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UMI
Approaching Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century French Organ Works with Small Hands

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Doctor of Musical Arts

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ABSTRACT

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César Franck, Charles-Marie Widor, and Louis Vierne were among the most important figures in France during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They made an enormous contribution to organ literature and the organ playing tradition. However, many of their compositions have proved difficult to execute for organists with small hands. Throughout the organ works of Franck intervals greater than the octave abound. In numerous pieces by Widor and Vierne, melodic intervals or chords are positioned in such a way that precise attacks and releases are challenging. This document demonstrates solutions to the various problems that organists with small hands encounter in playing the literature from this period.
Acknowledgements

Upon the completion of this document, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported and advised me throughout the process. Special thanks go to Dr. Clyde Holloway, not only for his insight and enthusiasm expressed for this project, but for his constant support, guidance, and endearing friendship through the years of my study at Rice University. I thank Dr. Anne Schnoebelen, my thesis director, for her invaluable advice and expertise that made working on this project so enjoyable. I thank the members of my committee, especially Dr. Walter Bailey and Dr. Dean Shank, for their encouragement, advice, and kindness.

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Preface

In the course of completing the Doctor of Musical Arts degree, the time came for choosing a topic for this document. I wanted to contribute something that might be of a practical value rather than to comment on personages or music that had already been scrutinized many times over.

In playing the great pieces of organ literature over the years, one aspect had always become evident. As a player with small hands, I rarely had been able to approach certain pieces the same way as other organists. My approach to fingering was always very different as I included many more finger substitutions and glissandos. Many times I would play notes in the pedal that were written for the manuals because I was unable to reach intervals greater than an octave or the ninth.

Upon discussing this dilemma with Dr. Clyde Holloway, he agreed that this might be a topic worth considering for such a project. After further investigation, I discovered that there was very little written about such problems that small hands encounter or how to approach certain technical issues.

I then began to analyze the various challenges within the organ repertoire. These challenges are manifested in many pieces from a number of eras, but most appear in the organ works of César Franck and other French composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The pieces chosen for this project examine every kind of difficulty I have faced in playing this repertoire. Although other pieces could have been included in this study, it would have resulted in a repetitive discussion of the same issue(s).
It was important also to include a discussion of organ technique and practice pertinent to the period. I begin with the organ method of Jacques Lemmens which leads to the unfinished method of Louis Vierne. Although there are no such written methods left by César Franck or Charles-Marie Widor, a discussion of their training as organists and their teachings are included to better understand the composers’ intentions and to render an accurate technical interpretation. The manner in which Franck, Widor, and Vierne played the organ themselves is also taken into account.

It is my hope that this project can serve as a valuable tool to other organists who are challenged by small hands so that their repertoire is not limited by such obstacles.
PART ONE

A Brief Historical Review of Organ Technique and Practice of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century in France
1. Jaak Nikolaus Lemmens

During the mid-nineteenth century Jaak Nikolaas (Jacques-Nicolas) Lemmens was a most compelling figure in the organ scene in France and Belgium. His “style sévère” contrasted greatly with the improvisational style of Louis Lefébure-Wély who specialized in storm scenes.\(^1\) Lemmens’s style depended on his own performance of the works of J.S. Bach, Mendelssohn, and other serious repertoire.

Lemmens studied with the famed Adolf Hesse in Breslau through the efforts of François-Joseph Fétis (Director of the Brussels Conservatory). In 1849 Lemmens was appointed professor of organ at the Brussels Conservatory and it was there that he began his illustrious teaching career. During his professorship in Brussels Lemmens began issuing a periodical entitled *Nouveau Journal d’orgue à l’usage des organistes du culte catholique*. Eighteen issues were produced during 1850-51. It was soon after in everybody’s hands [and] exerted the greatest influence on the progressive movement of the art, so profoundly degraded and neglected.\(^2\)

While playing concerts in Paris, Lemmens became acquainted with the eminent French organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811-1899). Through Cavaillé-Coll, Lemmens met and played for leading organists, critics and other musicians. Lemmens’s performances and his playing style greatly impressed the Parisian audiences. Unlike the flamboyant, improvisational organists of France at this time,

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\(^1\) "Storm" improvisations all began with relative calm, would build up to a great roar, and subside to a hymn of praise or reflection. Many improvisations would end like the beginning section. The great roar was produced by holding down the notes of the lowest octave on the pedals.

Lemmens played with immaculate legato, precise rhythm, and moderate tempi that seemed most austere.

Whenever Cavaillé-Coll got the chance he advised young organists to go and study with Lemmens in Brussels. In two cases this advice had far-reaching effects on the French organ tradition. Alexandre Guilmant and Charles-Marie Widor both traveled to Brussels upon the organbuilder’s recommendation. During the time of Guilmant’s and Widor’s study in Brussels, Lemmens published his École d’orgue in 1862 which was essentially a revised edition of the Nouveau Journal d’orgue. The École was divided into two parts: the first included manual exercises with accompanying organ pieces; the second provided a pedal method and a collection of organ works that could be used in the Roman Catholic service.

To nineteenth-century observers both Lemmens’s organ playing and organ method seemed especially striking. Accounting Lemmens’s achievements Fétis called attention to the art of finger substitution and the resulting “jeu lié du clavier” (legato). Lemmens’s method stressed the development of the “style lié” (legato style) and the use of finger substitution to achieve the desired close connection between notes. Lemmens was able to present techniques of finger substitution, glissando, and finger crossing to guide the development of a legato style in those who possessed less a precise than an approximate legato.

The pedal technique of organists in Belgium and France was ready for reform in Lemmens’s view. His pedal technique was based on the toe-heel method which

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4 Peterson, “Lemmens, His École d’orgue,” 68.
5 Ibid., 68.
aimed to achieve a smooth connection of notes. This contrasted to the alternate-toe technique as taught by Hesse. Lemmens also recommended several different kinds of pedal substitution. The first one involved both feet, and the second involved the toe and heel of one foot. He affirmed that proper pedal playing always requires two feet and those left-footed organists could neither play legato nor play any rapid passages. Therefore, many French organists could neither play the great works of J. S. Bach nor any other serious works.

Indeed, for more than a century German organ music and organ playing had been far superior. For in France, the emphasis was placed on improvisation. French organ playing became increasingly superficial during the early 1800’s as opera took center stage. Organ music reached the lowest point during and after the French Revolution when it was used as a political tool to “touch” the common man. Marches, patriotic airs, and picturesque improvisations that depicted cannon fire and battle scenes were often played. Organists seldom knew how to play an independent pedal part.

Lemmens was the one who began a rejuvenation of French organ culture in the later part of the century. No method existed in France that could replace or surpass Lemmens’s École. It was so instructive that it was adopted by the Paris Conservatory for many years. The brilliant pedal and manual technique that has become synonymous with the French school of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was largely based on Lemmens’s work.6

2. César Franck

César August Franck was born in Liège, Belgium in 1822. Early on his father insisted upon a virtuoso career for his son and enrolled him at the Liège Conservatory in 1830. There he was awarded premiers prix for solfège in 1832 and for piano in 1834. By the time he was eleven Franck had undertaken a tour that culminated in a performance before King Leopold. In 1835 the family moved to Paris so that Franck and his brother could continue their musical education and career. After entering the Paris Conservatory in 1837, Franck was awarded premier prix in both piano and counterpoint. He then entered François Benoist’s organ class so that he could further his improvisational skills, but was given only a second prix in organ in 1841. Dismayed by the second place, Franck’s father forced him to withdraw from the Conservatory. Franck’s training as an organist thus included two stages: his experience as a student at the Conservatory and later his own self-guided study.

Franck’s career as a virtuoso declined somewhat, but he continued to teach privately at various public and religious schools. The start of a new phase in his career came with his appointment as organist in 1858 at Saint-Clotilde. On December 19, 1859 both Franck and Lefèbure-Wély inaugurated the new organ at Saint-Clotilde, an instrument that is considered one of Cavaillé-Coll’s greatest achievements. Franck later participated in many other organ dedications including the Cavaillé-Coll organs at Saint-Sulpice and Notre Dame Cathedral.

In 1872 Franck was nominated to succeed Benoist as professor of organ at the Paris Conservatory. His tenure was noted for its lack of emphasis on technique. He assumed that if one was admitted as a student, one already had obtained sufficient
technique to play the works of Bach. The fragments of evidence that exist suggest that Franck was not a proponent of a systematic method of technique training.

Performance seemed to interest Franck less than improvisation, where he focused on musical expression, melodic invention, harmonic discoveries, subtle modulations, and elegant figurations.

At the Conservatory three quarters of the organ curriculum was devoted to improvisation. Franck’s class did not emphasize the study of organ literature, but rather the sharpening of improvisational skills to stimulate one’s creativity.¹ The tests required for the end-of-year examination and the competition were improvisations of a fugue on a given subject, free improvisation on a given theme, and a performance from memory of a “classic” organ piece. Franck also gave advice on issues such as tempi, articulation, and phrasing to those pupils who were playing his own music.

It was at Saint-Clotilde that Franck’s improvisations during and after the service became a public attraction. Vincent d’Indy described Franck’s talent:

Franck had, or rather was the genius of improvisation and no other modern organist, not excepting the most renowned executants, would bear the most distant comparison with him in this respect.²

In Mes Souvenirs, Louis Vierne wrote:

I have never heard anything that could compare with Franck’s improvisation from the point of view of purely musical invention. At church it took him a while to get started—a few attempts, a little experimenting—then, once under way, a prodigality of invention that was miraculous: a polyphony of incomparable richness in which melody, harmony, and form competed in originality and emotional conception... Never any calculated combinations, never any of the feats of skill customary among the acrobats playing in the gallery;

instead, the constant concern for the dignity of his art, for the nobility
of his mission, and for the fervent sincerity of his sermon in sound…. Mere technical skills such as contrapuntal artifices, canons, superimposition of themes, etc., would never appear except when justified by the expression of a thought... His teaching of improvisation bore the fruit of long reflection and broad experience.\(^3\)

Albert Mahaut, who studied with Franck, wrote:

> When we improvised, Franck was completely involved—as though we were imbued with his spirit. “I like it,” he said simply at good passages...Often he only said that, but he put it in such various tones of voice that these words were enough for us to understand.\(^4\)

Others students in his class besides Vierne and Mahaut included M. Gabriel Pierné, Charles Tournemire, and Vincent d’Indy.

After Franck’s death in 1890, Gabriel Pierné stated:

> He was truly a beautiful soul, with an inexhaustible goodness, and a bit of naïveté—completely honest in his artistic life as well as in his family life. They called him ‘le père Franck,’ and he was, in effect, a true ‘papa’ to us all and it was as such that we mourned him.\(^5\)

After Franck’s funeral, his students had decided to resign from the organ class at the Conservatory. To see the hall and the organ occupied by someone else besides Franck himself was unbearable. However, some days later Franck’s students decided to stay in class to defend their teacher’s artistic ideas, for they were his last heirs.

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\(^5\) Ibid., 161-162.
3. Charles-Marie Widor

Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937) came from a family of Hungarian descent and who for generations was closely connected to the organ. His grandfather, Jean Widor, was an organ builder with the Callinet organ company in Alsace. His father, François-Charles, was the titulaire organist at the church of Saint-François-de-Sales in Lyon. Charles-Marie’s first organ lessons were with his father and he showed a remarkable musical talent at a very young age. When he was eleven he was named organist at his school.

A major influence in the development of the young Widor was through his father’s friendship with Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, a most important figure of organ builders. Upon Cavaillé-Coll’s recommendation, Widor was given the opportunity in 1863 to study with Lemmens in Brussels. There he entered a rigorous program of organ study with Lemmens and counterpoint and composition with François-Joseph Fétis.¹ Widor believed that Lemmens’s instruction was the true tradition of organ playing handed down from Bach.

After returning to Lyon, Widor established his own reputation. In 1870 he was called to succeed Louis Lefèbure-Wély as organist of Saint-Sulpice when he was twenty-six years old. His appointment lasted sixty-four years. After the death of Franck in 1890, Widor became professor of organ at the Paris Conservatory. Widor radically changed the focus of teaching at the Conservatory. He declared to his new class:

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¹ François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871) served as director of the Brussels Conservatory from 1833 where he taught counterpoint and composition. He was highly regarded by his peers as a musicologist, critic, teacher and composer.
In France we have neglected performance much too much in favor of improvisation. This is not only wrong, it is nonsense. To improvise in the artistic sense of the word, one must have ideas, certainly; but that is not sufficient...Improvisation is spontaneous composition; it can be accomplished only with profound knowledge and assiduous practice of all the resources offered by the manuals and pedalboard of the organ.

Furthermore, I do not see why organists should be the only artists exempt from having to know the entire literature of their instrument...To interpret Bach’s works in their absolute integrity, it is necessary to have the technique of which I speak. It must be scientific and methodical, not empirical. The organ is the most mathematical of instruments; it alone sustains a sound with the same intensity as long as the finger or foot presses the key that produces it. The fact that the duration of the sound can be strictly controlled obliges one to make use of a certain number of fingering artifices with which I shall acquaint you as the need arises.

I hesitated a long time before accepting the position that falls to me today. I finally decided to take it with the determination to restore the level of organ playing in general, and, in particular, to revive the authentic tradition of the interpretation of the works of Bach.²

From the first day, Widor introduced a new philosophy and a new method, which stressed technique and interpretation.

Although Widor did not author his own organ instruction as a written method, he did leave many written remarks about manual and pedal technique. Widor not only collaborated with Albert Schweitzer on an edition of the complete works of Bach³, but also provided the preface to André Pirro’s book on Bach as well. He comments on Bach’s playing:

He [Bach] played with the body inclined slightly forward and motionless; with an admirable sense of rhythm, with an absolutely perfect polyphonic ensemble, with extraordinary clearness, avoiding

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² Vienne, Mes Souvenirs, tr. Smith, 55, 59.
extremely rapid tempi; in short, master of himself, and, so to speak, of the beat, producing an effect of incomparable grandeur.\textsuperscript{4}

Widor payed close attention to every detail. All unnecessary motion needed to be eliminated:

All unjustified movement is harmful, because it is a loss of time and of strength. Before deciding that a movement is inevitable you must have tried out its utility during the period of slow practice. That period must be very long. If you have the courage and the conscience to make yourself do it, it will be considerable time gained, and then you will play every virtuoso piece in its exact tempo without difficulty.\textsuperscript{5}

Widor gave specific instruction for attacks and releases of notes, exactly how repeated notes are separated, and how the feet should approach and play the pedals.

Widor disdained empty virtuosity and insisted on slow tempos, maintaining “the essential character of the organ is grandeur.”\textsuperscript{6} He understood Bach to have basically two tempos: Andante, not very fast; and Adagio, rather slow.

For Widor, the basis of articulation and expression was that of rhythm. He relates:

It is only by rhythm that one wins attention. Particularly with the organ, all accents, all effects are dependent upon it. You may bear upon the keyboard with the weight of pounds, with all the strength of your shoulders — you will gain nothing by it. But delay by a tenth of a second the attack of a chord, or prolong this same chord the very least, and judge of the effect produced! Upon a manual not provided with a swell-box one may obtain a crescendo without the aid of a mechanism of any kind: by the simple augmentation of the duration allowed successive chords or detached phrases.\textsuperscript{7}

It was, of course, the method of Lemmens that Widor taught to his class. No one understood the École better than Widor. In 1925 Widor published a new edition


\textsuperscript{5} Vierne, \textit{Mes Souvenirs}, tr. Smith, 69.

\textsuperscript{6} Vierne, \textit{Mes Souvenirs}, tr. Smith, 73.

\textsuperscript{7} Widor, “Preface,” xxvii-xxix.
of Lemmens's École d'orgue (Paris: Hamelle). In the preface he stated, "The present edition reproduces that Method faithfully, text and music, without any kind of modification, with the religious respect it deserves, and with which no one is permitted to tamper." Through Widor organists learned Lemmens's organ method and pedagogical ideas and he valiantly defended the tradition. It was through Widor that the standard of playing was established for all French organists of the next generations.

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4. Louis Vierne

Louis Vierne was the most widely acclaimed French organist of the early twentieth century. He was born in Poitiers, France in 1870 and studied at the Paris Conservatory under César Franck, Charles-Marie Widor, and Alexandre Guilmant. During his years at the Paris Conservatory, Vierne developed his own distinctive style that was very orchestral in character. Vierne’s music is highly chromatic, yet very melodic. According to those who knew him, Vierne was a particularly engaging and sensitive person, and many of his works are a perfect reflection of his character.

Vierne experienced much personal misfortune and career disappointments during his life. He was born almost completely blind. He became head of his family at the age of sixteen after his father died. Both his son, Jacques, and brother, René, were killed in the First World War. During his career, he was denied premier prix in organ in several competitions at the Paris Conservatory, sometimes for political reasons. At the Paris Conservatory years later, he was expected to succeed Guilmant as professor of organ after Guilmant died in 1911. However, Eugène Gigout was chosen instead. Vierne went on to accept a position at the Schola Cantorum, another school that was founded in part by Guilmant. He accepted this position so that he could continue the tradition of Widor and Guilmant.

Perhaps the greatest influence on Vierne was Franck’s successor at the Paris Conservatory, Widor. Widor’s new approach to organ technique resulted in Vierne’s complete relearning of the repertoire, which at first was discouraging to him. But over time Vierne and his fellow students gained a new appreciation of the art that Widor brought to the organ class.
Out of the many sessions Vierne had with Widor there developed a strong friendship and mutual respect. After Vierne was invited to visit Widor’s organ loft at Saint-Sulpice he recalled:

What a thrill! I have never forgotten the first impression…with five manuals decked 118 draw-knobs of which 100 were real stops,… I had never imagined the complication of its means for producing color. When I saw the marvelous working of the monster, docilely obeying the precise motion of its master, I thought I must be watching some phantasmagoria, and said to myself that it would never be possible for me to command such a colossal machine with that extraordinary tranquility. Six months later I was to face the difficulty, which had seemed insurmountable, and in a few months, thanks to the maître’s judicious advice, the monumental instrument was to become quite familiar to me.¹

Widor had called upon Vierne, not quite twenty-four years old, to be his substitute as Saint Sulpice as well as his assistant in his Conservatory class. Vierne would then teach the preparatory courses and prepare the pupils for all the tests required for the competition. At Widor’s recommendation, Vierne was later retained as Guilmant’s assistant when Widor moved on from organ professor to composition professor.

At the urging of Widor, Vierne became one of many candidates for the post as organist at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris in 1900. He was unanimously chosen for the coveted position and became the organist at the greatest and most famous church in France. Vierne carried out his post at Notre Dame with characteristic enthusiasm and dedication. There was a tremendous cohesion between Vierne and the Cavaille-Coll organ. Most of his organ works were inspired by this organ whose every secret he discovered as the years went by. Vierne’s organ tribune became a cultural center

¹Vierne, Mes Souvenirs, tr. Smith, 85-87.
and meeting place for many of the most influential artists and musicians of Paris at the time: Guilmant, Fauré, Renoir, Rimsky-Korsakov, and many others. The organ loft at Notre Dame was transformed into a splendid cultural center.

During the first decades of the twentieth century Vierne corresponded numerous times with Durand Fils & Cie regarding the proposal of his own method of organ instruction. In 1939, the *Amis de l’Orgue* published *In Memoriam Louis Vierne*, in which the catalog indicated a work in preparation, a *Grand Traité de l’Orgue* in four parts: summary of the evolution of the organ, technique of the manual keyboard, technique of the pedal, and the art of registration. Although he never finished his *Méthod* (only the first two parts are completed), Vierne relates his ideas of technique as a culmination of the Lemmens method and the teaching of Widor. Indeed, the techniques that Vierne acquired from Widor became his pedagogy. One can then assume that all the organ works of Vierne can be approached in the manner recommended by Lemmens: correct posture and proper seating of the performer at the organ; logical and economical movements in playing and in manipulating the mechanical devices of the instrument; control of movements during the period of practice to determine if a movement is necessary; precise attack and release of the key or pedal; absolute legato touch achieved by means of finger and foot substitution, glissando, and crossing for all parts of the musical texture; accurate articulations in a rhythmically measurable manner for staccato, repeated, and accentuated notes; careful observation of all musical texts, expression marks, and articulation signs which should

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3 Ibid., 167.
reflect exactly the composer’s intention.\textsuperscript{4} It is these elements that constitute a very refined technique on which any good performance is indispensable.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 168.
PART TWO

Analysis of Organ Works
1. *Choral II* in B Minor by César Franck

The *Trois Chorals* were the last organ works written by César Franck. They were composed during his summer vacation in 1890. Eugène Gigout prepared the manuscripts for publication after Franck’s death on November 8, 1890. None of the manuscripts included names of any dedicatees, although the publication bears the names of the following: I. à Eugène Gigout; II. à Auguste Durand; III. à Augusta Holmès. Vincent d’Indy said that these inscriptions were wrong and should have been inscribed as follows: I. Alexandre Guilmant; II. Théodore Dubois; III. Eugène Gigout.¹

Franck completed *Choral II* in B minor on September 14, 1890. Although he never had the opportunity to teach any of the *Trois Chorals*, there is significant data to show how Franck intended them to be played. Before his death Franck played the *Chorals* for Louis Vierne and Charles Tournemire on the piano at his home. Tournemire later wrote:

> Analyzing the *Trois Chorals* is pleasant for us because we cannot forget the emotion we experienced the day we heard these magnificent works played by the master on the piano in his home. Our duty was to play the pedal part “à la main.” An extraordinary première! It was then that the impressions were imprinted in our mind and heart.²

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¹ D’Indy, *César Franck*, 198.
In the decades after Franck, two main schools of Franck interpretation evolved.

Lawrence Archbold\(^3\) summarized these different interpretations as follows:

...Tournemire studied in Franck's organ class and played the *Trois Chorals* with Franck at the piano. His connection with Franck's playing of his own music is thus direct and indisputable. The chief opposing tradition derives from Alexandre Guilmant, who as a peer rather than a student consulted with Franck about his organ music on several occasions, and is said to have seen the *Chorals* when they were in drafts. The chief heir of the Tournemire tradition [was] Jean Langlais; the chief heir of the Guilmant tradition was Marcel Dupré. While Langlais and other Tournemire disciples rely on the original Durand edition of Franck's organ music, Dupré issued his own edition in which far-reaching changes are introduced, from the registration and Italian tempo markings to phrasing and articulation. These modifications reflect Dupré's singular, systematic approach to the performance of the entire organ literature. His edition, then, represents a codification of his own playing style.\(^4\)

The Durand edition\(^5\) of the *Trois Chorals* is the edition preferred by all players, but the editions prepared by Joseph Bonnet\(^6\), Maurice Durufle\(^7\) and Marcel Dupré\(^8\) offer a number of technical suggestions for players with small hands. With so many interpretations given to Franck's organ works, one can successfully make appropriate choices in the performances of these most revered compositions.

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\(^{3}\) Lawrence Archbold is Associate Professor of Music and Enid and Henry Woodward College Organist at Carleton College, Northfield Minnesota, where he has taught since 1982. A graduate of University of California, Berkeley, he specializes in the performance and scholarship of organ music.

\(^{4}\) Lawrence Archbold, "We Have No Idea of the Liberty With Which Franck Played His Own Pieces", *The Organist as Scholar: Essays in Memory of Russell Saunders*, ed. Kerala Snyder (New York: Pendragon Press), 90-91.


The question of whether to repeat the *notes communes* (common notes) or to play them as tied notes surfaces again and again throughout the *Choral II*. Franck did not give any instruction as to the playing of common notes in his manuscripts. In the edition Dupré prepared of the *Trois Chorals*, he added numerous ties connecting common notes within the same voice. Likewise, Bonnet’s edition is ladened with editorial additions. So numerous are the additions in these editions that one is unable to distinguish the composer’s intentions in most passages. But their value for this study lies primarily in the suggestions given for certain passages that prove difficult for small hands to execute.

There has long been speculation as to the manner in which Franck himself played the organ. Marcel Dupré relates, in his Preface to the edition he prepared of the *Trois Chorals*:

...As regards (to) the organ, he was a genius both as an improviser and composer. But as an organ virtuoso, he played...as they played in France at that time, with approximate legato and approximate observance of length values. It was customary too, to double the pedal basses with the left hand. It should be said however that organists had some excuse then, for they were never sure to find pedal couplers on all manuals in an organ.\(^9\)

Louis Vierne remarked, “To tell the truth, technical instruction was rather neglected (in Franck’s organ class), especially the study of the pedal.”\(^11\) Of course, Franck’s mission was not a pedagogical one, unlike Widor and Guilmant. But there is evidence

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\(^9\) The Lemmens method first entered organ pedagogy in France in 1891 when Widor succeeded Franck at the Paris Conservatoire. The Lemmens method stressed precision regarding value of notes/rests and absolute legato in all voices. Notes of the same pitch following one another immediately in different voices (“notes communes”) were likewise tied. Since Franck’s education as an organist occurred before the Lemmens method was introduced in France, should one tie the “notes communes” in Franck’s music? In some circumstances such ties gives the impression of voice crossing. It is most probable that Franck (who apparently did not play according to the Lemmens method) never systematically tied such “notes communes.”


to show that Franck was thoroughly proficient in finger substitution and glissandi. In the Braille scores he prepared of some of Bach’s works, he illustrated finger substitution and glissandi to ensure an absolute legato.\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, throughout the \textit{Trois Chorals}, accurate technique is necessary in order to achieve a consistent interpretation of the works.

One of the major obstacles in playing the organ works of Franck is the open position in his part writing, which results in intervals of a ninth and beyond throughout his compositions. Although these wide and uncompromising stretches were within the agile hands of Franck himself, they present a difficult situation for those with smaller hands. The first instance of this appears in m. 20 of \textit{Choral II}. Unless the right hand can play both the melody line and the accompanying alto voice or the left hand can play the alto voice as well, the registration must be altered at the beginning of the phrase to allow the pedal to play the lower B natural (Example 1). The registration can then return to the original prescription after m. 20. This is easily accomplished since there is no pedal part written for mm. 17-32.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{12} Karen Hastings, “New Franck Fingerings Brought to Light,” \textit{The American Organist} (Dec 1990), 93.}
Example 1, m. 17-21.

Apparently, Franck was not opposed to players rearranging the harmony from time to time to accommodate those having difficulty with the wide intervals. Former pupils of Franck have said that on numerous occasions Franck would rewrite passages that were better suited for smaller hands.\(^\text{13}\) In his edition of the *Three Chorals for Organ*, Bonnet redistributed the inner parts of mm. 35-36. Intervals of a tenth appear again as both hands span the interval of two and one-half octaves (Example 2). Bonnet shifts the alto notes, G-sharp and A, to the octave below. Although the shift

\(^{13}\) Smith, *Playing the Organ Works of César Franck*, 232.
alters the voice leading that Franck desired, the harmonies are nonetheless complete (Example 2).

Example 2, mm. 35-36.

Charles Tournemire, who studied with Franck at the Paris Conservatoire, relays that the composer’s intention was to play the left hand chords in mm. 41-44 detached and the octaves in the right hand as cantabile as possible. In the later Franck editions by Dupré and Duruflé, this is again indicated. In order to play the

\[14\] Ibid., 234.
octaves in the right hand legato, or as cantabile as possible, one must play the lower
note of the right hand octaves on beat one of measures mm. 42 and 44 on the Grand-
Orgue (Great) with the left hand thumb. For this to occur, the following fingerings
must be observed (Example 3).

Example 3, mm. 41-44.

written:
G.O.

executed: 5

Note that on beat two of mm. 42 and 44 the left-hand chord spans the interval of the
ninth. If one lowers the left-hand wrist on beat two of m. 42, the wide interval is
possible, given the position of the chord. However, it is not necessary to play the
upper A’s in m. 42 or the upper C’s in m. 44 (notated in parentheses) since the right-
hand octaves are already covering this note. The *Positif* is also coupled to the *Grand-Orgue* at this point, so the A and C-sharp are thus already sounding.

The octave melody in the right hand in the subsequent phrase, mm. 45-48, must be played without assistance from the other hand. Thus, for both hands, one must employ the constant use of glissandos.

The accompanying triplet figure in mm. 57-64 can be played on a secondary manual. Although Franck did not indicate this, it would allow the right-hand octaves to stand out. Here again, the left-hand thumb can reach down and play the lower note of the octaves in mm. 58 and 60 (Example 4). If the manual arrangement is Choir/Great/Swell, the left hand would then reach up to the lower octave note in mm. 58 and 60.
Both Bonnet and Duruflé played both hands of mm. 57-64 on the Grand-Orgue as written. If one chooses this interpretation, the right hand can ably play the upper notes of the left-hand score and the left-hand thumb can then take the lower note of the right-hand octaves as well as the lower notes of the left-hand score (Example 5).
Example 5, mm. 57-64.

written:

executed:
An important capability of the Saint-Clotilde organ must be mentioned when one approaches mm. 65-80 and again in mm. 90-105. During Franck’s time, the organ at Saint-Clotilde lacked a *Tirasse Récit* (Swell to Pedal coupler). To compensate for such a deficiency, Franck typically doubled the bass line in the left hand. When a *Tirasse Récit* is available, one can easily eliminate the duplication of the lowest voice in the left hand when passages result in a multiplicity of finger glissandos (Example 6).
Example 6, mm. 115-122.

written:

executed:
There are several alternatives in fingering mm. 139-140. Bonnet and Dupré both suggested fingerings for the ascending, rhapsodic figurations (Example 7).

Example 7, 139-141.

While Dupré’s suggestion is more consistent than Bonnet’s, it results in a most awkward hand position. Example 8 shows perhaps a better position for small hands.
Example 8, mm. 139-141.

The short fugue that begins in m. 148 is based on two subjects: the passacaglia theme and a countersubject. Tournemire recommended having the passage played on two manuals in order to “illumine” the melody, “...A complex arrangement, to be sure, but the clever organist with a sure technique ought to be able to overcome this great difficulty.”¹⁵ In his edition, Bonnet approached this difficulty with a detailed suggestion for fingering the passage. However, he neglected to address the wide intervals of the ninth (mm. 183-185) and the tenth (m.185) in his solution. Even if one chooses to approach the score as it is written, problems with playing the wide intervals still occur in mm. 182-185. However, it is possible to play all the notes in the correct octaves if some of the lower notes of the left hand are shifted to the pedal. This can be accomplished by a registration change before m. 182 since Franck wrote mm. 181-194 for manuals only. The original registration can then return after m. 187. This alternative is shown in the following example.

¹⁵ Smith, *Toward an Authentic Interpretation of the Organ Works of César Franck*, 90.
Example 9, mm. 180-187.

written:

executed:

*registration change

*return to original registration
Like the earlier passage in mm. 139-141, many players find it easier to divide descending or ascending figurations between the hands. In the following examples, the wide leaps in mm. 239-240 and m. 245 are eliminated and the left hand is better positioned for the next measure.

Example 10, mm. 239-240.

written:

executed:
Example 11, m. 245.

written:

executed:

In the concluding section, mm. 274-288, the duplication of the pedal part in the left hand can again be omitted as in mm.115-126. Again, the Tirasse Récit must be engaged.
2. *Choral III* in A Minor by César Franck

César Franck completed the third *Choral* on September 30, 1890. It was the last piece he wrote for the organ before his death. Albert Schweitzer describes *Choral III* as

... a toccata, both in the brilliant virtuosity that dominates it and in its form, which freely alternates the brilliant sections with more pensive ones. It is these latter sections that present the chorale melody in various guises and combinations. Even more than the two preceding *Chorals pour Orgue*, this gives the impression of an improvisation.¹

As with the other works of Franck, there has been a considerable amount of documentation as to proper interpretation. A comparison of the recordings of *Choral III* as played by Marcel Dupré and Charles Tournemire shows quite a drastic difference in style. Dupré’s style reflects the uninflected, pure, and strict playing of those taught through the lineage of Lemmens and Widor. Tournemire’s style reflects the personal and lively spirit of Franck. Which is the more historically authentic style is not the focus of this study. However, if one approaches this piece as an improvisation the player can be more subjective on issues of note values and tied notes, which can be advantageous to small hands. One may assume that with each ‘improvisation’ the rendering will not always be exactly the same. Indeed, Franck’s actual playing indicates that he played “*avec une extreme liberté.*”² When Jean

¹ Smith, *Playing the Organ Works of César Franck*, 249.
Langlais commented on Tournemire's recording of *Choral III* he was certain "that he [Tournemire] did not play this work the same way the day before nor the day after."³

The momentum of the entire *Choral* begins in the first measure with the exchange of the right and left hand ascending figurations that conclude on mm. 5 and 14. Although these two passages do not present a difficulty in reaching wide intervals, one can play the ending measures of the phrases with greater facility if the left hand continues to aid the right (Example 1). In this way the exchange of hands continues evenly throughout the phrase and keeps the hands in the same position.

³ Archbold, "We Have No Idea of the Liberty With Which Franck Played His Own Pieces", 95.
Example 1, mm. 5 and 14.

written:

executed:

The two-measure *Largemente* phrases that follow present the first challenge for small hands. Example 2 shows the solution Joseph Bonnet suggested for mm. 15-18 in his edition of the *Trois Chorals*. He suggested playing the first note of the third beat with the left hand and then passing the lower left hand note to the pedal division.
Example 2, mm. 15-18.

written:

executed:

However, with careful employment of finger glissandos and finger crossings one can effectively play the passage as written (Example 3). The thumb glissandos in the left hand must then be executed non-legato.
Example 3, mm. 15-18.

Throughout the *Choral III*, one is faced with a multitude of glissandos, substitutions, and finger crossings. Again, we know from Karen Hastings’s research, regarding Franck’s fingering of Bach in Braille, that his fingerings indeed included a multiplicity of substitutions and finger glissandi. Even Lemmens stated in his organ method

... Sometimes, in order to play all the parts smoothly, it is indispensable to glide with the same finger from one key to another, but in such manner that the continuation of sound is unbroken... Gliding (with the thumb or other fingers) is easy from a black to white key, ascending or descending a semitone, but it requires great dexterity when done by the thumb from one white key to another... When moving from a white to a black key it is necessary to advance the thumb more (than when moving between two white keys)... This fingering is also practicable the reverse way (descending instead of ascending).\(^4\)

Indeed, Franck’s fingerings of the organ works of Bach contain many examples of thumb glissandi between a white and black key that have a white key

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in between. Depending on the tempo and note values, some of these fingerings can be played smoothly and legato, but others must be performed non-legato.\textsuperscript{5}

The only solution in playing mm. 34-35 with absolute legato is to play two notes with the right-hand thumb on beats two and four (Example 4). Here the right hand is lowered on beats two and four and raised on the third beat. The wrist may guide the up-and-down motion as necessary. Involving the wrist will aid in relaxing the hand. The same solution can be applied to mm. 46-47, 60, 78-79, and 189.

**Example 4, mm. 34-35.**

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example4.png}
\caption{Example 4, mm. 34-35.}
\end{figure}

However, the left-hand passages in mm. 46 and 78 present an additional impossibility. The eighth-note passage in the left hand requires an interval reach of a tenth. Bonnet suggested playing five of the lower notes in the pedal (Example 5). Here one would need to make a registration change, having no

\footnote{Hastings, “New Franck Fingerings Brought to Light,” 96.}
stops drawn and the *Tirasse Récit* (Swell to Pedal coupler) engaged. One can then revert back to the prescribed registration in the next measure. This is easily accomplished since Franck wrote this section for manuals alone.

**Example 5, mm. 45-47.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Notation" /></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Notation" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bonnet’s suggestion certainly solves the problem, but may well present an additional technical issue if the five notes played in the pedal do not duplicate the exact legato of the left hand. Upon closer observation, there is a more effective solution. Instead of the pedal playing the eighth notes, the pedal can simply play
the E whole note, thus allowing the left hand to play the entire octave passage alone (Example 6).

**Example 6, mm. 45-47.**

In mm. 117-128, at *a tempo*, there are a number of intervals of the ninth and tenth that are impossible for small hands to execute. These impossibilities happen in mm. 118, 120, and 123 in the right-hand part. In his edition, Bonnet suggested:

...Small Hands: From the end of m. 118 the playing of the contra theme on an upper manual reduces the difficulty due to extension; therefore I offer two suggestions: 1st. on a 4 manual organ play the contra theme on the Solo(IV) instead of Gt. with a Gamba, Sw.Gt.Ch.
coupled to Solo. 2nd. On a 3 manual, from the second quarter in m. 117 play on the Ch.(I) without any stop (Sw. to Ch. only) and the contra theme on the Gt. as indicated…

The problem with this arrangement is whether one is playing a manual arrangement of Grand-Orgue/Positif/Récit or Choir/Great/Swell, the distance between the manuals themselves may still be too great to thumb down (or up) for those notes impossible to reach with the right hand alone. Another possible solution is to rearrange the right-hand chords whose intervals are greater than the ninth. Example 7 shows the rearrangement in mm. 118, 120 and 123. The lower note of the right-hand chord is shifted to the upper octave which creates an interval of a fourth or fifth instead of the ninth or tenth.

Example 7 mm. 118, 120, and 123, right hand.

At the Molto slargando section, Dupré, Langlais, Tournemire and Duruflé all detached the manual chords in mm. 144-145. It is obvious that Franck’s

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6 Franck, Three Chorals for Organ, ed. Joseph Bonnet, 38.
intentions were to detach the chords even though he did not include any articulations in his score. Thus, the need for clever fingering is omitted.

If playing the octave chords in the right hand of mm. 187-188 does not result in legato, one can omit the lower note of the chords (Example 8). Otherwise, the only option is to play the octave chords non-legato, which is less satisfactory.

**Example 8, mm 187-188, right hand.**

![Example 8, mm 187-188, right hand.]

Lemmens andDupré considered finger crossing to be one of the most useful tools in legato playing. Franck’s examples of finger crossing certainly attest to this as well. However, for those with small hands, finger crossing is used less as more multiple finger substitutions are necessary. Much fingering that looks quite forbidding and most awkward is actually manageable and smooth even with the plethora of substitutions and glissandos.

Marie-Louise Jaquet-Langlais states in her survey of editorial and performance problems of the works of Franck that one of the “positive aspects of the Dupré edition are the very careful fingerings, which are well suited for small
hands." However, as a player with small hands this writer finds that much of Dupré’s fingerings are unusable. Dupré typically fingered intervals of a fifth or sixth between the thumb and fourth finger, but for small hands such intervals are more comfortable fingered between the thumb and fifth finger. Dupré also often fingered intervals of an octave with the thumb and fourth fingers, which is not possible with small hands. Although Dupré demonstrated the necessity for a multitude of finger substitutions and glissandos, players with small hands must create their own course of fingerings.

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3. *Andante sostenuto*(Symphonie gothique) by Charles-Marie Widor

In 1895 the ninth symphony of Charles-Marie Widor was published. The *Symphonie gothique*\(^1\) ushered in a new style in organ music with its employment of Gregorian melody and spiritual transcendence. Widor dedicated the *Symphonie gothique*, opus 70, to the memory of Saint Ouen, the seventh-century bishop. The architecture of the famous church of Saint-Ouen in Rouen and the plainsong *Puer natus est* served as Widor’s inspiration for the *Symphonie gothique*. The first two movements of the *Symphonie* were said to have been inspired by the exterior and interior of the church. The first movement portrays the angular and severe lines of the Gothic exterior while the second movement, *Andante sostenuto*, relates to the serene repose of the interior.\(^2\)

The form of *Andante sostenuto* is A-B-A and it opens with a lyrical melody and undulating accompaniment both played on a Flute 8\'. The double pedaling in the middle section enriches both the melody and counterpoint. This reverie of Widor has become one of the loveliest gems in organ literature.

Although the left-hand accompaniment that opens the movement involves intervals of only the fifth and sixth, it is the position of these open chords that present the first problem for small hands. If one is unable to play the left-hand passage of the first measure legato, the right hand can aid in executing the first two beats of the measure (Example 1).

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We know that precision in attack and release was of the utmost importance to Widor. Legato notes were connected exactly, not approximately, and repeated notes separated by specific rests. In *Mes Souvenirs* Louis Vierne recalled Widor’s instructions:

Legato is the result of instantaneously carrying over the pressure from one finger to another. An infinitesimal hesitation and it becomes either
choppy or muddy. Although you must play legato, you must also play clearly: otherwise you have no real technique.³

... repeated notes must be articulated very precisely. If the time values are short, or if the tempo is quick or moderately so, cut short the first note by half its value. If the values are long or the movement slower, cut off a quarter or an eighth. With few exceptions it is reasonable in slow tempos to adopt the smallest time value of the particular piece of music as the fraction to cut from the first of two repeated notes for clear articulation.⁴

Vierne goes on to say that Widor explained the delicate difference between rhythm and meter.

... On the organ, the only means we have [of accenting] is by lengthening a note. Losing a slight amount of time on certain notes, making it up on others, that is the secret of rubato, the secret upon which all vital performances depend. Nevertheless, all this should be accomplished in such a way that the beat is respected. The listener must not be aware of the means employed in drawing his attention to what you wish to underline. It is a very delicate matter, for the slightest exaggeration produces a detestable mannerism that all artists of good taste must avoid. It is these principles that must guide the interpretation of the left hand, in particular, throughout the entire piece.⁵

It is by these most important principles, which Widor taught, that a successful interpretation of the Andante sostenuto is guided. The left-hand accompaniment throughout the piece is quite exposed even in the first section where the melody and accompaniment are both played on the same manual. The slightest break or imprecise attack and release create a "hiccup" that immediately destroys the tranquil mood of the reverie.

In m. 5 the right hand is again needed to play the upper notes of the left-hand accompaniment. This is easily accomplished since both the melody and

³ Vierne, Mes Souvenirs, tr. Smith, 69.
⁴ Ibid., 76.
⁵ Ibid., 77.
accompaniment are played on the *Grand-Orgue* (Great). The right-hand thumb must duplicate the exact attack and release as does the left hand so that a new articulation is not created at this point (Example 2). The example below shows all of the upper F’s of the left-hand accompaniment played with the right hand as well. This may aid in achieving more consistent attacks and releases.

**Example 2, m. 5-7.**
The closing section (A') that begins m. 33 offers yet another opportunity for the right hand to play the upper notes of the left-hand score. In m. 33, the right hand must play the A-flat and B-flat of the left-hand score so the left hand can execute the passage in the measure without any rhythmic alteration. Otherwise, the slightest hesitation of the left hand becomes detectable (Example 3).
Example 3, mm. 32-33.
4. Carillon de Westminster (Troisième Suite) by Louis Vierne

Second in importance to the six symphonies of Louis Vierne are the 24 Pièces de Fantaisie. This collection of 4 suites was written for the organ alone as concert pieces. The Carillon de Westminster is the final movement of the Troisième Suite which was composed at Luchon during the summer of 1927.¹ Vierne dedicated the Carillon to the noted English organ builder Henry Willis. Vierne played the Carillon for the first time as a Sortie at a closing service at Notre Dame. It remains today as one of the most popular pieces from the organ literature.

However, in the Carillon there are a number of problems that confront players with small hands. The first problem appears in m. 40. The impossibility occurs in the left hand on beat 3 (Example 1). The only solution is to play the B naturals with the right hand thumb. On organs where the manual arrangement is Grand-Orgue/Positif/Récit (Great/Choir/Swell), one would simply hold the right hand note D with the 4th or 5th finger and play the B naturals of the left hand part with the right hand thumb. The right hand must rotate clockwise. Even if the organ manual arrangement is such that the Positif is the bottom manual and the Grand-Orgue (Great) is the second manual (Choir/Great/Swell), which is the case on most American organs, this solution still works, as the right hand would then rotate counter-clockwise. It is even easier to allow the right hand thumb to play all of the B naturals in the measure. The thumb is then prepared early and makes for a smooth execution of the entire measure.

Example 1, m. 40. (Manual arrangement is *Grand-Orgue/Positif/Récit*).

written:

G.P.R.

executed:

G.P.R.

The same problem occurs again in mm. 45-46 (Example 3) as well as in m. 52.

But in m. 52 (Example 2) the D in the right hand on the *Grand-Orgue* (Great) must be held with the thumb to allow the right hand to rotate counter-clockwise and play the B-flats on the *Positif* with the 4th finger.
Example 2, m. 52. (Manual arrangement is *Grand-Orgue/Positif/Récit*).

Crucial fingering occurs in measure 44 in the left hand. On beat 2, it is necessary to use the following fingering to achieve an absolute legato (Example 3).
Example 3, m. 44-46.

written:

executed:

Perhaps the most difficult challenge for small hands comes in the closing section, in particular measures 120-140. In mm. 120-125 (Example 4), the A pedal point that is held in the left hand can be most difficult to maintain. It is necessary to lower the wrist significantly in order to play the upper notes of the sixteenth-note pattern. A most unnatural hand position occurs. The fifth finger of the left hand, along with the wrist, is lowered to the point where the thumb is able to reach under the keys to approach the upper B of the sixteenth-note pattern. For players unable to
reach intervals of a ninth or beyond, this solution allows the pedal point A to be held without any breaks and allows all the notes to be played legato.

Example 4, mm. 120-125.

Beginning in m.130 (Example 5) however, an additional solution must also be applied. Along with lowering the wrist, the player must also at times play two or more consecutive notes with the left-hand thumb. When the Carillon is played at the appropriate tempo, these thumb executions are actually played staccato. Consecutive
thumb glissandos here would be impossible to play legato in tempo. The agility of the thumb is crucial in order to execute these passages.

**Example 5, mm. 130-131.**

In the Lemoine edition of the 24 *Pièces de Fantaisie*, there are a number of printed errors. These printed errors confront all performers, especially those with small hands. In 1988 Olivier Latry\(^2\) undertook the challenge of recording the 24 *Pièces*. In preparing this project, he investigated the original manuscript as well as the corrected proofs of the publisher and made corrections according to these documents. The manuscripts of the first three suites are in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The corrected proofs remain at the office of the publisher.

Although blind for the most part, Vierne still was able to write out his own music on enlarged staves. His uncertain and imprecise methods of notation and the

\(^2\)Olivier Latry (b. 1962) studied with Gaston Litaize at the Saint-Maur-des-Fossés Conservatoire. In 1990, he succeeded Lataize as professor of organ. He was appointed one of four organists of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris in 1985.
alteration of the manuscript made the engraver’s task more difficult, the latter having
to opt for solutions of his own on occasion with the result that the printed proofs could
not be guaranteed to represent the composer’s intentions.\textsuperscript{3} The following table cites
the textual corrections Latry made for the \textit{Carillon de Westminster}.\textsuperscript{4}

\textbf{Textual Corrections for the 24 Pièces de Fantaisie}

\textit{Troisième Suite, Op. 54, VI. Carillon de Westminster}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Beat</th>
<th>Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pedal note should be B, not A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second sixteenth note in left hand should be D, not E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second sixteenth note in left hand should be D, not E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td>Add diminuendo mark through whole measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No eighth rest after dotted quarter note in the Pedal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>Left hand registration should read R.p., not R.P.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Manuscript has a quarter note chord in the left hand followed by an eighth rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Manuscript has a quarter note chord in the left hand followed by an eighth rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedal note should be a quarter note followed by an eighth rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Top note of the left hand should be B, not A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Top note of the left hand should be B, not A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>First sixteenth note of the left hand should be C#, not B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pedal notes should be B flat, not B natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Add eighth rest in the left hand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a number of instances, the corrections made by Latry essentially solve the
problem presented to players with small hands. For instance, the correction of the D
naturals in mm. 49 and 51, instead of the E, enables the left hand to execute the

\textsuperscript{3} Rollin Smith, \textit{Louis Vierne: Organist of Notre Dame Cathedral} (New York: Pendragon Press, 1999), 735.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 742.
passage legato. But in a few cases, the textual correction presents a difficult interval for the left hand. This occurs in mm. 127 and 129 (Example 6).

Example 6, m. 127 (duplicated in m. 129).

The A in m. 152, beat 4 in the left hand, was also omitted by mistake in the original manuscript. Rollin Smith made this correction by adding the omitted note so that it corresponds with the same chord played on beat 4 in mm. 127, 129, 141, and 143.\footnote{Ibid., 736, 742.} However, many small hands are unable to play the lower A. Since the pedal note on beat 4 of these measures also plays an A, it is certainly logical and justifiable to omit the low A in the left hand from these measures (Example 7).
Example 7, mm. 141 and 143.

Vierne did not indicate fingering in his organ compositions. Therefore, players must seek the best fingering possible for an accurate and elegant performance. Regardless of the layout of the printed score, inner voices must sometimes be distributed between the hands. For players with small hands this can become an added challenge. Unlike his flexibility on the subject of tempo, Vierne was quite inflexible when it came to rhythm. He considered rhythm as the essential characteristic of a true interpreter; and the test of clarity was that the listener always should be sure of the exact rhythm. In approaching the music of Vierne the player must first choose fingering solutions that best enable one to maintain accurate rhythm.
5. Clair de lune (Deuxième Suite) by Louis Vierne

The Deuxième Suite, op. 53, was composed between August and December of 1926. Vierne added the dedications of each movement after returning from his American tour in 1927. In the published edition by Henry Lemoine & Cie, Vierne dedicates the Clair de lune to E.M. Skinner, the noted American builder, for whose work Vierne had great admiration.

The Clair de lune is a quiet reverie much like the Andante sostenuto from the Symphonie gothique, op. 70, of Charles-Marie Widor. There is no doubt that this most impressive gem of Widor’s must have influenced Vierne. Like Widor, Vierne opens the work with a lyrical melody accompanied by a repetitive figuration in the left hand along with a long pedal point. The pedal then states the melody that proceeds in double pedaling along with a counter melody. After a brief development, the opening melody returns again in its simple form.

The foremost obstacle in playing the Clair de lune with small hands deals mainly with the issue of legato, particularly in the inner parts. As stated in the previous chapter, legato touch was the norm for Vierne. He was particularly concerned that inner voices are legato and stressed. Vierne was also quite meticulous in the striking and releasing of notes. “The great conductor brings in and cuts off his instrumentalists sharply; the great organist should do the same.”

One is immediately faced with the challenge of legato playing in the first three measures of the left hand (Example 1). It is impossible to play the whole-note pairs in

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2 Smith, Louis Vierne, 571.
3 Ibid., 572.
the inner parts without some sort of break, thus presenting the problem of how to interpret the "legato inner part". Given the slow and dreamy atmosphere of the piece in general, one may first approach the issue of repeated notes. Vierne adhered to Widor and Guilmant's practice of the repeated note losing half its value (in moderate tempo). In slow tempos the repeated note would lose one-fourth or one-eighth its value.⁴ If one uses a consistent and smaller release, particularly in the repeated quarter notes of the left hand throughout the first section of the piece, it creates a very fluid and unjarring line, even though there is a break between each note. One may then approach the whole notes in the first few measures with the same technique of attack and release. In Example 1, one of the whole notes is played legato and the other with a break. Not always is it possible for the upper note in a passage to be played legato. But by using a smaller release in those notes that must be broken, it creates a line without "hiccups" or audible breaks, which would not be in keeping with the atmosphere or tone of the piece.

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⁴ Ibid., 571.
Example 1, left hand, mm. 1-3.

written:

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright}
\end{array} \]

can be played as:

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright}
\end{array} \]

In mm. 13-14, yet another problem arises in the left-hand part. One would need to be able to reach an interval of a ninth in order to keep the releases of the repeated quarter notes consistent, while still playing the whole notes in tempo. If this is not possible and one remains consistent with the release of the quarter or eighth note, then what results is a slight lengthening of the melody line at the end of m.13 (Example 2). Otherwise, the result is a much quicker release of the last eighth note in measure 13, creating a “hiccup” on the last beat. Here, the left hand must have time to move upwards to reach to E-flat with the thumb of the left hand.
Example 2, mm.13-14.

The next issue concerns the slur markings of the melody line that includes the interval skip of a tenth. This occurs twice in the piece, in mm. 5 and 86 (Example 3). The plethora of slurs in the Clair de lune, as in all of Vierne’s music, leads one to think that they were more for the eye than for actual phrasing indications. Vierne’s student, André Fleury, likened them to “bowings in an orchestral work” which are not always lifted at the end of every slur. Vierne himself phrased passages sometimes differently and even gave his students conflicting directions as to the phrasing of a certain melody line. Geneviève de La Salle considered Vierne’s phrase marks to be

...often a theoretical or intellectual nature, affording visual symmetry, and that a literal interpretation of the phrasing would be contrary to Vierne’s lyricism and legato style and would result in phrases that are trop hachés (too choppy)...phrasing or breathing in (his) lyrical pieces is generally the exception rather than the rule, with phrasing occurring

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6 Geneviève de La Salle (d. March 1993) was one of Vierne’s last students.
mainly at the ends of sections of a composition in order to prepare the listener for a new idea, new theme, or for a modulation.\footnote{R. Christiansen, Interview with Geneviève de La Salle, Paris, July 8, 1976. Quoted in “Adagio and Final from Louis Vierne’s Sixth Organ Symphony: Technical and Interpretive Problems,” Unpublished scholarly paper, Brigham Young University, 1978, 64-65.}

If one compares the \textit{Adagio} from \textit{Symphonie III} as Vierne phrased it in the organ score to his 1926 arrangement for organ and orchestra, one can see the obvious difference in phrasing. The woodwind parts include much shorter phrasing, as winds cannot sustain the breath for such long lines as those of the organ. When approaching the opening melody line of the \textit{Clair de lune} orchestrally, it is not only valid but also quite convincing to phrase the line so that there is a lift before the D-flat in m. 5 (Example 3).

\textbf{Example 3, mm. 1-7.}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example_3.png}
\end{center}
The beginning of the last section, m. 81, again confronts the player with the issue of accuracy and consistency of attacks and releases of notes, especially pairs of notes. Instead of playing m. 81 with the left hand only, it is much easier to divide the measure between the right and left hand (Example 4). This allows for much more accuracy and control of the attacks and releases.

Example 4, mm. 81-82.
A final problem arises in the next to last phrase of _Clair de lune_. The left-hand chord in m. 104 requires the left hand to reach the interval of a tenth. The obvious solution is to play the low C in the pedal (Example 5). To do so, one would need to make a registration change at the beginning of the phrase (m.102) so that the _Récit_ is coupled to the _Pédale_ without any pedal notes drawn. Afterwards, in m. 105, one can then return to the registration set for the final section.

**Example 5, mm. 102-105.**
In keeping with the remarks on other works of Vierne included in this study, the textual corrections can affect players with small hands. For instance, in m. 96 the half note D-natural in the left hand should be a whole note, in keeping with m. 15. This presents the same problems found in m. 13. The following table lists the textual corrections made by Olivier Latry.\(^8\)

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Measure} & \text{Beat} & \text{Correction} \\
16 & 1-2 & \text{Lowest voice in the left hand should be A-natural} \\
28 & 4 & \text{Upper voice in the left hand should be F-natural, not E} \\
37 & 1 & \text{Dynamic marking should be } mf, \text{ not } f \\
81 & 1 & \text{Add diminuendo sign from here to third beat of next measure} \\
86 & 1 & \text{Rhythm in right hand should agree with measure 5} \\
96 & 1-4 & \text{The D natural in the left hand should be a whole note} \\
103 & 1 & \text{The lower note in the r.h. chord should be G-flat, not A-flat} \\
104 & 1-4 & \text{Add crescendo sign through the entire bar}
\end{array}
\]

\(^8\) Smith, Louis Vierne, 740.
6. Final (Symphonie I) by Louis Vierne

The Final is the last movement from Vierne’s Symphonie I\(^1\) and has become one of the best-known pieces of organ literature. This youthful work of Vierne was dedicated to Alexander Guilmant, with whom Vierne studied at the Paris Conservatory. Like the symphonies of his mentor Widor, Vierne’s first symphony contains six movements. Maurice Duruflé considered this symphony alone sufficient to establish Vierne’s reputation.\(^2\)

The Final is laid out in sonata form. The first theme, heard in the pedal, is accompanied by an eighth-note figuration. The second theme encounters a canon between the soprano and bass. After the development, the first theme returns, now accompanied by eighth-note triplets. It is in the beginning measures of the Final that the eighth-note accompaniment figures first challenge players with small hands. Although the interval outline for the figures in the left hand does not exceed an octave, it is the position of the seventh going to the fifth in the left hand that presents the difficulty. This occurs on beat four in each of the first eight measures (Example 1). Vierne wanted the second note of the pairs to be “cut very short.”\(^3\) If one plays the eighth-note pairs in the left hand, in accordance with the layout of the printed score, one is faced with the problem again of accurate and consistent releases of the pairs. This problem is the main obstacle throughout the entire piece.

Though the solution is simple, it requires accurate attack and release. If one allows the right hand thumb to play the upper A’s of the left hand score, then one can

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\(^2\) Smith, *Louis Vierne*, 520.
\(^3\) Ibid., 584.
more effectively play the eighth-note pairs with exact precision (Example 1). Since both hands play on the *Grand-Orgue* (Great) manual, this solution also eliminates excessive or exaggerated movements between the hands. Since the upper A of the left hand part is always played with the right-hand thumb, it keeps the hands in place and closer to the keys, which is essential for precision attacks and releases.

**Example 1, mm1-4.**

written:

executed:

The next difficulty again involves eighth-note figures that include the interval of the seventh. In mm. 122 and 124, it is impossible to play beats 3 and 4 legato without a break. While the problem may not be alleviated entirely, perhaps the best solution is to play the upper notes of the left-hand score as thumb glissandos (Example
2). Here, the thumb glissandos between the third and fourth beats are actually non-legato when played in tempo.

Example 2, mm. 122-124.

Another passage that may require the use of glissandos occurs in mm. 205-208. By playing the half notes in the right hand as thumb glissandos and with the following fingering, one can achieve accuracy and precision of the passage without excessive movement (Example 3). When playing the glissandos, the right-hand wrist is lowered to prepare the next note(s).
Example 3, mm. 205-208.

Rollin Smith offers another solution to these measures that begin the climax of the Final (Example 4). Smith distributes the inner voices (half notes) between the hands. This too can yield an effortless performance of a passage fraught with possible disaster at a most exposed moment.\(^4\)

Example 4, mm. 205-208.

\(^4\) Ibid., 579.
Conclusion

In playing the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French organ works, organists with small hands encounter many technical challenges. Many passages are most difficult to execute without "Franckian" hands. Many phrases and chords involve intervals greater than the octave, which for many organists with small hands is the largest interval possible.

César Franck, Charles-Marie Widor, and Louis Vierne provided few fingering suggestions in their organ works. Celebrated organists such Marcel Dupré and Joseph Bonnet have offered some suggestions in approaching the works of Franck. However, it is obvious by the careful fingerings that appear in their editions that they did not have small hands. Therefore, organists with small hands must create their own scheme of fingerings that best suit the capabilities of their hands. A greater number of finger substitutions and glissandos and fewer finger crossings must occur in most cases.

Many passages are rewritten in this document so that the right hand can play the left-hand notes or passages and vice versa. There are numerous times where the thumb or another finger needs to reach up or down to an adjacent manual to aid the other hand. Although this is not an uncommon realization amongst organists, it becomes a necessity much more often for small hands. In certain passages, such as in the Trois Chorals of Franck and the Clair de lune of Vierne, the pedal plays a part written for the left hand—its may be a single note or an entire passage. This results in a few more registration changes.
Whereas the octave may be the largest interval that one can reach, larger intervals can be obtained at times by altering the hand position. For example, in the *Carillon de Westminster* some left-hand passages that involve the interval of a ninth are made possible by lowering the wrist and reaching under the keys. This results in an unusual hand position, but it meets the challenge.

The *Clair de lune* presents an example of where one must phrase the melody line differently than the composer indicated. After viewing other organ works of Vierne that he later arranged for organ and orchestra, one can see that there are obvious changes in phrasing made to better accommodate the limitations of the instrumentalists. Thus, one can conclude that Vierne was not opposed to such differences in phrasing.

Many examples given in the previous chapters illustrate difficult passages in executing precise attacks and releases when the intervals involved are beyond the reach of small hands. The approaches and resources offered by this writer provide organists with small hands the solutions to play the repertoire of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French period with a sure technique that will result in a most convincing interpretation.
Bibliography


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