade</i>)	8'	Oboe
	8'	Diapason I (<i>en façade</i>)	4'	Clarion
	8'	Diapason II (<i>en façade</i>)	8'	Vox Humana
	8'	Gross Flute*		Tremolo
	8'	Doppel Flute*	IV	SOLO
	8'	Gamba (<i>Choir</i>)	8'	Stentorphone
	8'	Dulciana (<i>Choir, ext.</i>)	8'	Philomela
	4'	Octave	4'	Harmonic Flute
	4'	Harmonic Flute*	8'	Tuba Mirabilis
	2-2/3'	Twelfth* (<i>1996</i>)		Chimes (<i>1996</i>)
	2'	Fifteenth		
	III	Mixture* (<i>1996</i>)		PEDAL
	8'	Trumpet*	32'	Bourdon (<i>ext.</i>)
	4'	Clarion* (<i>1996</i>)	16'	Diapason (<i>open wood</i>)
		(*enclosed in Choir box)	16'	Violone
I	CHOIR		16'	Bourdon
	16'	Dulciana	16'	Lieblich Gedackt (<i>Swell</i>)
	8'	Diapason	16'	Dulciana (<i>Choir</i>)
	8'	Concert Flute	10-2/3'	Quint (<i>ext.</i>)
	8'	Gamba	8'	Violoncello (<i>ext.</i>)
	8'	Viola	8'	Flute (<i>ext.</i>)
	8'	Vox Celestis (<i>c⁰-c⁴</i>)	64'	Ravelement (<i>ext., 2006</i>)
	4'	Flute d'Amour	32'	Contra Bombarde (<i>2006</i>)
	2'	Piccolo	16'	Bombarde (<i>ext., 2006</i>)
	8'	Clarinet	16'	Trombone (8")
		Tremolo		
III	SWELL (<i>double-shades</i>)			COUPLERS
	16'	Bourdon		Swell 16', 4'
	8'	Diapason		Choir 16', 4'
	8'	Stopped Diapason		Solo 16', 4'
	8'	Quintadena		Swell / Great 8'
	8'	Salicional		Choir / Great 8'
	8'	Unda Maris (<i>c⁰-c⁴</i>)		Solo / Great 8'
	4'	Octave		Swell / Choir 8'
	4'	Flauto Traverso		Great / Solo 8'
	2-2/3'	Nasard		Great / Pedal 8'
	2'	Flautino		Swell / Pedal 8', 4'
	V	Dolce Cornet		Choir / Pedal 8'
	16'	Contra Fagotto		Solo / Pedal 8'

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Upcoming Livestreamed Concerts & Musical Prayer

St. James Cathedral ❖ Seattle

Friday Musical Prayer in the Cathedral

Join us each Friday evening at 6:30pm as our Cathedral Musicians and friends present meditative music to soothe the soul and bring a quiet end to a busy week.

October 23 ♦ Paul Taub, *flute*

October 30 ♦ Eliza Woodyard, *soprano*, with Samuel Libra, *organ*

November 6 ♦ Mark Hilliard Wilson, *guitar*

November 13 ♦ John Carrington, *harp*

November 20 ♦ Alexander White, *trumpet*, with Joseph Adam, *organ*

The complete organ works of Louis Vierne

The French composer Louis Vierne, organist of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris from 1900 until his death in 1937, left us an invaluable legacy in his compositions for the organ. We continue our observance of the 150th anniversary of Vierne's birth with a survey of his music written for the King of Instruments. Each program is livestreamed at 7:00pm and is approximately forty minutes in length.

Thursday, November 19 ♦ Samuel Libra, Cathedral Associate Organist ♦ *Symphony No. 4 in G Minor*

Tuesday, December 1 ♦ Joseph Adam, Cathedral Organist ♦ *Symphony No. 6 in B Minor*

Date TBA ♦ Joseph Adam, Cathedral Organist ♦ *Symphony No. 5 in A Minor*

Chamber Music for strings and piano by Johannes Brahms

The chamber music of Johannes Brahms is among the most treasured and beloved music composed in the late 19th century. Join us in these programs, each featuring one of the sonatas written for strings and piano, with musicians from the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. Each program is livestreamed at 7:00pm, and is approximately forty-five minutes in length.

Tuesday, October 27 ♦ Walter Gray, *violoncello*, with Joseph Adam, *piano* ♦ Herbolsheimer: *Five Elegies for solo Cello* ♦ Brahms: *Sonata in F Minor*, op. 99

Tuesday, November 10 ♦ Roberta Hansen Downey, *violoncello*, with Joseph Adam, *piano* ♦ Clarke: *Sonata* ♦ Brahms: *Sonata in E Minor*, op. 38

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