



Eccles Organ
FESTIVAL

The Complete Organ Works of
César Franck

May 1 and May 22, 2022

The Cathedral of the Madeleine | Salt Lake City, Utah

The Complete Organ Works of César Franck

Gabriele Terrone, organist

PART I

Sunday, May 1, 2022 | 8:00 PM

Pièce héroïque

Choral No. 1

Pastorale, Op. 19

Prière, Op. 20

Cantabile

Grande Pièce Symphonique, Op. 17

PART II

Sunday, May 22, 2022 | 8:00 PM

Choral No. 3

Fantaisie in C, Op. 16

Choral No. 2

Fantaisie in A

Prélude, fugue et variation, Op. 18

Final, Op. 21

Kindly hold your applause until the end of the program

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890)

Although regarded as a French composer, César Franck was born in Liège, Belgium. He showed musical ability from a young age, entering the Liège Conservatory along with his older brother, Joseph, who played the violin. After César graduated from the conservatory with honors at the age of eleven, the Franck family relocated to Paris so that both boys could continue studies at the Paris Conservatory. César progressed rapidly and hoped to win the coveted *Prix de Rome* but his father withdrew him from his studies so that he and his brother could tour and earn money for the family. By this time César was composing prolifically (he and his brother performed many original compositions), and even at this early stage his compositions showed a command of form and technique.

By his mid-twenties César had begun to lose interest in life as a touring concert pianist and turned his attention to composition, teaching piano lessons to earn a living. In 1848 he married one of his piano students, the daughter of well-known actors. The Franck family did not approve of their relationship, and after his marriage César was forced to sever ties with his father completely. The newlyweds settled in Paris, where César worked as an organist, choirmaster, and private tutor while continuing to compose.

Franck's mature style was shaped by his employment at the Basilica of Sainte Clotilde, where he served as organist from 1858 until his death. Not long after Franck's appointment the church installed a three-manual Cavaillé-Coll organ, one of the first to boast a combination action system as well as a Barker lever, which made it possible to couple the divisions together without added weight to the key mechanism. The Sainte Clotilde organ also featured a number of newly-developed stops designed to mimic an orchestra. Franck was one of the first organist-composers to experiment with the tonal colors that would become the hallmarks of French symphonic organ style.

Franck was highly regarded as both an improviser and performer and often gave dedicatory recitals on newly-installed Cavaillé-Coll organs. Gabriel Pierné, Franck's student and eventual successor at Sainte Clotilde, noted that Franck often carried with him small leatherbound notebooks which contained themes taken from Bach, Handel, Beethoven, and modern composers that served as the basis for improvisation, as well as his own

original themes. Vincent D'Indy, Franck's student and first biographer, called Franck the "very genius of improvisation," an opinion corroborated by other students such as Vierne.

Franck gained a circle of composition students through his efforts as a founding member of the *Société Nationale de Musique*. The *Société* was formed in 1871 following the Franco-Prussian War as an effort to elevate French music (instrumental music in particular, which had long failed to garner the same respect as opera and ballet in France) and to support the performance and publication of music by French composers. Franck was appointed as organ professor at the Paris Conservatory in 1872. He was well-liked by his students, who referred to him as "Père Franck," but was often at odds with conservatory faculty who frowned upon his tendency to mingle composition with performance in his organ classes.

Six months after he was involved in a trolley accident, Franck developed a respiratory infection which led to his death in November 1890. Apart from a few isolated early pieces of unconvincing craftsmanship and those for harmonium written between 1858 and 1863, Franck's organ output is limited to the 12 large pieces of universal renown today: *Six Pièces*, *Trois Pièces*, and *Trois Chorals*.

SIX PIÈCES

Franck's appointment at Sainte Clotilde prompted a significant change in his compositional output. Prior to the completion of the Cavallé-Coll organ in 1859, Franck wrote virtually no major works for the organ, focusing instead on works for the piano as well as his early oratorio, *Ruth*. His first large works for organ, *Six Pièces* are clearly the result of his new position at Sainte Clotilde and access to a larger instrument that provided him with inspiration. Composed from 1854 to 1863, they were published in 1868 and pursue the ideal of "pure," non-liturgical organ music which could at last compete with the piano in a modern and worthy repertoire.

Fantaisie in C Major, Op. 16

Franck composed the *Fantaisie* over the span of a decade, writing three different versions before it was finally published. The final version is in C major, a key rarely used by Franck, and consists of three movements. The initial *Poco lento* has three symmetrical sections (ABA) which set out two themes. The A section is characterized by natural simplicity, followed by

the B section in the style of a chorale in canon, and ending with the return of the A section on a fuller registration above a pedal point resulting in a pastoral drone effect. The second movement, *Allegretto cantando*, is also in tripartite form. The first theme is a rustic melody followed by a supple and fluid arabesque in the upper range of the trumpet. The movement ends with a dialogue between these themes, alternating between the bass and the treble. A short *Quasi lento* introduces the final movement, a delicate *Adagio* in 3/8, which evokes a calmer climate and reconnects with the peaceful beginning using the distinctive *Voix humaine* stop.

Grande Pièce Symphonique, Op. 17

At a performance time of approximately 25 minutes, the *Grande Pièce Symphonique* is Franck's longest work for organ and laid the foundation for the organ symphonies of later composers such as Widor and Vierne. Franck set a historic milestone not only by imitating Beethoven's cyclical development of the same thematic material throughout its four continuous movements but also by employing colorful orchestral timbres of the Cavaillé-Coll organ. The opening movement in sonata form is introduced by an *Andantino serio* in F-sharp minor which immediately juxtaposes two themes: a melody in even eighth notes over repeated chords then a response in the style of a harmonized chorale but softened by syncopations. The initial melody is developed leading to the *Allegro non troppo* where two more themes are introduced: the first one of martial allure and the second another majestic four-voice chorale. A series of suspenseful cadenzas then leads to the two chorale themes forming a peaceful conclusion. The symphony continues with a sensitive *Andante* in B major generating a romantic melody played on the Positif clarinet. The *Andante* is interrupted by a lively ABA scherzo (*Allegro*) in the minor mode; two fragments echo between Positif and Récit and surround a kind of hymn melody, alternately shared by the bass and soprano, woven into a *perpetuum mobile*. Suddenly the clarinet melody resumes, this time clad in thick harmony on the *Voix céleste* and with double pedal and canon between the two upper parts. Franck then offers a Beethovenian review of all the previous main themes as a prologue to the finale. The three-part finale begins with an arresting *grand chœur* transforming the military theme of the first movement into the major mode over a virtuosic pedal line. Then comes a fugue on a subject from the same theme with a four-voice exposition (ASTB) and a second part using a new eighth note motif. The fugue theme is developed in the spirit of a variation, and an abrupt modulation to E-flat leading to a chromatic episode signals the exhilarating coda.

Prélude, Fugue et Variation, Op. 18

This “exquisite” (in the words of Bizet) work was originally a piano-harmonium duet which Franck subsequently arranged as an organ solo and dedicated to Camille Saint-Saëns. Endowed with a haunting melody and trio texture, it was first performed by Franck November 17, 1864 at Sainte Clotilde and has become his most popular organ work. The opening melody in B minor is played on the oboe, the only instance in Franck’s works where that stop is used for a solo rather than part of the chorus. It is repeated three times, and following a second theme, it returns to close the movement in the dominant. A short *Lento* using four-part homophony transitions into the *Fugue*. After a classic tenor, alto, soprano, bass exposition, the *Fugue* eventually ends on a dominant pedal to segue directly into the *Variation*’s elegant pianistic 16th-note accompaniment which combines with a verbatim reprise of the B minor melody and pedal parts from the *Prélude*.

Pastorale, Op. 19

Franck’s tenderly warm and picturesque *Pastorale* in E major is dedicated to famed organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll. It lacks the compound meter and lilting melodies commonly found in pastorals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Calling for a very simple registration, a total of only eight stops, it is written in ABA form beginning with an *Andantino*, which like Bach’s *Pastorale* and many French noëls, uses long and rustic musette pedal points. A harmonized chorale periodically disrupts the regular pace, providing a religious touch to the tableau. A short trumpet recitative (future subject of the middle fugato) creates a bridge to the contrasting B section, *Quasi allegretto*. This toccatina of staccato chords in A minor perhaps depicts a small thunderstorm. Vacillating between major and minor, a beautiful countermelody emerges but is soon broken up by a brief fugato with a four-voice exposition (BTAS). In the recapitulation the previous musette theme returns, this time enriched with lyrical counterpoint cleverly combined with the chorale theme. In 1930, Charles Tournemire, one of Franck’s students and his later successor at Sainte Clotilde, made a 78 rpm phonograph recording of the *Pastorale* (along with four other works by Franck), representing some the only recordings made on the Sainte Clotilde organ in its original state.

Prière, Op. 20

The only piece in the set with a religious notion, *Prière* was composed by Franck as a tribute to his mother, who had died in July 1860. It is filled with organic unity and develops three main themes to achieve a balance

between contemplation and feeling, mysticism and sensuality, and the union of body and spirit. The structure is two major movements linked by a recitative, of which Franck retains some elements in the epilogue. Franck had notoriously large hands, so his music can be difficult to play for organists with small hands. A classic example is the five-voice opening movement, *Andantino sostenuto*—with frequent tenths, elevenths, and voice-crossing—which introduces all three themes. The first theme is played twice, followed by the second theme initially stated in fragments then developed, and finally the third theme appears superimposed on the second theme. The central transition is a dialogue of recitatives with polyphonic responses. A triplet pattern emerges to animate the discourse and announce the return of the first theme. The final section marked *Très expressif et très soutenu* is a kaleidoscopic recapitulation of the three themes. At times they mingle together so densely that a sense of clarity is more than the symphonic organ can deliver. A set of ascending scales signals the conclusion treating the third theme imitatively. The opening theme returns and builds to a climax in the major mode before a subdued, prayerful ending.

Final, Op. 21

This piece likely made its debut at the inaugural recital given by Franck and Louis Lefébure-Wély, the acclaimed “prince of organists,” to whom the piece is dedicated, at Sainte Clotilde in 1859. On one hand, Vincent d’Indy found the *Final* “particularly interesting because of its firm, Beethoven-like structure, its graceful second theme contrasting with the inflexibility of the first and the important development toward the close which leads to a forceful and majestic peroration.” On the other hand, Franck has been accused of lowering his musical standards to those of Lefébure-Wély’s Second Empire socialite style. Indeed, Lefébure-Wély’s *Offertoire in D Major* is somewhat analogous to the *Final*; however, Franck proves himself vastly superior from the outset as he lays out a tonal plan and musical form in the 29-bar opening pedal solo, with its modulations to F and A-flat major. The preceding triplet carillon theme provides a joyful countermelody followed by a development into fanfares of the pedal theme in the upper registers. A contrasting hymn of solemn legato then appears as the second theme beginning in F-sharp major modulating and mingling with the carillon theme. In the final section the first theme returns, but like *Choral No. 3*, only after a prolonged wait does it sound in the tonic key—an effect of deliverance that provokes an immediate manifestation of seven hammered chords. The ephemeral second theme disrupts before a spectacular conclusion where lines and fanfares contend until a dominant pedal and four monumental final chords.

TROIS PIÈCES

Following the loss of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, France was eager to reassert itself on the world stage and in 1878 built the grand Palais du Trocadéro (along with the adjacent Eiffel Tower) to host the World's Fair. Its central building was a 5,000-seat auditorium that showcased an organ constructed by Cavaillé-Coll. Over the course of two months in 1878, a series of fifteen organ recitals was presented by the most well-known organists of the day, including Guilmant, Gigout, Widor (premiere of his 6th Symphony), Saint-Saëns, and Franck, who played the thirteenth recital on October 1. His recital included the premier of the *Trois Pièces*, all of which he composed within just a few months earlier that year. The recent discovery of the manuscript used by Franck on this occasion reveals significant differences with the definitive edition of 1883, as regards the registration, the title of the first piece (then called *Fantaisie-Idylle*), and the actual text of *Pièce héroïque*, which Franck had clearly improved in its final version.

Fantaisie in A Major

The longest of the *Trois Pièces*, this work has often been criticized for its lack of rigor, its ambiguous epilogue, its pianistic effects, and the abundance of its melodic ideas, but this “improvised” aspect seems to be largely compensated by its inspiration, its vigor, and its expression. Three principal themes come together: (1) beautiful phrases composed of two-measure cells accompanied by repeated chords; (2) an ample lyrical melody consisting of a series of descending scales treated in syncopations, with a very creative tonal ambiguity; and (3) a rather flexible and harmonized chorale. The piece is assembled in three parts and a coda. In the exhibition, *Andantino*, the opening theme imposes itself in powerful unisons and alternates with soft homophonous episodes whose suspenseful cadences show interrogation, even imploration. This imposing theme is then repeated, which gives the work its true start. Then follows the lyrical melody accompanied by arpeggios. The first theme returns and is developed polyphonically, and at *Poco animato* combines with the second theme to form an eight-measure phrase. Following a crescendo and return to the major mode (*Très largement*) the first two themes are superimposed. The recapitulation then presents the themes in major and is interrupted on a dominant seventh and three typically Franckian cadences (widened intervals). The third theme brings the work to a conclusion in the celestial serenity of A minor.

Cantabile in B Major

This delicate piece is one of the shortest of all the organ works and seeks to arouse emotion as much as the *Prière*. It is the only one of Franck's major organ works to use only a single theme. With an accompaniment on the foundation stops of the Great and Positif, the Trompette of the Swell unrolls a long melody divided into four segments (d repeating a). The theme then reappears in the tenor and subsequently generates a canon preceding the epilogue. Some have found allusions in this piece to a love duet from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Furthermore, Charles Tournemire described *Cantabile* as "the most perfect expression of suavity." It was played at Franck's funeral service by Eugène Gigout (who incidentally was scolded by Louis Vierne for playing it too quickly and without proper expression).

Pièce héroïque

The most famous piece of the collection, this work, like the *Final*, flirts with the triumphalist taste of its time, but it does not make us forget either the impulses of the *Fantaisie* or the elegiac spirit of the *Cantabile*. Though there is no evidence of programmatic intent on the part of the composer, *Pièce héroïque* has a dramatic quality that has inspired listeners to ascribe their own extra-musical narratives. It comprises three parts in an ABA structure. The piece opens with an *Allegro maestoso* revealing a sinister 3/4 theme in B minor with dotted rhythms accompanied by repeated chords. The theme is heard first in the tenor, echoed in an eloquent response, and finally followed by the appearance of majestic chords. It is developed by circulating between bass and treble amid a flood of very pianistic arpeggios, restless chromaticism, and reappearance in the main key. After two suspenseful cadenzas, a tonic-dominant timpani motif in the pedal announces the second part, punctuated with a solemn hymn in B major. A brief development crescendos over the continual timpani until fragments of the opening theme eventually take over. The last part, *Più lento*, takes up the theme of the hymn in a triumphant B major, which is emphatically punctuated by the orchestral timpani of the middle section.

TROIS CHORALS

When Franck moved to Nemours to convalesce after an accident at the beginning of May 1890, he composed *L'Organiste* (59 harmonium pieces commissioned by Enoch) then completed *Choral No. 1* on August 7. The other two *Chorals* were only finished during the month of September

in Paris. These are Franck's last works, a musical testament that mark a new level of maturity by eliminating all picturesqueness and any concession to the questionable taste of the time. The *Chorals* utilize hymn-like textures at times, but they are not chorales in the Lutheran sense, in that they are not based on any pre-existing religious melodies. Instead, the French-style chorale dates back to the years 1850-1860 with Lemmens producing a "Catholic" adaptation to plainsong which seems less rigorous and lends itself to a more expressive performance. The harmonized hymn-like themes in Franck's earlier organ works foreshadow the solemn magnetism of the *Trois Chorals*. Franck died November 8 and was unable to hear these works performed or supervise their publication. Using several preserved manuscripts of each piece, Eugène Gigout prepared the posthumous final edition published in 1891.

Choral No. 1 in E Major

This is the most intricate of the three chorales. In a letter addressed to Enoch, Franck elucidated the intentions of this masterly work mentioning a "Chorale with a lot of fantasy," and again he reflected to Vincent d'Indy, "You will see, the chorale is not what you think it is. The real chorale is made during the work itself." This way of proceeding by emergence or transmutation undoubtedly owes to Liszt and appears as one of the components of Franck's genius. In the words of biographer R. J. Stove it is "not so much a theme-and-variations as a theme-*from*-variations....It saves a full statement of the principal melody for the end." Franck uses variation technique to paint a vast fresco in four sections. To begin, the manuals reveal six-part harmonizations of all the melodic motifs in the manner of a hymn. These motifs are the basis of the two ensuing variations that constitute the main body of the work. In the first variation the motifs begin in the treble on the Swell trumpet accompanied by sixteenth notes and then pass to the tenor, of which each phrase receives an ornamental commentary. A surprising intrusion on the *grand chœur* then introduces a transition built on two ideas, one homophonic, and the other more decorative. Next the much more complex second variation modifies the motifs, either in their entirety, or by cells. A long modulating transition with triplets leads to a most distinctive and final tonic-key return of the entire chorale in an energetic harmonization of its various motifs. A brief coda recalls the sixteenth notes of the first variation in a brilliant lattice of imitations.

Chorale No. 2 in B Minor

Albert Schweitzer called this the "most unpretentious and most

deeply felt” of the three chorales, while Tournemire compared its elegance to that of J. S. Bach. Certainly more serious in character, it begins with four passacaglia variations in 3/4 time, whose 16-bar theme sounds first in the pedal, then the soprano, then is combined with eighth-note counterpoint, and lastly with a set of restless repeated notes. A second lyrical theme, that of the chorale, is introduced in three phrases interspersed with decorative comments. A theatrical recitative, with dialogues between *grand chœur* virtuoso lines and massive chordal responses, introduces a fugue based on the opening notes of the passacaglia theme ultimately ending in a modulating pianistic cadenza of canonical stretto. The opening theme triumphantly returns combined with the chorale theme. To close the work, the last phrase of the chorale melody sounds on the *Voix humaine* in peace and stillness.

Chorale No. 3 in A Minor

In contrast with the variation technique and passacaglia and fugue of the first two chorales, this most frequently performed of the *Trois Chorals* utilizes sonata form. It is in three continuous movements. The first movement, *Quasi allegro*, comprises two alternating ideas: a showy toccata of broken arpeggios (often compared to the opening bars of Bach’s Prelude in A Minor) and a contrasting contemplative, homophonic theme in slow note values. The celebrated *Adagio* movement features a trumpet aria: an expressive “endless melody” (reminiscent of that in the *Prélude, Fugue et Variation*) composed of four sections, alternating between major/minor and diatonic/chromatic. The pensive theme from the first movement soon intervenes in the tenor and later in the pedal. In the last movement the main theme is taken through a network of distant modulations. After reaching the tonic the second theme is added, creating a majestic epilogue culminating the arpeggiated chords from the first movement and a grand plagal cadence.

About the Performer

GABRIELE TERRONE is the Organist and Assistant Director of Music at the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City, Utah since 2014. In this role, he is the principal organist and the principal assistant of the Cathedral Director of Music. He also serves as music faculty of the Madeleine Choir

School, assisting with the training and preparation of the choristers, and as Director of the Eccles Organ Festival.

Gabriele was born in Rome (Italy) where he also received most of his music education, obtaining the Diploma in Organ and Composition from the Italian State Conservatory under the guidance of Juan Paradell Solé. Afterwards, he attended a three-years postgraduate program in organ improvisation under the direction of Theo Flury in the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music in Roma and the *Hochschule für Musik* in Luzern (Switzerland). From the latter Institution he obtained the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Organ Improvisation. Graduated with honors in Mathematics at *La Sapienza* University of Rome, he earned a Ph.D. in Mathematics from the University of Padova and has been working as a researcher at the *Instituto Superior Técnico* in Lisbon (Portugal). Before coming to Utah, he served in the Papal Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Roma, first as Assistant Organist then as Titular Organist since November 2011. Dr. Terrone is the author of several music and scientific publications.

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331 E South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84111
www.ecclesorganfestival.com
ecclesorganfestival@utcotm.org

