Charles-Marie Widor
The Organ Symphonies
Vol. 1
Symphony No. 6, op. 42
Symphony No. 5, op. 42
Joseph Nolan
The Cavaillé-Coll Organ of La Madeleine, Paris
### Organ Symphony No. 6 in G minor, Op. 42 No. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I. Allegro</td>
<td>9:05</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>II. Adagio</td>
<td>7:23</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>III. Intermezzo: Allegro</td>
<td>6:16</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>IV. Cantabile</td>
<td>5:41</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>V. Finale: Vivace</td>
<td>6:35</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total timings: 72:35

### Organ Symphony No. 5 in F minor, Op. 42 No. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I. Allegro vivace – Piu lento</td>
<td>10:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>II. Allegro cantabile</td>
<td>8:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>III. Andantino quasi allegretto</td>
<td>8:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>IV. Adagio</td>
<td>4:33</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>V. Toccata: Allegro</td>
<td>6:11</td>
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**Widor: The Organ Symphonies, Vol. 1**

**The Cavaillé-Coll Organ of La Madeleine, Paris**

Organ Symphony No. 6 in G minor, Op. 42 No. 2

1. Allegro
2. Adagio
3. Intermezzo: Allegro
4. Cantabile
5. Finale: Vivace

Organ Symphony No. 5 in F minor, Op. 42 No. 1

6. Allegro vivace – Piu lento
7. Allegro cantabile
8. Andantino quasi allegretto
9. Adagio
10. Toccata: Allegro

Total timings: 72:35

**Organ Symphonies, Vol. 1 Nos. 5 & 6**

Bridging the generations from Mendelssohn to Messiaen, Empire to Republic, Widor was born to the organ. His Lyonnaise kinsfolk were organ-builders, he showed early talent for the instrument, and for decades was the embodiment of its might and splendour across the Gallic domain. Through the intervention of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, friend of the family, he went to Brussels to study with Jaak Lemmens, a noted exponent of Bach, and the critic-composer François-Joseph Fétis, venerable director of the city’s Conservatoire. Cavaillé-Coll took an active interest in Widor’s career, garnering the support of Saint-Saëns and Gounod to influence the young man’s ‘provisional’ Paris appointment in January 1870 as master of the loft in Saint-Sulpice (succeeding Lefébure-Wely, official organist to the Second Empire), a position he was to remain in for over 60 years. In December 1890 he inherited Franck’s organ chair at the Paris Conservatoire, six years later succeeding Théodore Dubois as professor of composition. His many pupils included Marcel Dupré (his successor at Saint-Sulpice), Tournemire, Vierne, Albert Schweitzer, Honegger and Milhaud. Creator of the French Romantic tracker-action organ, Cavaillé-Coll (1811-99) provided composers with an ennobling medium. His grand edifices commanded the spaces of Notre Dame, La Madeleine (where Saint-Saëns was incumbent), Saint-Clotilde (Franck likewise), La Trinité (Guilmant) and the Trocadéro. Their pipes crowned the great abbeys and cathedrals from Lyon and Bayeux to Orleans and Rouen. In 1862 his ‘magnum opus of 100 stops’, 19 combination pedals, and five manuals was installed in Saint-Sulpice, inaugurated by Saint-Saëns. This was the instrument, with its many voices, colours and harmonic overtones, its gradation and immensity of volume, which was to directly inspire Widor. ‘It’s when I felt the six-thousand pipes of the Saint-Sulpice organ vibrating under my hands and feet,’ he recalled, ‘that I took to writing my first four organ symphonies [… ] 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 sonoroussness 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’ (Souvenirs autobiographiques, typescript 1935-36). In Saint-Sulpice, ‘dominating some 20 meters
WIDOR: THE ORGAN SYMPHONIES, VOL.1
THE CAVAILLÉ-COLL ORGAN
OF LA MADELEINE, PARIS

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ORGAN SYMPHONIES, VOL.1
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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’ (René Dumesnil, Portraits de musiciens français, Paris 1938). Walk into Saint-Sulpice today, arrondissement VI, his spirit and name is everywhere still. Look aloft, become part of the anima and ambience of the place, and you know why he imagined and wrote as he did.

Widor wasn’t the first Romantic to conceive a ‘symphony’ for solo instrument, his fellow Parisian Alkan having published one for piano in 1857 (Nos. 4-7 of the Minor Key Études Op. 39, dedicated to Fétis). But he emphatically established the genre for organ, using the gigantic instrument, Widor was king. He reign, and he had his court of musicians, the faithful, friends, and the inquisitive’ (René Dumesnil, Portraits de musiciens français, Paris 1938). Walk into Saint-Sulpice today, arrondissement VI, his spirit and name is everywhere still. Look aloft, become part of the anima and ambience of the place, and you know why he imagined and wrote as he did.

Widor was one of the last two – the Symphonie gothique, Op. 70 (1894) and Symphonie romane, Op. 73 (1899), inspired by the Cavaillé-Colls in Saint-Ouen, Rouen, inaugurated by Widor in 1890, and Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, dedicated by Guilmant in 1889 — instil specifically liturgical elements (pre-Solemesised Gregorian plainchant). Tracing a rising ‘C scale’ of keys (C minor, D major, E minor, F minor; F minor, G minor, A minor, B major; C minor; D major), Widor’s symphonies are a unique phenomenon, their legacy the gentlemanly preserve of the French Establishment — notably Vierne at Notre Dame (who completed the last of his six in 1930), Guilmant, Barié, Dupré, Fleury (who effectively brought the genre to its end with his Second in 1949). These days, cleansed of sentimentality and gratuitous sanctity, the purple and the pompous that once cloaked them, observed for their precision detail and scoring, they tower on their own — sonically particular, transcendentally exacting, cogently argued distillations of a special aesthetic, time and place in European history.

The F minor Fifth (1879) and earlier G minor Sixth (1878) open the Op. 42 quartet, dedicated to Auguste Wolff. Each majesterially refute Paul Henry Léon’s damning 1941 view that Widor’s “symphonies for organ” are merely the ‘contrapuntally belaboured products of a flat and scant musical imagination, the bastard nature of which is evident from the title alone’; that their ‘creative force springs more from the technical than from the spiritual’. Whether or not Schweitzer was entirely correct to say that the Fifth ‘deserts’ the path of its predecessors, ‘the lyric withdraws’ (1951), is arguable. Certainly, along with No. 6 (7 and 8 too), its slow counterfoiling content, the ‘mouvement lent ou modéré à la Mendelssohn’ element (François Sabatier, 1991), would appear to continue rather than abandon earlier traits. Progressiveness, though, there most certainly is — what Schweitzer calls that ‘something else [striving] to take form’. Widor’s modern editor and biographer, John R. N. opines that ‘the ["signature work"] Fifth and ["astonishing", “innovative”] Sixth Symphonies show the composer in full control of his craft, and thus provide a pivotal point to mark the transition to Widor’s second creative period […] Still in his mid-thirties […] mature and successful [a man of “distinct musical personality”] working in large forms’.

One of several starry celebrants to inaugurate Paris’ first concert organ (moved since to the Auditorium Maurice Ravel in Lyon), Widor premiered No. 6, billed as ‘5me Symphonie’, at the Palais du Trocadéro, 24 August 1878. ‘The performing talent of this artist […] is of the most brilliant sort. M[onsieur] Widor is skilled in execution, and there is scarcely a difficulty that stops him,’ reported the Revue et Gazette. The hallowed B major Adagio and clattering staccato Intermezzo (G minor/E flat) particularly impressed. The one for its ‘gracious’ character and ‘descending semitones’ recalling Wagner; the other for its ‘brilliant’ manner, albeit ‘written rather for the piano than for the organ’. What was thought of the tonally remote D flat major Cantabile, with its quartet-like texture and balanced part-writing, is not recorded. The work follows a quinquepartite plan, heroic ‘sonata’ powered columns enclosing a gentler quasi-Brahmsian tapestry — architecture versus cameo. These flanking movements, in rhetorical minor and exultant major respectively, traverse Jovian vistas, Widor contesting, dramatising and ‘orchestrating’ ideas with all the skill, splendour and fff voice of a rampant field commander. Not for small places or shy instruments.

‘By the grace of its abundant inspiration […] the preferred symphony with the public’ (Ménestrel, 1889), the epic Fifth similarly
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* (René Dumesnil, Portraits de musiciens français, Paris 1938). Walk into Saint-Sulpice today, arrondissement VI, his spirit and name is everywhere still. Look aloft, become part of the anima and ambience of the place, and you know why he imagined and wrote as he did.

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divides into five parts, with a reflective, suggestively terpsichorean inner core, comprising an impeccably gauged Allegro cantabile, a fantastical, whimsical A flat Andantino quasi Allegretto, and a C major Adagio. Contrasting the Sixth, however, variation procedure replaces sonata discipline. Self-evidently so in the opening Allegro vivace – a bronzed, lithe theme leading the way. And indirectly in the falling/rising step sequences of the closing maggiore Toccata – a fabled ‘wedding’ allegro of simple yet ingenious tonal patterning, thunderous climax, inexorable foot-work, and unremitting manual dexterity (the sextuplet semiquavers of the right-hand calling for high-velocity staccato articulation). The first ascertainable public performance was given by Widor in Lyon on 16 December 1880, inaugurating Cavaillé-Coll’s new organ in Saint-François-de-Sales. From this fact, a handful of truncated Paris outings in 1879 – at Saint-François-Xavier (27 February, first movement) and the Trocadéro – and the internal evidence of the score, Near reasons interestingly that the Fifth may have been composed ‘with an instrument other than Saint-Sulpice in mind’ – just as the Sixth had been intended for elsewhere (the 1878 Exposition Universelle). ‘Several passages require an expressive Positif division – something that the Saint-Sulpice organ did not have, but which Saint-François-Xavier [built by Fermis & Persil], Saint-François-de-Sales and the Trocadéro instruments included.’

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Further Reading: John R Near, Widor: A Life beyond the Toccata (University of Rochester Press, 2011)

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Joseph also performed on numerous occasions at Buckingham Palace, most notably giving the inaugural recital of the refurbished Ballroom organ to a distinguished invited audience. Joseph was the first ever Organist to record a commercial CD of this instrument in November 2006 for the Signum label (‘Nolan uses the organ to amazing effect’ Gramophone UK).

This acclaim has led to Joseph being invited to record in some of the world’s premiere venues. These include St Sulpice, Paris, St Ouen Rouen, and Buckingham Palace and in May 2011, Joseph recorded the entire ten organ symphonies of Widor at La Madeleine, Paris (where both Fauré and Saint-Saëns were organists) in only seven nights. Many
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Joseph’s latest disc from St Sulpice, Paris for Signum Records has been particularly well received winning the star recording award from the Organ Magazine. It has also been described by Gramophone Magazine as a ‘brilliantly played recital’, Music Web international ‘this disc should find a special place amongst organ collectors’, and American Record Guide ‘the best Liszt Ad Nos on record’. The disc was also awarded ‘disc of the week’ on Swedish national radio.

Joseph has toured extensively across Europe, Asia, North America, New Zealand and Australia, including giving concerts in the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, Westminster Abbey, St Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne and Auckland Town Halls and for various US conventions including the Year of the Organ. Joseph will be undertaking a solo concert tour of Canada/USA in October 2012.

Joseph has also conducted and accompanied some of the world’s leading groups and musicians, including the King’s Singers at the Bad Homburg International Festival, conducted the London Mozart Players at St John’s Smith Square, UK, as well as giving organ and trumpet concerts with trumpeters Crispian Steele-Perkins and Alison Balsom. Joseph also conducted the Hilliard Ensemble, St George’s Cathedral Consort and WASO players in a performance of Pârt’s Passio for the 2010 Perth International Arts Festival at Perth Concert Hall.

Joseph made his debut with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra at Perth Concert Hall in March 2012, playing Poulenc’s Organ Concerto and Saint-Saëns Organ Symphony for the opening of the WASO Classics concerts. June 2012 will also see Joseph’s debut solo concert at Sydney Town Hall.

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Joseph took up the post of Organist and Master of the Choristers at St George’s Cathedral, Perth, Australia in March 2008. Joseph conducts the nationally renowned choirs and is Artistic Director of the Cathedrals major annual concert series. Since Joseph’s arrival the Cathedral choirs are now regularly in demand on ABC TV


STOP LIST

I. Grand-Orgue
   - Montre 16’
   - Gambre 16’
   - Montre 8’
   - Salicional 8’
   - Flûte harmonique 8’
   - Bourdon 8’
   - Prestant 4’
   - Quinte 2 2/3’
   - Doublette 2’
   - Piccolo* 1’
   - Fourniture V
   - Cymbale V
   - Cornet* V
   - Trompette 8’
   - Cor anglais 8’

THE CAVALLÉ-COLL ORGAN

OF L’ÉGLISE DE LA MADELEINE

Built by the famed organ-builder Aristride Cavallé-Coll (working with his father Dominique), the Grand Organ of La Madeleine was inaugurated in 1846 by Alexandre-Charles Fessy, with Louis James Lefebure-Wely becoming chief organist in 1947. Originally comprised of 46 stops over 4 manuals and pedal, it was the third major instrument Cavallé-Coll had produced for a Parisian church, the others being in the Basilique Saint-Denis and Notre-Dame de Lorette. Modifications since then include: restoration work in 1927, extending the keyboard range; the addition of six new stops (including mixtures) in 1957; increasing the number of stops to 57 in 1971, also automating the key and stop action; and an additional stop in 1928. Classified as a ‘Historic Monument’, it currently has 60 stops and 4426 pipes.
of these discs have been lauded by media across the globe and been broadcast in part on BBC Radio 3, Radio France, USA Pipedreams, Radio New Zealand and ABC Classic FM amongst others.

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Cymbale V
Corne* V
Trompette 8’
Cor anglais 8’

* - 9 -- 8 -

THE CAVAILLÉ-COLL ORGAN OF L’ÉGLISE DE LA MADELEINE

Built by the famed organ-builder Aristride Cavaillé-Coll (working with his father Dominique), the Grand Organ of La Madeleine was inaugurated in 1846 by Alexandre-Charles Fessy, with Louis James Lefebure-Wély becoming chief organist in 1947. Originally comprised of 46 stops over 4 manuals and pedal, it was the third major instrument Cavaillé-Coll had produced for a Parisian church, the others being in the Basilique Saint-Denis and Notre-Dame de Lorette. Modifications since then include: restoration work in 1927, extending the keyboard range; the addition of six new stops (including mixtures) in 1957; increasing the number of stops to 57 in 1971, also automating the key and stop action; and an additional stop in 1928. Classified as a ‘Historic Monument’, it currently has 60 stops and 4426 pipes.

STOP LIST

I. Grand-Orgue

Montre 16’
Gambre 16’
Montre 8’
Salicional 8’
Flûte harmonique 8’
Bourdon 8’
Prestant 4’
Quinte 2 2/3’
Doublette 2’
Piccolo* 1’
Fourniture V
Cymbale V
Corne* V
Trompette 8’
Cor anglais 8’

* - 9 -- 8 -
II. Positif
Montre 8’
Viole de gambe 8’
Flûte douce 8’
Voix celeste 8’
Prestant 4’
Dulciane 4’
Octave 2’
Trompette 8’
Musette 8’
Clairon 4’

Flûte octavante 4’
Octavin† 2’
Larigot‡ 1 1/3’
Plein Jeu† IV
Cymbale* IV
Bombarde 16’
Trompette 8’
Basson-Hautbois 8’
Voix humaine 8’
Clairon 4’

Pédale
Quintaton 32’
Contrebasse 16’
Flûte 8’
Violoncelle 8’
Flûte† 4’
Bombarde 16’
Basson 16’
Trompette 8’
Clairon 4’

* - Added in 1957
‡ - Added in 1971
† - Added in 1988

III. Bombarde
Soubasse 16’
Flûte harmonique 8’
Flûte traversière 8’
Basse 8’
Flûte 4’
Octavin 2’
Fourniture* IV
Cornet* III
Bombarde 16’
Trompette 8’
Clairon 4’

* - Added in 1957
‡ - Added in 1971
† - Added in 1988

IV. Récit
Flûte harmonique 8’
Bourdon Céleste‡ 8’
Prestand* 4’

Manual compass - 56 Notes
Pedal compass - 32 Notes

Recorded at L’église de la Madeleine, Paris, from 18th to 24th May 2011.
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| II. Positif          | Montre        | 8'  |
|                    | Viole de gambe| 8'  |
|                    | Flûte douce   | 8'  |
|                    | Voix celeste  | 8'  |
|                    | Dulciane      | 8'  |
|                    | Octave        | 8'  |
|                    | Trompette     | 8'  |
|                    | Musette       | 8'  |
|                    | Clairon       | 8'  |
|                    | Flûte octaviante | 4'  |
|                    | Octavin†       | 2'  |
|                    | Larigot‡       | 1 1/3' |
|                    | Plein Jeu†     | IV   |
|                    | Cymbale*       | IV   |
|                    | Bombarde      | 16'  |
|                    | Trompette      | 8'  |
|                    | Basson-Hautbois| 8'  |
|                    | Voix humaine   | 8'  |
|                    | Clairon       | 4'  |
| III. Bombarde       | Soubasse      | 16'  |
|                    | Flûte harmonique | 8'  |
|                    | Flûte traversière | 8'  |
|                    | Basse         | 8'  |
|                    | Flûte          | 8'  |
|                    | Octavin        | 8'  |
|                    | Fourniture*    | IV   |
|                    | Cornett†       | III  |
|                    | Bombarde      | 16'  |
|                    | Trompette      | 8'  |
|                    | Clairon       | 4'  |
|                    |          Quintaton | 32'  |
|                    | Contrebasse   | 16'  |
|                    | Flûte         | 8'  |
|                    | Violoncelle   | 8'  |
|                    | Flûte†        | 4'  |
|                    | Bombarde      | 16'  |
|                    | Basson        | 16'  |
|                    | Trompette      | 8'  |
|                    | Clairon       | 4'  |
| IV. Récit           | Flûte harmonique | 8'  |
|                    | Bourdon Céleste‡ | 8'  |
|                    | Prestant*      | 4'  |

* - Added in 1957
‡ - Added in 1971
† - Added in 1988

Manual compass - 56 Notes
Pedal compass - 32 Notes

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