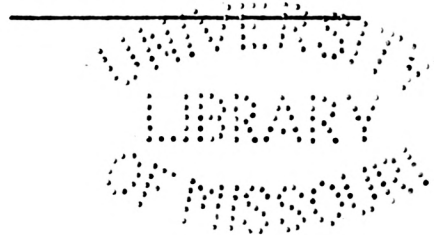


THE ORGAN SYMPHONIES
OF LOUIS VIERNE

by

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CHAPTER I

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOUIS VIERNE AND HIS ORGAN SYMPHONIES

The modern French school of organ-playing is a monument to the unswerving devotion of one man--Charles-Marie Widor. From the day in 1890 when he succeeded César Franck as professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire, Widor labored unremittingly toward the improvement of French organ-playing. Rarely, if ever, in the history of music has there arisen such a galaxy of organists as those of the modern French school, a large number of whom received their stimulation and inspiration under his tutelage.

In a similar connection one recalls the tremendous impetus given to organ-playing and composition by Jan Sweelinck of Amsterdam (1562-1621), and of the consequent rise of the North German school of organists which eventually culminated in the genius of Johann Sebastian Bach. However, the very range of geographical distribution represented by these organists prevents a close comparison.

The French organ school was almost a completely national development. The success of Widor's determination to restore excellence to organ-performance and to revive

the authentic tradition in the interpretation of the works of Bach can justly be measured by the accomplishments of the nearly incredible number of organists produced by the Paris Conservatoire during the régime of Widor.

Among these organists so skilfully trained was one who, in his Conservatoire days, was both student and master. Louis Victor Jules Vierne was a student of Franck, of Widor, and of Guilmant. At first chosen by Widor as his assistant, he was later to serve in that capacity with Guilmant also. Though Vierne was but one of several excellent students in the organ-class of Widor, his selection by the latter demonstrated the high regard in which both he and his work were held. Louis Vierne thus became a link between the teaching of Franck and that of Widor; his later association with Guilmant only served to strengthen the tradition--in truth--for Guilmant placed heavy responsibility upon his assistant as the closeness of their association grew.

By reason of the thirty-seven years spent in the coveted position of organist at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Vierne's position among his contemporaries as one of the foremost representatives of the modern French organ school was assured. Widor himself urged Vierne to become a candidate for the post of organist at Notre-Dame when the incumbent, Sergent, died in 1900.

He [Widor] prodded my artistic ambition with the thought of restoring the prestige of the organ at Notre-

Dame, eclipsed now for a century, having lost with d'Aquin [1694-1772] its last great representative. Badgered on this side and that, I finally yielded to Widor . . .¹

If further proof were needed of the high regard in which Vierne was held, it only would be necessary to read the words of Canon Pisani as he instructed Vierne in his rights and duties as organist of Notre-Dame:

M. Widor insisted [on Vierne's candidacy], first in your interest, and then [secondly] in order to prove the great renown of our young school of organists, which he has so greatly stimulated and inspired [sic]. You have followed his advice. You see that it was the part of wisdom. The future will only prove it to you the more. Your mission is to restore to the organ of Notre-Dame its glory of past centuries. . . .²

The organ works of Louis Vierne, though relatively limited in number (there are six general titles), form a connection between the last symphonies of Widor and the works of the later French organists, many of whom were taught by Vierne. Since there has been, to the best of the author's knowledge, no examination--cursory or analytical--of the Vierne organ symphonies, it is the purpose of this dissertation to demonstrate that these six symphonies, in the matter of form and outline at least, are a logical development and extension of the Widor symphonies; that in the symphonies there is a manner of expression which is a further development of the chromatic harmony of Franck;

1 Louis Vierne, "Reminiscences of Louis Vierne; His Life and Contacts with Famous Men," The Diapason, June, 1939.

2 Ibid., June, 1939.

that in terms of the organ, it is entirely practicable to work in forms as large as those represented by the organ symphonies.

Despite Láng's characterization of the Widor symphonies as "contrapuntally belabored products of a flat and scant musical imagination, the bastard nature of which is evident from the title alone,"³ the author feels that the Vierne organ symphonies, although deriving certain elements of form and treatment from the Widor works, are not necessarily susceptible to the same castigation.

³ P. H. Láng, Music in Western Civilization (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1941), p. 995.

CHAPTER II

MUSIC IN FRANCE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

I. THE OPERA AND OTHER FORMS

The entire nature, state, and preoccupation of French music in the first half of the nineteenth century can be expressed in two words: Paris, and opera. The eighteenth century had seen many developments take place in the operatic field: Gluck had accomplished his reforms; he had, in his own words, sought "to reduce music to its true function [in opera], that of supporting the poetry in order to strengthen the expression of the sentiments and the interest of the situations, without interrupting the action. . . ."1

It was Paris to which Gluck looked for the center in which his theories might find approval; it was Paris where the Gluckists and Piccinnists quarreled in the streets; the Parisian public witnessed the efforts of the followers of Gluck--Cherubini, Méhul, and Lesueur; Paris saw the classical ideals of tragedy gradually decline, the mingling, in the opéra comique, of the tragic and the comic elements.

¹ Abridged preface to "Alceste", in Ferguson, A History of Musical Thought (New York: F. S. Crofts and Company, 1935), p. 260.

The historical opera with its more serious aspect, and written almost exclusively by foreigners, seemed to find more favor with the French public than with the native French composers. Parisian taste dictated the concessions that were made to its demands, and, in addition, the cachet of its approval was considered invaluable by the Italian composer who sought distinction in the field of opera.

While it seems as though there was great confusion of purpose and much uncertainty of taste in the operatic field in the 'thirties, Meyerbeer, with his librettist, Scribe, was able to effect a merging of all the conflicting interests of the Germans, the Italians, and the French. It was not long before this combination of talents had all Paris at its feet, and it was with the utmost nicety that Meyerbeer calculated the intelligence and the endurance of the French public.

As for the writers of symphonies in the first half of the nineteenth century, there was no disputing the leadership of the Germans--Mendelssohn and Schumann--although "It is perplexing to think that by the middle of the nineteenth century the number of compositions of more than ephemeral merit written in the symphonic medium, once the pride of an era and the supreme aim of its composers, had shrunk to a handful."² The touch of romanticism was upon

² P. H. Lang, Music in Western Civilization (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1941), p. 281.

all forms; the classical differentiation between orchestral and chamber music styles was lessened, and as the century progressed chamber music became instrumental music for specialized ensembles, with the string quartet in particular acquiring orchestral characteristics.³

In the first half of the century, then, music in France was almost entirely dominated by the opera, the despotism of which was so complete that scarcely any composition was done in the orchestral field, with the exception of the efforts of Berlioz, who was entirely engrossed with his experiments in the field of highly imaginative program music. Chopin, despite his French environment, must be put in company with Schumann and Mendelssohn in deference to his lyrical romanticism.

Berlioz, a typical Frenchman in temperament, was unique in the field of instrumental music. He labored alone among a group of foreigners who dominated other fields of music. It might be well to point out that the strong emphasis on rhythm, color, and dramatic contrast which was later to become so characteristic of the music of Vierne and of his contemporaries was already present in the music of Berlioz. The vividness of the pictorial ideas that Berlioz attempted to put into his music demands that these

³ Ibid., p. 822.

qualities be carefully considered. Hadow says that "Berlioz was one of the greatest masters of rhythm and modulation the world has ever seen. . . ."4 It must be remembered too, that such a device as alterations of theme in the use of the idée fixe was comparatively new in Berlioz's day.5 He himself says in his Memoirs that "The prevailing characteristics of my music are passionate expression, intense ardour, rhythmical animation, and unexpected turns."6

The commanding personalities of the time, as far as the field of opera was concerned, were Auber, Rossini, and Meyerbeer; it was largely due to the efforts of the latter that French opera had been so auspiciously launched on its full career. This form of music most certainly needed, and at the same time met the demands of an audience for the most part composed of the bourgeoisie, whose position and whose power were definitely in the ascendent. Music in France, as a consequence, had the aspect of a luxury and an entertainment, though it was not long before the rise of nationalism was to make itself felt in French musical circles.

⁴ W. H. Hadow, Studies in Modern Music, First Series (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1892), p. 137.

⁵ Ibid., p. 138.

⁶ Hector Berlioz, Memoirs (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1932), p. 488.

The Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) was largely instrumental in awakening an interest in national affairs and in national culture. One of the first concrete evidences of its leavening spirit was the founding, in 1871, of the Société Nationale de Musique français. Saint-Saëns and Bus-sine were the moving spirits of the venture and with them were associated many of the leading musicians of the day. There was by no means an immediate turning away from the operatic field, but the interests of the Parisian musical public were broadened to a degree. Since the avowed purpose of the Société was to aid the production and the dissemination of all serious works of French composers, the aims and the ideals of the musicians concerned were of the highest. There is little doubt that the effort to raise the standards of public taste was successful to a modest degree, for orchestral music once more became more generally acceptable. It must be remembered, however, that César Franck was to spend fifty years of his life as an obscure teacher and organist with only the love and admiration of his students as an intangible reward for his efforts. That those efforts were not in vain can be demonstrated by the fervent acceptance of his ideals by the students who in later years carried on the tradition. The work of these same students was later to become a large part of the music guaranteed a hearing by the Société. Edward Burlingame Hill

asserts unequivocally that "French music of the later progressive type owes its very existence to the National Society more than to any other single cause."⁷

Another perennial institution--the Conservatoire--had, from the eighteenth century, enjoyed an increasing prestige, and in some ways, the winners of its first prizes in the various departments of study show the progress of later music in France. The training at the Conservatoire always laid heavy emphasis on the various competitions for the first prizes in the several fields of concentration.

The Grand Prix de Rome was awarded by the Académie des Beaux-Arts to the winner of the annual competition in composition at the Institut de France. The prize composition was to be a cantata with orchestral accompaniment, rather than a purely orchestral work.

Musical scholarship had never been one of the primary interests of the Conservatoire, but that very definite lack was supplied in Paris by the founding, in 1894, of the Schola Cantorum by Charles Bordes, who was one of Franck's gifted pupils. His collaborators in this venture were Guilmant and d'Indy. The aims of the Schola were the restoration of the Gregorian tradition in plainsong; the restoration of the rich treasury of church music from

⁷ E. B. Hill, Modern French Music (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), p. 9.

the time of Palestrina, the enlargement of the organist's repertoire, and the creation of a modern literature of religious music. Bordes had already awakened much interest in music of the style of Palestrina through its use in the choir of which he was the director--the Chanteurs de Saint-Gervais. With the death of Bordes in 1909, and of Guilmant in 1912, the directorship of the Schola was entrusted to Vincent d'Indy, who continued the policies of his predecessors.

The instruction of the Conservatoire tended heavily toward the production of highly specialized performers on their several instruments; the Schola, on the other hand, was greatly and primarily interested in producing students who had a thorough knowledge of the various phases of musical thought, and who were cognizant of the many musical styles permeating the history of music. In this respect the Schola's training admirably supplemented the solid professional schooling provided by the Conservatoire.

Yet another invigorating influence was the series of orchestral concerts represented by the efforts of three distinguished conductors: Padeloup, Colonne, and Lamoureux. These three concert-series were of paramount importance in bringing to the Parisian music-lovers a new knowledge of the masterpieces of musical literature, and again, they were instrumental in diverting a part of the public's attention

from the opera-house. Eventually it was to be expected that this newly awakened interest would carry over to other fields--among them those of chamber music and of organ literature.

II. FRENCH MUSICIANS AND MUSICOLOGY

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, many of the foremost musicians in France were engaged in editorial and historical pursuits in the field of music.

As Egon Wellesz says:

At the end of the 18th century there began a period of detailed research, a period which is not yet over, whose object is to investigate, step by step, the whole province of music, to publish complete editions of the great masters, and collections of the most important works of lesser composers, each country contributing its quota to the whole⁸

If there were differences of opinion among the many French musicians occupied with such problems of research, it must be said that when they acted in collaboration as editors and arrangers of historical collections of music, their individual differences of opinion were set aside.

This curiosity in the historical aspects of music was, in part, the result of the labors of the Schola, and in many cases authoritative editions of masters long dead were made available for the first time. Bordes himself was the

⁸ Egon Wellesz, Article on "Musicology", Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Supplementary Volume (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), p. 460.

collector and publisher of the works of Jannequin, one of the sixteenth-century masters who made experiments in program music; Bordes' principal work was his Anthologie des maîtres religieux primitifs. Henri Expert, who resigned his position as senior librarian of the Conservatoire in 1933, published in 1894 Les Maîtres Musiciens de la Renaissance française, in twenty-three volumes, and began, in 1924, his Monuments de la musique française au temps de la Renaissance, now complete in ten volumes.

One of the most sorely needed examples of research was that of Guilmant and Pirro. Félix Raugel says of their venture:

The French masters of the organ possess an historical importance of the first rank. They were almost unknown until the day when Alexandre Guilmant conceived the plan of publishing their works in association . . . with André Pirro. . . . Messrs. Guilmant and Pirro are, therefore, the editors of that magnificent collection, "Archives des Maîtres de l'Orgue XVI^e, XVII^e, et XVIII^e Siècles", comprising six large volumes of over 300 pages. . . .⁹

Saint-Saëns acted as the editor-in-chief for the publishing of the complete works of Rameau. Hill calls attention to the fact that French music publishers were most far-seeing, and that there were many evidences of splendid cooperation with the editors.¹⁰ In 1895, Pirro produced his L'Orgue de

⁹ Félix Raugel, "The Ancient French Organ School," The Musical Quarterly, October, 1925, p. 566.

¹⁰ Hill, Op. cit., p. 18.

Bach, and in 1907, L'Esthétique de Jean-Sebastien Bach, both of which were among the first competent studies of the Leipzig cantor. Hill summarizes the developments:

In retrospect then, we may assign the development of instrumental music, the intensification of the national spirit caused by the Franco-Prussian War with its aftermath of the National Society of French Music and other organizations, the reawakening of French musicians to their historical and poetic past, the signal advance of educational institutions and the revival of historical and critical investigations as the chief causes of a constructive rebirth of French music.¹¹

¹¹ Ibid., p. 19.

CHAPTER III

THE FRENCH ORGAN

The inherent conservatism of the Roman Catholic Church and the fact that the formal services of that church have remained unchanged for centuries have meant that new methods of organ construction have received small encouragement. Goodrich states:

So far as the general characteristics of action and tonal disposition are concerned, the French organ of today was virtually established seventy-five years ago.¹

The general custom in most churches in France has been to restore and to preserve the excellent qualities of the old instruments by careful rebuilding.

The period of seventy-five years--now grown to one hundred--taken by Goodrich dates from the invention of the Barker lever, which, according to Charles Mutin,² caused a veritable revolution in organ-building. This device made it possible for the organist to overcome the almost impossibly heavy action on large organs when all manuals were

¹ Wallace Goodrich, The Organ in France (Boston: The Boston Music Company, 1917), p. 14.

² Charles Mutin, "L'Orgue", Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire de Conservatoire (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1926), p. 1076.

coupled to the Great Organ. The lever, using pneumatic power, removed from the manual keys the resistance of the couplers, of the pallets, and of heavy wind pressure. Cavallé-Coll made the first application of the new invention to the organ he was building (1841) for the Church of St. Denis, near Paris. He was enabled thereby to introduce harmonic pipes which were dependent upon increased wind-pressure.

Cavallé-Coll was responsible for many improvements in organ construction in addition to the two just mentioned; the divided wind-chest made it possible for an organist to control independently certain stops on a given keyboard; and he also worked unceasingly upon the problems afforded by mixtures and mutation stops.

The rather conservative progress of the French organ builders was continued in other countries in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The following examples quoted by Mutin³ are interesting in showing the spread of new ideas in construction. Rotterdam boasted, in 1850, an organ with a swell-box, perhaps the first in Holland; Roosevelt organ in Grace Church, New York, (1878), used electricity in the action; the Brussels Conservatoire had a Cavallé-Coll organ with pneumatic machines at all keyboards (1880); in 1891 Amsterdam had a forty-six stop organ with pneumatic

³ Ibid., pp. 1081-1084.

levers and pneumatic motors for drawing the stops; St. Louis' Exposition organ of one hundred-forty stops used electric action.

The organ in France has always had its most important function in the accompaniment and in the artistic embellishment of the services for the Roman Church. The music written for these services, as well as the organ music based upon liturgical themes--though not necessarily meant for sacred use--must take their characteristics from the qualities of the instrument upon which the music is to be played. The larger forms of organ music developed by the modern French school had to wait upon the development of devices for furnishing constant and equalized wind pressure. The improvisations which were so important to the French organists were created both in terms of the services they embellished and in terms of the instrument on which they were performed.

In the French Catholic churches, the organ gallery is usually located at the rear of the church, over the main entrance, and from that point the organist is able to decorate the service artistically, without the necessity of accompanying either the choir or the congregation. For all practical purposes, a small choir organ (*orgue de chœur*) in the chancel provides the support and the accompaniment needed by the choir. This independence of the Great Organ

(Grand-Orgue) necessarily encourages the art of improvisation, which in most Protestant churches is utterly lacking, save for the opportunities at beginning or ending of a service.

The elaborate Sunday and Festival services of the Roman Church offer ample opportunity for the genius of the improviser at the organ, since in the course of the Mass there are many places where interludes become necessary. Especially at the Offertory is there opportunity for an extended improvisation. The organists of the modern French school have always had excellent reputations in this particular aspect of organ-playing; indeed, a very heavy emphasis was placed upon this attainment during the incumbencies of Franck, Widor, and Guilmant at the Conservatoire. Saint-Saëns was authority for the statement that improvisation was the basis of the organist's talent,⁴ and in making his remark he was surely thinking of the service organist following the progress of the Mass.

The organ at Notre-Dame was built in 1868 by Cavaillé-Coll, and three times at least, it was modified or reconstructed by the same builder. This instrument, and the organ of St.-Sulpice are perhaps the most representative of

⁴ Camille Saint-Saëns, "Music in the Church," The Musical Quarterly, January, 1916.

the French organs built by Cavaillé-Coll. These organs exemplify the type of instrument for which the French organists were composing.

The modern development of imitative stops was almost entirely neglected by the French builders in their determination to preserve those qualities they felt were indigenous to the instrument. The organ works of the French composers, for the most part, disregard almost completely in their registrations the trend toward orchestral imitation which later became so prevalent in both construction and composition in America. There are movements in the Vierne symphonies where coloristic and impressionistic methods are called for, but nowhere can there be found the extreme registrations demanded by Karg-Elert, for example.

Above all else, the French builders were concerned with the perfection of ensemble. The builders did not assiduously cultivate the characteristics of brilliance and individuality in the various stops, since they were at all times bent upon producing a sonorous and smooth ensemble. It is true that so-called solo stops are not lacking in the specification of the organ at Notre-Dame (see Appendix B); but it is likewise true that the consideration for perfection of ensemble far outweighs any preoccupation with solo "effects."

There is in addition the question of the relative

strengths of solo stops and of those foundation stops which must provide an accompaniment. Goodrich gives an excellent example⁵ taken from the Cantabile of Vierne's Second Symphony where the Récit employs a Clarinete or Cromorne 8' against an accompaniment written "nearly two octaves higher and assigned to the 8' Flûte (harmonique) on the Grand-
Orgue!"

Brilliance in the degree to which it was desired was to be the function of the compound stops of the mutation ranks; the reeds, which on large organs were provided at the 16-, 8-, and 4 ft. pitches, were to be relied upon for power as well as for brilliance. One has only to look at the specification of almost any large French organ to see that the primary foundation stops as well as the mutations and mixtures are well represented at all manuals, and that for the most part the stops which are used for solo purposes may enter into the ensemble as well.

The borrowing from, and the augmenting of, certain ranks of pipes are directly at variance with French principles. Wallace Goodrich remarks:

. . . in the disposition of their reeds, as in their foundation stops, the French declare their adherence to the principle that an organ should be conceived as an instrument primarily of eight-foot tone upon the manuals, with the provision of octave and sub-octave registers (in both flue and reed-work) and mutation

⁵ Goodrich, Op. cit., p. 67.

ranks, so voiced with regard to quality, intensity and pitch as to reinforce artificially (and in proper proportion) all the natural overtones, within judicious limits, which are but feebly produced by the stops of 8-ft. pitch.⁶

The pedal-organ as conceived by the French builders had much care and attention lavished upon it. Goodrich relates⁷ that it was conceived, built, and voiced in the firm belief that it should be treated as an utterly independent division of stops which needed no aid from the manuals. There had been relatively few borrowings or augmentations in the pedal-organ, except in recent years. This independence, so carefully maintained, insured the individual voicing of the stops of that division, both as to intensity and quality.

Vierne, in his Memoirs, speaks highly of the new developments that were available to organists in the matter of modern construction, and in his account tells of the liberation of the organ:

From this triple collaboration [Guilmant, Widor, Vierne] emerged a sound doctrine of instruction which was to form the most brilliant generation of artists to which our country has given birth since the end of the eighteenth century. It was the sudden glorious rebirth of a school which had had a considerable reputation in musical Europe in times gone by. But while our ancestors had been paralyzed by the rudimentary mechanism of their instruments and therefore were obliged to draw

⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

a good deal upon the technique of the harpsichord both in their writing and in their playing, the tremendous advances in our modern construction were to allow our school to become much more specialized and to liberate the organ from its bondage to "pianism". The new couplers of one keyboard to another, the perfecting of the bellows, the enriching of the tonal pallet, etc., opened up to composers a new pathway, that of the symphony.

Immediately and with great mastery, Widor has illustrated this type of work in a way that would stimulate the imagination of his successors. Guilmant, for his part, with less originality and less audacity, preached the same aesthetics in his sonatas. There was a violent reaction to what had gone before, and, like all reactions, it went far beyond its logical limits. The vox humana was held in abomination. The tremolo was pitilessly proscribed. The importance of these details was exaggerated, and to return to normal it took the publication by Guilmant and Pirro of the "Archives des Maîtres de l'Orgue," which demonstrated the judicious use that our forerunners had made of these means.⁸

⁸ Louis Vierne, "Reminiscences of Louis Vierne; His Life and Contacts with Famous Men," The Diapason, February, 1939.

CHAPTER IV

THE RISE OF THE MODERN FRENCH SCHOOL OF ORGAN-PLAYING

The organ music being written in France at the middle of the nineteenth century was of a rather sentimental, lyric quality which cannot withstand comparison with the works resulting from the tremendous activity of the organists at the end of the century. Gounod and Boëly may be considered as representative of the men who were in the service of the church about 1850. The former was organist and choirmaster at the *Église-des-Missions-Étrangères*, the latter was organist at *St.-Nicholas-des-Champs*. The organ music each wrote was not especially distinguished for it was largely patterned after the lyric, sentimental fashion of the time. Gounod, although a close student of the works of Palestrina, wrote both his organ and his religious music in a neutral vein which was not far removed from his operatic style.

One of the most important considerations in the schooling of the succession of organists which was to produce the modern French school was the acquisition of the traditional eighteenth-century manner of playing the Bach organ-works. Oddly enough it was through the good offices

of the French organ school that the German tradition was preserved. Schweitzer asserts¹ that in the first half of the nineteenth century France could not claim possession of an art of organ-playing. His reason was that the organs which had survived the Revolution were in bad repair, having received but the minimum of restoration. Widor himself related to Schweitzer that when Cavaillé-Coll began to build good organs, it was necessary for organists to go abroad for study with Lemmens. Cavaillé-Coll established his reputation in Paris with the building of the new organ at the Church of St. Denis in 1833.

Nicholas Jacques Lemmens (1823-1881) was a young Belgian who had studied with Hesse at Breslau in 1846. He became professor of organ at the Brussels Conservatoire in 1849, and his method of organ instruction was adopted by several institutions, among them the Paris Conservatoire. Hesse is said to have remarked that Lemmens' playing of Bach was as good as his own.

Adolf Friedrich Hesse (1809-1863) lived in Breslau for the greater part of his life and was acknowledged by many authorities to possess remarkable talent as an organist. He was at one time a student of Rinck, who had studied with Kittel (1786-1789).

¹ Albert Schweitzer, Out of My Life and Thought (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933), p. 156.

Johann Christian Kittel (1732-1809) was one of Bach's last pupils and from all accounts he was a fervent apostle of his master's teaching. Schweitzer says² that Hesse was a student of Kittel, although as will be shown below, this is a doubtful statement.

The tradition of the playing of the Bach organ-works is supposed to have come down through this succession of organists, though the manner of its being handed on is rather confusing in the Schweitzer version.³ It is well established that Lemmens studied with Hesse (1802-1863); Schweitzer says that Hesse was a student of Kittel (1732-1809), but an inspection of these dates will show that Hesse must have been most precocious, for Kittel died when Hesse was seven years old.⁴

Widor's account of the handing-down of the tradition, as related by Vierne,⁵ is only slightly more credible. Here the succession--in reverse order--is Widor, Lemmens, Hesse, and finally Forkel (1749-1818), the first biographer of Bach. If Schweitzer's date of 1802 for the birth of Hesse is

² Ibid., p. 156.

³ Ibid., pp. 155-156.

⁴ Grove's Dictionary gives Hesse's birth-date as 1809, in which case it was impossible for him to have studied with Kittel.

⁵ Louis Vierne, "Reminiscences of Louis Vierne; His Life and Contacts with Famous Men," The Diapason, November, 1938.

taken, then Hesse's study with Forkel is conceivable. The plausibility of that study is lessened, however, if Grove's date of 1809 is taken.

According to Schweitzer, at any rate, Widor and Guilmant continued the German tradition they had learned from Hesse and Lemmens not only as a matter of esthetic creed, but also because of practical necessity. The organs being built by Cavallé-Coll were not far removed from the eighteenth century in the matter of tonal design, and in addition, the French organ was not usually in possession of devices such as the swell-box for making gradations in the volume of sound issuing from the pipes. The French organists were constrained, almost of necessity, to play in the classical manner, without much change of registration and without the constant varying of the volume of tone available. The polyphonic music of Bach demanded of them that they keep the various voice lines as clear as possible and that they perfect their handling of phrases to the end that listeners should be given the illusion of accents.⁶

In 1846 Lemmens had been subsidized by his government so that he might study with Hesse in Germany. It was during this study that Griepenkerl and Roitzsch had completed the publication of the complete organ works of J. S. Bach. The practicability of this venture was assured by the rising

⁶ Schweitzer, Op. cit., pp. 155-157.

amount of interest in the works of Bach which had been initiated by Mendelssohn's revival of them in 1829. Two ventures, first, the study of Lemmens with Hesse; second, the issuing of Bach's complete works, were to have significant and memorable effects in the development of the famous modern French school of organ-playing. Lemmens, upon his return to Brussels, published the organ method which was to be the basis for the training of both Guilmant and Widor when they studied with him. Widor and Guilmant, each in turn, with Vierne as both student and assistant, were to use the method of Lemmens in the instruction of the many fine organists their classes were to produce at the Conservatoire.

Though not of the French school of organists, Albert Schweitzer, the famous authority on Bach, was a student with Widor in 1898, thus beginning a collaboration which had its issue in an edition of Bach's organ-music prepared by the house of G. Schirmer in New York.⁷ In 1905 Schweitzer published his treatise on the works of Bach, J. S. Bach, le musicien-poète. Widor had complained many times to Schweitzer that there were only biographical books on Bach in the French language and that there were none which could serve as an introduction to his music. Schweitzer promised Widor that he would begin an essay on the nature of Bach's art

⁷ Ibid., pp. 154-162.

which could be used by the students at the Conservatoire. It was this essay, then grown to the stature of a book, which appeared in 1905. In response to the question of making a translation into German, Schweitzer turned to work on the German edition, only to find that it was impossible to translate himself into that language. He had already wrestled with the problem of actually writing the original manuscript in French, though his native tongue was German. This difficulty with language finally resolved itself into an entirely new book, at first planned to extend 455 pages. When the manuscript was completed, the project had grown to 844 pages, but the publishers, Breitkopf and Härtel, nevertheless completed the printing, and the book, J. S. Bach, appeared in the German edition in 1908.

Despite the valiant efforts of Widor and Guilmant, the organ works of Bach were still relatively unknown when Schweitzer's publication appeared. Vierne, in his *Memoirs*, tells of the discovery of the Bach Chorale Preludes by the organ class and of the joy of the class in the playing of them.⁸

In 1870, the year in which Vierne was born, Charles-Marie Widor was appointed to the post of organist at St.-Sulpice; one year later Guilmant became organist at the

⁸ Vierne, Op. cit., January, 1939.

Church of La Trinité. César Franck became the professor of organ at the Conservatoire when he was fifty--in 1872. Until his death in 1890, he labored faithfully, with little recognition save that of his admiring students, in the field of organ instruction and in composition. His feats of improvisation, however, did serve to spread a modest bit of fame; even Liszt found time to come to Ste.-Clothilde to marvel at Franck's skill.

Upon Franck's death, Widor was appointed to the professorship of organ and he continued in large measure the work that Franck had begun although he placed greater value and emphasis on actual performance. Franck had largely taken it for granted that his students were prepared for organ playing, and in his class five out of the six hours a week were used for the instruction of the students in improvisation. Widor was at great pains to enlarge the scope of his students' musical experience, and it was at his hands that the class came to know more intimately the Bach organ works. There was little if any lessening of the attention given to improvisation, but the thoroughness of the instruction in actual performance left most of the class breathless.

Guilmant succeeded Widor in the organ-class in 1896, for Widor had been appointed professor of composition. Again the fine tradition of organ-playing which had come

down through the years from Bach--through Forkel, Lemmens, and Widor--was passed on in the true apostolic succession. All efforts were bent toward the semi-annual examinations before the jury, and this preparation left little chance for the practice of any large amount of individuality, save in the actual treatment of given themes within the prescribed forms.

Louis Vierne had acted as assistant to Widor in his organ-class, and he continued in this capacity with Guil-mant. Vierne, as thoroughly as his position and authority permitted, encouraged, aided, and abetted the harmonic experiments of the class. Wallace Goodrich in his consideration of French organ composition says of the later products of the French school:

Beginning with Vierne, and continuing through the more recent compositions of Roger-Ducasse and Georges Jacob, we observe that these composers have been deeply affected by the same progressive tendency in modality and harmonization which is characteristic of what we call the "modern French school." Particularly in the case of the latter composer is exhibited a predilection for "effects" which have their origin in contemporary orchestral writing, rather than in the organ compositions previously put forth by the French or any other school. In no case, however, are these compositions conceived for any type of instrument but the one commonly built in France. . . .⁹

Vierne in his Memoirs gives Widor complete and un-qualified credit for the establishment of the modern French

⁹ Wallace Goodrich, The Organ in France, (Boston: The Boston Music Company, 1917), p. 11.

organ school:

The great reform brought by Widor to organ instruction dealt especially with performance. That reform, which was to give birth to the most brilliant school of organists in the world, will not be the maitre's least title to glory in the eyes of posterity.¹⁰

The meticulous and exacting training demanded of his students by Widor was accompanied by the most detailed illustrations at the organ, and his observations touched on every conceivable aspect of the organist's training, from the ignorance of the organ-class of the Beethoven piano sonatas to the delicate differentiation between rhythm and measure.

The list of the names of the organists--great and near-great--produced by the exacting training of the Widor-Guil mant-Vierne teaching is amazing. Perhaps the greatest of them is Marcel Dupré, whose performance at his first examination, according to Vierne, "was the most outstanding that I have ever heard at the Conservatoire." Dupré has travelled the world over as virtuoso; he was Vierne's assistant at Notre-Dame from 1914 to 1923; he succeeded Gigout as professor of organ at the Conservatoire in 1926, and he was the successor of Widor at St.-Sulpice in 1934.

Nadia Boulanger, to whom many American composers have gone for instruction in the past few years, was brought to Vierne for organ-lessons when she was eleven years old. At eighteen she was a brilliant success in her competition

¹⁰ Vierne, Op. cit., November, 1938.

at the Conservatoire, and in 1908 she was the second woman to win the deuxième Grand Prix de Rome. Her teaching in both America and France has been marked by the greatest success.

Alexandre Cellier is an accomplished virtuoso, composer, and musical scholar who was one of the finest products of the Guilmant régime. Two of his important publications have been L'Orgue Moderne (1913) and a French version of the Bach Chorale texts.

Another of Guilmant's excellent students is Georges Jacob, a fine concert artist who was one of the first to utilize the radio in France for the presentation of organ compositions. He is a most successful teacher and composer.

Félix Fourdrain was, by Vierne's estimate, the comedian of the group, for he was not above the perpetration of many hoaxes upon the audiences at the Concerts-Touche. For two seasons he mystified his audiences with improvised imitations, offered with tongue in cheek. Some of the titles quoted by Vierne are: Heures Violettes and Le Plus que Vif, by Debussy; La Girafe et le Crocodile, by Saint-Saëns; Sites Olfactifs, by Ravel; Idylle Algébrique, by d'Indy.¹¹ Fourdrain, however, was the composer of several excellent songs which often appear on concert programs. He died

¹¹ Ibid., April, 1939, p. 8.

prematurely in 1925.

Charles Tournemire was a classmate of Vierne when both were studying under Widor. He had a magnificent reputation as an improviser, and in the opinion of his classmates he was the most brilliant student of the organ-class. His works for organ are based, for the most part, upon plain-song. His work, L'Orgue Mystique (1930), in thirty-odd volumes, is perhaps one of the largest single contributions to modern organ literature.

Maurice Duruflé, a pupil of both Vierne and Tournemire, is, in the opinion of Vierne, "the most brilliant and the most original of the younger generation of organists."¹² He is the composer of much music for the organ, written in a bold, modern style.

Another product of the Guilmant-Vierne teaching was Joseph Bonnet, who has, according to Vierne, "preserved the purest tradition of Guilmant."¹³ In addition to his career as virtuoso and teacher, he has published five volumes of Historical Organ-Recitals which are based upon the idea first used by Guilmant in the Concert Historique d'Orgue (1896). Bonnet's collection covers the entire history of organ literature from Hofmaymer (1449-1537) to Max Reger (1873-1916).

¹² Ibid., May, 1939.

¹³ Ibid., May, 1939.

CHAPTER V

THE LIFE AND CAREER OF LOUIS VIERNE

I. STUDENT DAYS

The musical gifts of Louis Vierne were discovered by his uncle, Charles Colin, Prix de Rome, organist at Saint-Denis-du-Saint-Sacrament, and professor of oboe at the Paris Conservatoire. Vierne was five years old at the time his father was advised by his uncle to set the boy's feet upon the path leading to an artist's career. Looming forbiddingly over that proposed career, however, was the fact that Vierne had been born blind. Since his birth in Poitiers, October 8, 1870, little had been done to aid that condition, but when the family was living in Lille a few years later, a Dr. de Wecker of Paris had been able to restore sufficient sight for him to distinguish objects, to recognize people, and to read large type at close range. It became necessary, therefore, that instruction in Braille should be given. A former student of the Institution Nationale de Paris, Richard Horman, initiated his young charge into the mysteries of reading and of writing the punched characters and, at the same time, studies in piano and solfège were continued.

When Colin, the uncle, learned one day that the

young Louis had been bewitched by the sound of the organ at St.-Maurice in Lille, he forthwith drew up a very definite program of study which was intended to carry his nephew through the classes of the Institute Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles (National Institute for the Youthful Blind); of the Conservatoire; and then, at the end, into the organ class of César Franck.

The family moved to Paris in 1880, when Louis was ten years old, so that he might begin a preparatory series of lessons with Henri Specht, who, though blind himself, was able to help his student make rapid progress. In October, 1881, Vierne entered the second year at the Institute Nationale with a heavy program of studies which included:

Two hours of piano practice, two of the other instrument (violin), four hours of general culture classes, one hour of solfège, or later of harmony; three hours of study to prepare exercises and learn lessons; a quarter of an hour for the piano lesson; a quarter of an hour for the instrumental lesson (except, and this was my case, for those who studied their instrument with professors from outside who were not blind, and who were entitled to two half-hour lessons a week); one hour of reading aloud by a teacher or by the censeur; catechism and elocution on Thursday.¹

There was a general requirement which demanded of all students that they play in the daily orchestra rehearsals. For the students' artistic development there were the Sunday concerts--Colonne, Lamoureux, and the Société des Concerts

¹ Louis Vierne, "Reminiscences of Louis Vierne; His Life and Contacts with Famous Men," The Diapason, p. 6, January, 1938.

du Conservatoire; the weekly attendance upon the Opéra; the recitals at Érard or Pleyel; the concerts of Guilmant at the Trocadéro. Vierne spoke highly of the value to him of his orchestral training and playing, though of the work in harmony he was less enthusiastic:

After three years of this instruction (with strict rules) we wrote correctly, to be sure, but without the flexibility and freedom which make of harmony an art. Later I had to work extremely hard to acquire a 'pen' in the modern sense of the word, and especially to inspire my teaching with true musicianship.²

From 1889 to 1890, Vierne led a dual school-life, for he had been authorized to enter Franck's organ-class as an auditor while continuing his work at the Institute. Apparently he had some difficulty with strict counterpoint, and of it he said that the strictness of the rules withered all his enthusiasm. His last year at the Institute brought him a first prize in organ and another in composition.

The following year on October 4, 1890, Vierne was admitted to the organ-class of Franck, with the intention of remaining in it but a single year. There were three two-hour meetings of the class a week, and of those six hours, five were devoted to improvisation, the most formidable test of the competition. Performance interested Franck very little, and it seemed tacitly understood that when one was admitted to the class it was taken for granted that the

² Ibid., p. 6.

student possessed a technique sufficient for the performance of all the Bach works. Vierne and the others of the class who were blind were in an advantageous position for they had memorized vast quantities of music at the Institute, and their repertoires were much more extended than those of the rest of the class. Of the playing Vierne remarks:

There was no need to worry about manipulation; Franck drew the stops, worked the pedal combinations, managed the swell box. Everything was simplified, reduced merely to the playing on the keyboards and the observance of style. All of which explains why, except for Dallier, Marty, Mahaut and Letocart, none of the first-prize winners of Franck's class ever had any fame as an instrumental virtuoso. To compensate, the maître's teaching produced excellent improvisers. In that branch,³ as in composition, his teaching was truly marvelous.

The program for the examinations made it difficult for Franck to widen his field to any material extent, for the two narrow forms of the classical fugue and the free improvisation on a single theme were so much the preoccupation of the jury that no irregularities were to be tolerated.

In that same year, 1890, came the death of Franck; Vierne, with the others of the class, was grief stricken. Their emotion was not at all subdued by the obvious lack of homage which was to have been expected from the officials of the Conservatoire. None of these were at the obsequies, and their absence was widely noticed by the friends and the students of the departed master who had so charmed them by

³ Ibid., p. 12, October, 1938.

his qualities of heart and by the merits of his teaching. Among the members of the class there was talk of resigning in a body from the class, but the wiser souls constrained them with the idea of defending the artistic ideals of Franck from the attacks they knew would follow.

Charles-Marie Widor was appointed immediately as the successor of Franck, and if the class did not meet him with open hostility, it reserved its opinion. Widor was not long in showing the members of the class that there was more to the art of organ-playing than improvisation. His determination was to restore organistic performance in general, "and in particular to revive the authentic tradition in the interpretation of the works of Bach."⁴ The teaching from that moment became exacting in all its details; the class was shocked into the knowledge that it knew little about the various symphonic forms, and a study of them became a part of the work in improvisation. The effectiveness of Widor's teaching may be measured by the fact that Vierne speaks of it as bringing a great reform into organ instruction--a reform which was to create "the most brilliant school of organists in the world."⁵

⁴ Ibid., p. 10, November, 1938.

⁵ Ibid., p. 10, November, 1938.

II. VIERNE AS ASSISTANT TO WIDOR AND GUILMANT

At the reopening of the school in 1891, Vierne was instructed by Widor to give a course in plainsong for the new students who were auditors in the organ-class. This brought him his first active teaching, and under the watchful eyes of Widor the instruction was most successful. The following year, in February, Widor chose Vierne as his assistant at St.-Sulpice. Tournemire had held the position for the previous year, but had recently been appointed to a post of his own. This appointment afforded Vierne the opportunity of having almost individual attention from Widor, while giving him a most admirable example of organ-playing in all its ramifications upon which to build and further his own development. The inspiration and encouragement which Vierne must have received from this close relationship served as a tremendous stimulation to his work, for he resolved to approach as closely as he could the perfection of Widor's playing.

In May of 1892, Vierne presented himself as a candidate for the organist's post at St.-Germain-des-Près, but because of intrigue he failed to get the position; however, the disappointment was softened by Widor's allowing him to use the title "substitute organist for Charles-Marie Widor at the Great Organ at St.-Sulpice."

With the reopening of the organ-class in the fall of 1892, Widor's students made the discovery of the Bach Chorale Preludes; after a rigorous three months' study of them, the entire class astonished the jury which heard the January examinations when each member offered one of the chorales for his examination. It was in the following year, 1893, that Vierne finally obtained the first prize in organ-playing, an award which had been denied him in several past attempts through no fault of his own, for there had been a conspiracy among the jury with the result that no Widor pupils were able to secure the first place. At twenty-four, then, after fourteen years of constant effort, Vierne was the assistant of Widor at the Conservatoire, his substitute at St.-Sulpice, and the possessor of a vision of a magnificent future.

In 1895, Widor began the private lessons which Vierne continued to have even after he had left the Conservatoire. In the course of them Vierne received complete instruction in composition and instrumentation, and perfected his technique in writing and improvising. Until 1907 he did not write a page which was not shown to Widor.

With the death of Ambroise Thomas in 1896, the post of director of the Conservatoire fell to the lot of Théodore Dubois; at the same time Alexandre Guilmant succeeded Widor-- upon his recommendation--as professor of organ, since Widor

had been appointed professor of composition. Vierne had this tribute to pay to Guilmant:

He . . . was less eloquent than his predecessor. Neither did he have Widor's general culture, [n] or his originality of ideas, [n] or the same artistry in his critical sense. He knew his profession thoroughly; he was of absolute integrity, a conscientious research scholar, and a hard-working, upright man, and, more than all, the best-hearted of men. I worked with him for fifteen years, and not for a day, or even one hour, did the slightest cloud trouble our close friendship. This man, fifty-nine years old, having behind him a superb career as virtuoso, enjoying a just celebrity for the eminent service he had rendered in promoting the art of the organ by his recitals and his writings, did me the honor of treating me, who had barely entered the arena, as his equal, and showed a confidence in me which I tried by every means I could to justify.⁶

The teaching changed but little under the guidance of Guilmant, but it was Vierne, in his capacity as assistant, who set himself the role of maintaining the Franck-Widor tradition, and in this he had the ardent support of the students. In the beginning, Guilmant grimaced occasionally at the "rawness" of some of the combinations and balked a bit at some of the fanciful rhythms, but if an idea were logical, he would tolerate tendencies that were not his own. "'If you like,' he would say, shaking his head, 'if you like. That jars a bit, but it's interesting.' And to tell the truth, it did sometimes 'jar' badly;".⁷ Vierne was certain that the greatest thing Guilmant did for

⁶ Ibid., p. 9, January, 1939.

⁷ Ibid.

the class was to draw its attention to the study and the rational use of the different timbres available in the stops of the organ.⁸ Guilmant was, according to Vierne, "a colorist of the first water."

In 1897, Guilmant departed for America, and left Vierne in full charge of the organ-class. The responsibility weighed heavily upon the latter, but it gave him and the class a marvelous opportunity for experimentation in modern harmonies, a thing for which Guilmant had little taste. The class met with great hilarity, after the January examination, and rejoiced over the improvisations played for the examining jury. Said one of the class: "What didn't I make them swallow in the way of appoggiaturas!"⁹ At Guilmant's return the class carefully concealed the new style and returned to the "correct" and uninteresting manner.

III. CAREER AT NOTRE-DAME

In February of 1900, Sergent, the organist of Notre-Dame, became ill, and Widor was instrumental in Vierne's being chosen as substitute. A few weeks later Sergent died, and the Chapter at Notre-Dame was besieged by applications from ninety-eight candidates for the position. Since only ten were to be seriously considered by the Chapter, it was

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 8, February, 1939.

decided that only by means of a competition could the inevitable series of intrigues be eliminated. A jury was selected from among the best musicians of Paris, and the conditions of the contest were announced in the newspapers:

First, accompaniment and embellishment of the liturgical chant; second, improvisation of a fugue upon a given subject; third, free improvisation upon a given theme; fourth, performance from memory of an ancient or modern piece from the organ repertoire, drawn by lot from a list of five presented to the jury by the candidate. The order of playing was also to be determined by lot at the last moment, and the list of pieces offered would carry the competitor's number, his name remaining unknown. The examination would be held on the organ at Notre-Dame and the jury would assemble in the side gallery at the left, whence it was impossible to see what was going on at the organ.¹⁰

Widor insisted that Vierne put his name in competition, although the latter felt many misgivings, for he was putting an already successful career in jeopardy, and in addition, another position with twice the salary had been offered him at the same time.

The jury was unanimous in its verdict, and Vierne was given first place in the competition. The Chapter, after outlining the duties and rights of the organist of Notre-Dame, congratulated him upon his success and expressed the hope that his mission would be to restore to the organ its glory of past centuries.

Almost immediately the flow of visitors to Vierne's

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 8, June, 1939.

organ gallery began, and all were welcome since Vierne felt that by receiving visitors he was spreading the cause of the artistic doctrine he represented, as well as demonstrating the qualities of French organ-building as represented by the Notre-Dame instrument built by Cavallé-Coll. The number of organ students who attended was considerable, and in addition, there were countless numbers of men from the fields of art, law, medicine and science. Among the guests Vierne could number Rimsky-Korsakoff, Nikisch, Granados, and the great American organist Linwood Farnam, to whose memory Vierne dedicated his Sixth Symphony.

In 1920, Vierne began his efforts to have the organ rebuilt. The ravages of time had been aided considerably by the fact that all the glass in the windows of the church had been removed after the bombardment of the church in 1914. The state of repair became so bad that the regular organ maintenance men were unable to cope with the situation. Desperate and worried because his efforts in arousing the clergy came to nothing, Vierne made a journey to America in 1927 with the hope of enlisting some of his American friends in the struggle. His reception was favorable and plans were made for a subscription list toward the reconstruction. After the return to Paris, another intrigue circumvented all the efforts that had been made. Under the guise of patriotism, the offer of an American builder to

supply a modern console for the organ was refused. Vierne himself was so disheartened by this turn of events that he made no effort to gather up the loose ends of the plans. Finally Widor, in a pamphlet, L'Orgue Modern, raised the issue in such a manner that the clergy at Notre-Dame and the Ministry of Beaux-Arts were aroused, and in 1931 they supplied the necessary sum--270,000 francs--from their own treasuries. This did not put an end to the matter, however, for there was further struggle and an acrimonious dispute on the subject of the proper builder for the work. It was only after much argument that the final decision was made and the work begun. Widor, then eighty-eight years old, played the inaugural recital--a fitting tribute to the man who had also inaugurated the instrument in 1868.

In his Memoirs Vierne speaks reminiscently of one of the recitals heard toward the end of his life. At this particular recital he spoke of experiencing a great joy in the hearing of his Sixth Symphony played in its entirety by Maurice Duruflé:

. . . It was absolutely perfect, and I was deeply moved.

For the last time I shall experience the same joy when, on June 7, 1937, I shall have this chosen audience to appreciate my instrument played with the collaboration of my pupil and friend, Maurice Duruflé. I say "the last time" advisedly, for in authorizing that gathering, the administrator of Notre-Dame

informed the Amis de l'Orgue that henceforth they could not expect a similar favor.¹¹

Vierne spoke with a truth he did not realize, for it was on that day that he collapsed at the keyboard and died. Certainly this was a fitting end for the organist-composer who had served at the splendid Notre-Dame organ for thirty-seven years in the never-ending mission of a cathedral organist: to bring to his work, as he said, "all the fidelity and sincerity of my heart as an artist and a believer."

¹¹ Ibid., p. 9, September, 1939.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGAN SYMPHONY

I. INNOVATIONS IN ORGAN CONSTRUCTION

The most important reasons for the development of the organ symphony can be found not only in the actual and prodigious expansion of resources in all fields of music, but also in the advances that were being made in modern organ construction. The organists of an earlier day than the latter part of the nineteenth century had been severely handicapped by the relatively crude mechanism with which they had had to contend, as well as by a truncated keyboard. Because of the imperfect mechanism of the bellows, it had been impossible for the organist to have a steady, unfluctuating volume of sound at his disposal.

With the perfecting of mechanical and pneumatic devices, it was possible for the keyboards to be coupled; the supply of wind both as to amount and as to steadiness of pressure was aided immeasurably by the improvements effected in the bellows mechanism; as a direct result of the latter, it was possible to extend the keyboard range and to enrich the tonal resources of the instrument.

In the Preface to his First Symphony,¹ Widor mentions that organists after 1839 (the date of the first practical use of the Barker lever) had at their disposal a swell- or expression-box, and a light key-action. He adds that it was now possible to have security of attack, balance of contrasts, a new, rich, tonal resource containing flûtes harmoniques, bassons, trompettes, as well as foundation stops and reeds of a quality and variety unknown before. An organ with these new advantages, says Widor, is essentially symphonic, and needs a new language--another ideal than scholastic polyphony.

II. PRE-SYMPHONY ORGAN MUSIC

Alexandre Guilmant wrote only one work which was called a symphony, and in this instance organ and orchestra were joined. Immediately popular at the time of their composition were eight sonatas for organ, of which the first was an arrangement of this symphony. These sonatas, however, largely failed to hold their popularity against the originality of the later composers in the field. There is, perhaps, less daring and less innovation to be found in the Guilmant sonatas, although there is no question but that they were more solidly constructed than the works of Boëly,

¹ Ch. M. Widor, Symphonie I pour Orgue, Op. 13 (Paris: J. Hamelle, edition of 1901), p. 1.

Batiste, or Lefébure-Wely, of the previous generation.

André Pirro speaks with much disparagement and with no little distaste of the condition of French organ music at the middle of the nineteenth century.² He singles out Danjou, organist at Notre-Dame (1840-1847), for his questionable taste in accepting the dedication of the Répertoire complet de l'organiste, compiled by Dietsch, "of which the style is detestable."

Pirro has few good words to say for Boëly. Lefébure-Wely, he felt, possessed a fine melodic sense and little imagination. One has the feeling that Pirro was rather sorry for Lefébure's wasting of his talent. Pirro feels that the organ music just preceding Guilmant approached caricature; even the musicians who knew better, who had a certain knowledge of the past, capitulated to the low public taste. It is not surprising, then, that both Widor and Canon Pisani, out of great faith, urged Vierne to restore dignity and greatness to the organ and to its literature.

III. THE CONTRIBUTION OF WIDOR

It fell to the lot of Widor to illustrate the possibilities latent in larger works, and his brilliant efforts

² André Pirro, "L'Art des Organistes," Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1926), p. 1366.

were to serve as a powerful stimulation to the imaginations of his successors. Although the intent of Widor is clear-- he was attempting to create a large form that would compare with the orchestral symphony--nevertheless, the rather varied content of the typical organ symphony by Widor might perhaps better be labelled as a suite, for there are occasionally as many as six movements to be found in the works. More will be said later of Vierne's efforts to overcome the occasional disparity of interest which such a lengthy work tends to create. Widor produced ten symphonies for organ, and one for organ and orchestra. Like the Three Chorales of Franck, the Widor symphonies furnished an almost endless opportunity for experimentation in registration and in touch, though it must be remembered that each of the Franck Chorales was essentially in the form of variations upon a theme, while for the most part the works of Widor and Vierne were concerned with new themes and their development in each succeeding movement of their symphonies.

The first four of Widor's symphonies are Op. 13; numbers five to eight are Op. 42; the Symphonie gothique is Op. 70, and the Symphonie romane is Op. 73. It may be assumed that the first eight symphonies were written before 1895, the date of publication of the Symphonie gothique.³

³ Ch. M. Widor, Symphonie gothique pour Orgue, Op. 70 (Mayence: B. Schott's Söhne, 1895).

The First Symphony has the following group of movements:

- (1) Prelude, C-minor;
- (2) Allegro, A^b;
- (3) Intermezzo, G-minor;
- (4) Adagio, E[♭];
- (5) Marche Pontificale, C-major;
- (6) Meditation, E[♭]-minor;
- (7) Finale, C-minor.

No one of the movements is in sonata-form; in fact, there are few, if any, movements in the entire eight symphonies which give any indication of being worked out in that form. As the symphony above demonstrates (it is typical of the arrangement of movements of the first eight symphonies) the form was not much more than a series of organ pieces, loosely strung together. The range of the style is wide, as is the range of mood; in the rest of the symphonies are to be found marches, scherzi, a toccata, fugues, and canons. The last movement of the Symphonie gothique is an excellent set of variations on a plain-song melody; in fact, there are several sets of variations in the symphonies.

In connection with the variety of style and of mood within a typical Widor symphony, it may be pertinent to mention that it is only rarely that a complete organ symphony appears on present-day recital programs.⁴

⁴ One has to return to the days of Theodore Thomas to discover a time when separate symphonic movements were played independently of each other and of the entire work. The custom of these early days of the symphony in America was born

The criticism of the Widor symphonies advanced by Láng (page four, above) seems to have some merit, for Widor has made little attempt to model his works upon the classical form of the orchestral symphony. The classical symphony, when it had begun to take on its mature appearance in the late works of Haydn and Mozart, set great store upon the first and last movements being in sonata-form. Occasionally a fugue might supplant one of the movements in sonata-form, but hardly a symphony of the classic period was without at least one movement in that design.

The crystallized form of the symphony has often been departed from in the works of Mendelssohn and Brahms, for example, but the alterations in the schemes of their symphonic writing have always seemingly been made with a desire to heighten the total effect. In other words, these romantic composers have modified the outline of the classical symphony to suit their own conceptions of how best to convey the thematic and emotional content. In each case the modifications were made in the composer's belief that his

of necessity, for there were not many audiences able to appreciate a complete symphony in one hearing. It is rather the exception than the rule when one discovers on today's organ recital programs a complete organ symphony. Most organists apparently prefer to choose those movements of the Widor and of the Vierne symphonies which are most likely to fill a certain needed place on a program. Despite the large tonal palette of the modern organ, that instrument still cannot compare with the orchestra in the matter of tonal painting and of coloristic effects.

adaptation of the form would better suit his purpose than the conventional form of the classical symphony.⁵

Widor apparently went only half the way necessary to an adapting of the symphonic form to the organ. His registrations, his passages and movements demanding variety of touch and phrasing are conceived in an orchestral manner. Different timbres are set one against the other; the liveliness of the scherzi and the intermezzi are admirably maintained; great varieties of phrasing and of accent are indicated; yet what degree of success Widor has achieved in the creation of a symphony for organ lies for the most part within the separate movements. Within them he has effectively adapted orchestral media: contrasts of tone color, varieties of phrasing, accent, and touch. The problem, however, was not completely solved, for the large plan of the Widor symphony is erratic and amorphous; the unity and variety of the large form has not effectively been captured. The variety, in fact, has not been disciplined.

It must be said that the Widor symphonies, while monumental in comparison with the organ music of Boëly, Batiste, and Lefébure-Wely, for example, do not have the striking thematic material of the Vierne works. The first half-dozen of the Widor symphonies are not especially notable

⁵ Cf. Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony which has a Saltarello for a last movement, and Brahms's Fourth Symphony which closes with a Passacaglia.

for thematic ingenuity. The music is busy, with fast moving figures and passages, yet the themes themselves are curiously undistinguished. There are exceptions, of course, notably in the slow movements and in some of the intermezzi and scherzi. In the later symphonies, as one would expect, the themes are more vigorous and their working-out is a bit more sophisticated. The elaboration of the themes and of their accompaniments is somewhat obvious and trite at times. Widor has a rather periodic predilection for pianistic figures such as arpeggios and scale passages. In as late a work as the Eighth Symphony these devices may be seen.⁶

There must, however, be pioneers in the development of a new form, and to Widor's credit it must be said that he very definitely opened a pathway for Vierne by his essays in the symphony for organ.

⁶ Cf. p. 289 and p. 326.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST THREE ORGAN SYMPHONIES OF LOUIS VIERNE¹

I. THE FIRST SYMPHONY²

Vierne's first essay in the symphonic form was published in 1899, four years after the appearance of Widor's Symphonie gothique, and dedicated to Alexandre Guilmant. At first glance, this work of the twenty-nine year old organist is another odd compilation of six movements:

- (1) Prélude, D-minor (a loose, mono-thematic form)
- (2) Fugue, D-minor
- (3) Pastorale, B^b-major (three-part song form)
- (4) Allegro vivace, A-minor (first rondo-form)
- (5) Andante, F-major (three-part song form)
- (6) Final, D-major (first rondo-form)

None of the movements ~~are~~^{is} in sonata-form, though the Fugue and Final (first rondo-form) are remnants of the classical symphony, supported by two slow movements, the Pastorale and the Andante, both of which are in three-part song form. Despite this disparity of movements, it soon becomes apparent that the work as a whole, so far as mood and contrast go, is unified in a much more satisfying manner than most of the Widor symphonies. The rather grave and solemn character of the Prélude, which rises to a stirring climax,

¹ The six symphonies fall naturally into two groups of three each, since Vierne employs cyclical treatment in the last three.

² Louis Vierne, Première Symphonie pour Orgue, Op. 14 (Paris: J. Hamelle, 1899).

continues throughout the movement, and ends only with a final dim echo of the theme. The fourth movement, a scherzo, contains a fine canon in double counterpoint. This scherzo, the first of many excellent examples of the form in the symphonies, already shows a fine mastery of the medium. The Final contains another canon, here used as the first subordinate theme, while the principal theme itself is of a fine, vigorous nature. The singing quality of the slow themes is most refreshing, and their constant sense of movement imparts a further interest to them. The symphony is eminently worthy of the statement of Duruflé, " It would alone have sufficed to establish his reputation." (See Appendix A.)

II. THE SECOND SYMPHONY³

- (1) Allegro, E-minor (sonata-form)
- (2) Choral, E^b-major (five-part song form)
- (3) Scherzo, E-major (first rondo-form)
- (4) Cantabile, C[#]-minor (three-part song form)
- (5) Final, E-minor (sonata-form)

In this work, dedicated to Charles Mutin, Vierne begins his use of sonata-form, in this instance for the first and the last movements. This symphony, save for the possible exception of the fourth movement, has all the attributes of, and fills the schematic design of classical symphonic form. It is, incidentally, one of the finest of the six works. The

³ Louis Vierne, Deuxième Symphonie pour Grand Orgue, Op. 20 (Paris: J. Hamelle, 1903).

contrast and unity are admirably preserved. The recapitulation of the first movement most cleverly combines the principal themes in the coda, while the second subject itself is a fine example of Vierne's lyric gift.

The Choral is modelled upon the second movement of Widor's Seventh Symphony. Vierne's work, however, is much superior, for he has used double augmentation of the theme in the final section, rather than near the middle of the movement as has Widor. Vierne's touch and instinct were more subtle and sure in this instance.

The Scherzo is one of the finest and most brilliant that Vierne wrote, and it provides an excellent contrast with the broad and impressive ending of the preceding movement.

In the Final Vierne has taken another idea from Widor. After the maestoso introduction, the first theme uses the device of a legato melody in the right hand, accompanied by detached chords in the left. Widor used this variety of touch in the Final of his Seventh Symphony (page 272). Vierne's writing again is the more interesting, both in chord selection and in the melody itself.

The themes of both the first and the last movements are rugged and leaping in character, being among the most effective devised by Vierne.

III. THE THIRD SYMPHONY⁴

This work, dedicated to Marcel Dupré, again makes use of sonata-form for the opening and closing movements.

- (1) Allegro maestoso, F[#]-minor (sonata-form)
- (2) Cantilène, A-minor (three-part song form)
- (3) Intermezzo, D-major (first rondo-form)
- (4) Adagio, E-minor (three-part song form)
- (5) Final, F[#]-minor (sonata-form)

This work shows Vierne's growing chromaticism which serves in the first movement to strengthen the already impressive theme by reason of the surprising changes of tonality.

The Adagio is one of the most eloquent slow-movements yet written, and provides an excellent contrast to the preceding Intermezzo with its light-footed grace, and to the succeeding headlong drive of the Final. This last movement is the first instance of the use of an ambiguous ostinato-figure accompanying the first subject. The interpretation may be either tonic or dominant. (See Example 16, page 87.) In the later symphonies Vierne makes consistent use of this device. When it is coupled, as it is here, with a melodic line which circles around the dominant of the key, the device is most felicitous.

⁴ Louis Vierne, Troisième Symphonie pour Orgue, Op. 28 (Paris: Durand et Cie., 1912).

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST THREE SYMPHONIES OF LOUIS VIERNE

I. CYCLICAL TREATMENT

Vincent d'Indy gives credit to César Franck for "the idea of constructing an important work upon the basis of a single theme, concurrent with other melodies which also reappear in the course of the work, thus creating a musical cycle . . .¹ D'Indy hints that the device was foreseen by Liszt though it was not perfectly developed by him. Some authorities are inclined to disagree with this opinion, and they point out that several musicians used the idea in a satisfactory manner before Franck wrote his Trio in F# in 1841. The idée fixe of Berlioz, regardless of its programmatic implication, was an example of the transferring of thematic material from one movement of a work to another. His Symphonie fantastique, which incorporated in its structure the idée fixe, was written in 1830. Beethoven's C-minor Symphony (1808) quotes a theme from the Scherzo in the Finale, while his Ninth Symphony (1823) quotes all the themes in the Finale.

¹ Vincent d'Indy, César Franck, translated, and with an introduction by Rosa Newmarch (London: John Lane--The Bodley Head Ltd., 1909), p. 88.

This method of treating musical ideas has a generative quality which would find fertile ground with a composer gifted in the art of improvisation. Both Franck and Vierne were admirable extemporizers, and it is not surprising to find Vierne using his master's cyclic devices in the last three of his symphonies.

One of the reasons for Vierne's cyclic construction may have lain in his desire to attain to a fuller sense of unity in the larger organ-works than was possible by the traditional use of sonata-form. In the first three symphonies already discussed Vierne has shown that the organ symphony could be as meaningful, as unified, and as diversified as the orchestral symphony.

The very length of the symphonies demands that every possible effort be made to sustain the listener's interest. It may have been that Vierne felt that the use of the cyclic form might better solve the problem.

It must be remarked, however, that with the possible exception of those movements cast in slow tempo, the use of the cyclic form fails in its mission to weld more completely the varied content. The transformations that have been effected in the re-use of thematic material are so intricate and move, for the most part, at such a rapid pace, that the ear quite fails to observe that it is hearing the same material again. The detection of these rather sophisticated

variations upon the original themes is a matter which calls in almost every case for the possession of a score by the listener. In brief, such technical features can best be perceived by the eye--and even then only with a goodly amount of close inspection.

II. THE FOURTH SYMPHONY²

This work, dedicated to William C. Carl, consists of the following movements:

- (1) Prélude, G-minor (loose three-part form)
- (2) Allegro, G-minor (sonata-form)
- (3) Menuet, E-major (Menuet and trio, three-part form)
- (4) Romance, Db-major (three-part song form)
- (5) Final, G-minor (sonata-form)

This symphony is the first of the six to use cyclical treatment. In the first period of the Prélude are found, with an inverted tonic pedal, two motives which are used throughout the symphony. The first of these appears below:³

Example 1a, IV-1, page 3, measures 2-3



² Louis Vierne, Quatrième Symphonie pour Orgue, Op. 32 (New York: G. Schirmer, 1917). Out of print.

³ All examples are identified as to work and movement in this manner: IV-1 = Fourth Symphony, first movement.

Example 1a is the basis for the construction of the following excerpts:

Example 1b, IV-3, page 22, measures 1-4

This phrase is the opening statement of the Menuet. Through the use of passing-tones and appoggiaturas the original motive is considerably modified, yet the contour and general intervallic relationship are similar.

Example 1c, IV-3, page 23, measures 5-9

The second part of section A begins with the above, which is 1b in contrary motion. It is found again in the section following the Trio, page 28, measures 19-22.

Example 1d, IV-4, page 36, measures 1-3



The transition from the first part (A) to the second part (B) of the fourth movement is entirely based upon Example 1a. It is unaccompanied, but the cadential measures at the end of each repetition are given accompanying harmonies in the manuals.

Example 1e, IV-5, page 42, measure 5



The example above is representative of the passage work which is constructed from motive 1a. There is hardly a page which is without a use of this motive in one form or another. The rapidity of the tempo makes the derivation of this figure most difficult of apprehension, and it is only by an examination of the score that the source of the motive for this consistent passage-work is found. The compass of

this example is doubled in range in many places, sometimes covering two octaves. The enlarged figure appears in both the manual parts and the pedal.

Example 2a, IV-1, page 3, measures 7-8



The second of the two motives (2a) appearing in the first period of the Prélude is not unlike the first (1a) in melodic contour. In fact, the only essential differences are in actual span and in the spacing of intervals. The treatment afforded the fragment in various places throughout the other movements warrants its inclusion at this point.

Example 2b, IV-2, page 12, measures 4-6



In the second movement the motive (2a) is shifted to 2-4 time, while the first note becomes the anacrusis of the rearranged theme. It appears above in augmentation as the

secondary subject of the exposition of the sonata-form in which the movement is cast.

Example 3a, IV-1, page 5, measures 13-17

The theme appearing above, in the left hand, is the second extended phrase to be used thoroughly in the work. Examples 1a and 2a are functions of the same phrase, though in the development of them in the Symphony, they have had separate use.

Example 3b, IV-2, page 10, measures 1-2

The principal theme of the second movement is formed from the first part of 3a, as will be seen in the example above. The second measure of 3b shows a typical example of Vierne's prolific use of the cambiata where the d leaps to f and returns downward.

Example 3c, IV-2, page 10, measures 4-6



3c is a reversal of 3b, in contrary motion.

Example 3d, IV-5, page 44, measures 3-4

The example above appears in much the same usage throughout the Final where it forms the secondary theme of the sonata-form. The original 3a has been lengthened by several notes in 3d.

If one considers the first movement as an entire prelude to the second movement, the beginning and ending convention of sonata-form is still met in this symphony. The quiet Prélude presents the themes which are to be used in the second movement, where they are transformed into Vierne's typical vigorous themes. The Menuet is scherzo-like in its lightness. The Romance is less intense than others of the slow movements, and there is less of chroma-

icism in the even flow of its melody. The Final is one of the least successful of the sonata-forms, for the rapidness of the pace prevents a clear delineation of the first subject. A rapid triplet-figure is initiated at the beginning, and it continues without a single measure's hesitation for the duration of the movement.

III. THE FIFTH SYMPHONY⁴

This symphony is the largest in extent, being seventy pages in length. The movements are as follows:

- (1) Grave, A-minor (loose prelude form)
- (2) Allegro, A-minor (sonata-form)
- (3) Scherzo, D-minor (third rondo-form)
- (4) Larghetto, F \sharp -major (three-part song form)
- (5) Final, A-major (second rondo-form)

The cyclical treatment continues in this symphony with the following themes in use:

Example 4a, V-1, page 2, measures 1-8

The single melodic line of the first three measures

⁴ Louis Vierne, Cinquième Symphonie pour Orgue, Op. 47 (Paris: Durand et Cie., 1925).

above represents one of the basic themes used in several of the movements.

Example 4b, V-2, page 8, measures 1-3

Theme 4a appears above with different note values and in contrary motion, as the principal theme of the sonata-form of the second movement.

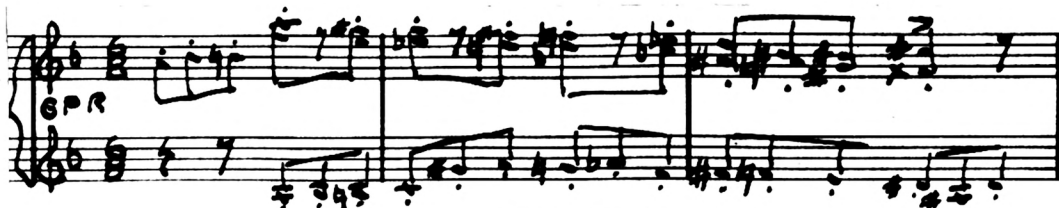
Example 4c, V-5, page 48, measures 1-3

Here 4a is again changed in note values and in rhythm, and appears as the subject of A of the second-type rondo which constitutes the Final of the Fifth Symphony.

Example 4d, V-2, page 10, measures 12-15

Measures four and five of Example 4a are here used in the pedal as the secondary subject of the second movement (sonata-form). This is the first statement.

Example 4e, V-3, page 25, measures 1-3



The fourth and fifth measures of Example 4a are here used as the subject of the first section of the third movement which is in the third rondo-form. This is the first statement of the theme.

Example 4f, V-5, page 59, measures 9-10



The counter-subject appearing in the left hand is a further adaptation of the fourth and fifth measures of 4a. It appears here in section B² of the last movement.

Example 4g, V-3, page 28, measures 1-3



Both parts of 4a appear above together, in the pedal and right hand respectively.

An indication of Vierne's concern for the niceties of contrast appears in the selection of the buoyant theme of the Final as a contrast to the chromatic intensities of the preceding Larghetto. The carillon-like theme, like many another of the ostinati in the symphonies, has a somewhat ambiguous harmonic implication against the virile and straightforward theme underlying it. The form of the Scherzo is discussed in detail in the section devoted to the rondo-forms.

IV. THE SIXTH SYMPHONY⁵

In this work, Vierne returns to the classical opening: a movement in sonata-form, with a three-page Introduction in which are presented the two themes used throughout the cyclical structure of the symphony. The movements are:

- (1) Introduction and Allegro, D-major (sonata-form)
- (2) Aria, D-minor (three-part song form)
- (3) Scherzo, G-minor (first rondo-form)
- (4) Adagio, E^b-minor (three-part song form)
- (5) Final, B-major (third rondo-form)

⁵ Louis Vierne, Sixième Symphonie pour Orgue, Op. 59 (Paris: Lemoine et Cie., 1931).

Example 5a, VI-1, page 1, measure 3



Above is the first appearance of the theme which serves as a basic motive for several uses. Here appearing in the left hand as only a motive, it is expanded in later presentations.

Example 5b, VI-1, page 3, measures 10-11



The pedal presents the theme in its first appearance in the first movement, following the introduction (Example 5b).

Example 5c, VI-3, page 24, measures 8-10



Utterly changed in appearance and sound, 5a is used as the basic idea in the B¹ section of the Scherzo, appearing above in the left hand.

Example 6a, VI-1, page 2, measures 10-11

In the Lento section of the Introduction appears a chromatic theme which is used in three succeeding movements (Example 6a).

Example 6b, VI-1, page 6, measures 1-2

Example 6b is the second subject of the first movement, based upon Example 6a.

Example 6c, VI-4, page 33, measures 3-10

This idea is present in much of the working-out of the first twenty-seven measures of the fourth movement. It also appears in contrary motion in the last four measures of Example 6c.

Example 6d, VI-5, page 41, measures 8-9



Here the motive is used as the subject matter for section B¹ of the final movement of the Sixth Symphony.

This, the last of the symphonies, is in some respects the most difficult from the standpoint of technical execution. The first and third movements in particular make severe demands on the performer. The longest development section to be found in any of the sonata-forms is contained in this work. It has six sections of working-out of the two principal themes, and covers six pages in its entirety. The recapitulation begins in the key of the exposition--D-major. Whereas the second subject is in the key of A-major in the exposition, it appears in the recapitulation in B-major, and the two-section coda continues in the same key, with the final chord being the tonic of B-major, with an added sixth. The Aria which follows is remarkable for its length of melodic line and for its intensely chromatic expression. The form of the Final is discussed in the section on rondo-form.

CHAPTER IX

VIERNE'S USE OF THE RONDO-FORMS

One of the striking factors of the Vierne organ symphonies is his predilection for the rondo-forms. The traditional sonata-form is employed with only half the frequency of the rondo. There are two possible explanations for this usage: first, Vierne was a splendid improviser, and it may have been that the inspiration of much of his writing in the symphonies came from the improvisations for which he was famed in the organ gallery of Notre-Dame; second, his use of cyclic construction in the last three of the symphonies may have influenced him in his decision to use the rondo-forms. It is true that the rondos used in these last three symphonies are much more extended than those of the first three. Since the themes and basic motives of the last three symphonies are used in many different guises, it may be that Vierne in his use of the rondo-forms may have wished to insure as far as possible the recognition of the themes.

The first essays in the use of the rondo are not at all exceptional in the arrangement of the sections, and they represent a conventional treatment of the form. In the First Symphony, for example, the third movement--a Pastorale--is in the first rondo-form. The first section (A) ends with

a tonic chord in B^b, and with no transition but a half-dozen unaccompanied pedal notes, the second subject enters directly in G-minor. The return of A is in the original key, and the themes are only slightly elaborated. The third movement is a rondo of the third type, conventional in its key relationships and in its transitional material.

The last movement of the First Symphony--Final--is also a rondo of the first type. The first section (A), in D-major, is repeated in a reconstructed version and then joined to B by a short transition. The retransition to A² is accomplished by a group of chain-phrases using the theme of A as its material and extending for two pages until the actual entrance of A², now in the key of B-minor. An extended, dominant pedal-point is added to A². The next section is a development of the theme of A, passing through E^b to B^b, in which key the retransition initiates a triplet figure in the manuals, replacing the duple rhythm of A¹. Section A³ enters in D-major, with the theme in the pedals, accompanied by the already developed triplet figuration in the manuals. Another short repetition of A leads directly to a five-section coda. This movement demonstrates a definite modification of the first rondo-form, since section B does not return, its place being taken by the development of A.

It is in the rondos of the Fifth and the Sixth Sym-

phonies where Vierne tremendously expands the resources of the form. It is only because of his ingenuity in handling the returning themes, and because of his ability effectively to transform the thematic material that Vierne is able to handle so much repetition of material without dullness. These two rondos present tremendous technical difficulties to the organist, for the continual transformation of the themes is accompanied by an ever-increasing demand upon the player's technical capacity.

The Scherzo (third movement) of the Fifth Symphony begins in D-minor with a theme of such intense chromaticism that the tonality is continually shifting. (See Example 4e, page 69.) Section A¹ presents the theme in the manuals alone, and it is immediately repeated with an additional dominant pedal-point. Section B¹, in D-major (Example 7), follows after a transition by dissolution.

Example 7, V-3, page 27, measures 1-2



Section C¹ follows after a short transition. This is an unusual departure from the established form, for there is

no return of A in its original version. The principal theme (Example 4g, page 69) is taken from the very first notes of the symphony; it appears here in the pedals with rhythmic alterations. Accompanying this theme are fragments in the manuals of the themes of both A and B. In effect, this section is a consolidation of A and B, with the addition of a new theme. However, since Vierne is using cyclic construction in this work, it is perhaps logical to call the section C¹, because the new theme is a transformation of material in the first movement, and since the whole section is repeated later.

A short and thinly-scored retransition leads from C¹ to A², now in F-minor, which is a transposed version of A¹, though here appearing with a dominant pedal-point. A² immediately repeats after an abrupt cadence, and presents its theme in contrary motion for four measures, followed by the original version. B² enters without benefit of transition or introduction, in the key of D^b-major, a transposed version of B¹. The same transition phrase appearing before C¹ now ushers in C², which is a transposed version of C¹, again complete with fragments of A and B. The key is D-major. A³ appears after a short and very chromatic retransition, in its original key of D-major, with little alteration save an extended phrase or two. The coda following is in two sections. A schematic diagram shows briefly the

order of the sections: $A^1 - B^1 - (C^1 (a\&b)) - A^2 - B^2 - (C^2 (a\&b)) - A^3$.

The Final of the Sixth Symphony is also in the third rondo-form. This movement is the most expanded of any of the examples of the form appearing in the symphonies. A^1 presents a vigorous theme in B-major, without pedal (Example 8).

Example 8, VI-5, page 40, measures 5-6



After a tonic cadence, B^1 enters in E-minor. (See Example 6d, page 73.) A diffuse retransition, based upon material from B^1 , leads to A^2 , again in B-major. The repetition is exact, save for some added pedal flourishes at the points of cadence. The section ends with a half-cadence on the dominant of E^b . C is now used in three versions in immediate succession; first, an inverted, arpeggiated, dominant pedal-point is maintained throughout over the pedal theme. (See Example 21a, page 91.) The second version now has the theme in the right hand, with sixteenth-note figuration in the left, Example 9.

Example 9, VI-5, page 47, measures 14-15



A persistent counter-theme in the pedals almost approaches the condition of a ground-bass, but intervals are altered here and there to fit the principal theme. After an eight-measure extension of the final phrase, the third version appears. The key is still E^b, but the section is reconstructed in four-part harmony, with many parallel fourths in the left hand, above a pedal-point in the pedals, Example 10.

Example 10, VI-5, page 49, measures 10-13



A short retransition leads to A³, in B-major. The second phrase carries the theme in the pedals. C² enters abruptly, in place of B. The principal theme is high in the right hand; the left hand carries sixteenth-note figur-

ation, while the pedals use a theme from the first movement of the symphony. The key remains B-major. This leads directly into A⁴ in which the principal theme is re-worked slightly, and the pedals carry a dominant-tonic, sixteenth-note pedal-point in D-major.

After the cadence of a dominant-seventh chord in E^b-- to which the A⁴ section had modulated--C³ enters. This is the most unusual section of all the Vierne rondo-forms. It is in B-major, and the section is complete in all its phrases. However, each of these phrases is followed by a motive from the A section. Thus the whole section C³ is composed of the regularly alternating phrases of C with the motive from A. A schematic diagram shows the order of the sections:

A¹ - B¹ - A² - C¹ (3 versions) - A³ - C² - A⁴ - (C³ (c&a)).

It is by the means noted above that Vierne keeps his rondo-forms from being monotonous. The reworking of the material is done in such a manner that the repetition is not too noticeable. The speed with which the movements proceed is an important factor in their success, however. All of the rondos are to be taken at a comparatively rapid pace. The repetitions in the last movement of the Sixth Symphony are treated with figuration devices to such an extent that the animation of the music prevents boredom. The combination of the C section theme with fragments from other sections is accomplished in a most clever fashion.

It would seem from these rondos of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, that Vierne has treated the old rondo-forms in a very flexible manner. The old principles have definitely been extended to suit the composer's needs.

CHAPTER X

RHYTHM

Unlike some of his students, Vierne was not concerned with the attempt to gain what rhythmic elasticity was possible from constantly-changing time signatures. Tournemire, one of Vierne's students, and de Maleingreau wrote much of their music in a fashion which demanded, in some cases, a change of time-signature with each succeeding measure. There are hardly any instances in Vierne's symphonies where the assignment of notes to a measure is changed before a particular section or movement is completed.

There are occasional examples of so disposing the notes in relation to the normal bar-lines that the normal accents are contradicted. The examples to be quoted below appear as short introductions to complete movements, and since they consist of single voice-lines, the normal accents are restored when the manuals enter.

Example 11, V-4, page 38, measures 1-2

The musical score shows three staves. The top two staves are for the right and left hands, and the bottom staff is for the pedals. The music is in 4/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with changing time signatures. The bottom staff is marked 'mf' and 'a piacere'. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and then to 2/4. The bottom staff is marked 'Ped. R.' and has a large bracket over it. The time signature changes are indicated by arrows and numbers: 4/4, 3/4, and 2/4.

The notes in the above example are so disposed as to fit the rhythm of 6/8 and of 3/4. With the entrance of the chordal structure the normal accent returns. This measure is from the beginning of the fourth movement of the Fifth Symphony.

Example 12, V-1, page 2, measures 1-4

It will be noted in the example above that the actual and the normal accents are indicated. The effect is one of having moved the entire three measures one beat (or note) to the right. Another example may be found on page 72, Example 6c.

Vierne had a particular fondness for beginning a movement, especially the more vigorous ones, with an anacrusis. In many cases a fractional portion of the upbeat has been elided. In these cases, the actual heavy accent and beat follows a single note or a small group of notes.

Example 13a, III-1, page 1, measures 1-2

In Example 13a the actual heavy accent is delayed until the first quarter-note, the eighth-note in the first full measure receiving a lesser stress.

Example 14a shows almost a reversal of the process of Example 12. The first note should receive the accent, but the second note of each of the measures shown, by reason of its longer value by a tie, seems to gain what might be called an accent of duration over its predecessor. The first note has the effect of an anacrusis.

Example 14a, II-5, page 39, measures 8-11

When the subject is repeated with a heavy chord structure, the result is the same, now heightened by a shortening of the first note to an eighth. (See Example 14b.)

Example 14b, II-5, page 40, measures 15-16

The same occurs at the beginning of the Choral of the Second Symphony in the unaccompanied pedal. (See Example 14c.)

Example 14c, II-2, page 13, measures 1-4

Musical score for Example 14c, measures 1-4. The score is in 3/4 time and marked LARGO. It features a grand staff with three staves. The top two staves are mostly empty, with a few notes in the first measure. The bottom staff, labeled 'Ped. G.', contains a continuous melodic line of eighth notes.

Example 15, II-5, page 39, measure 1

Musical score for Example 15, measure 1. The score is in 3/4 time and marked GPR and fff. It features a grand staff with three staves. The top staff has a melodic line starting with a seven-note introduction. The middle and bottom staves have accompaniment.

Here seven notes serve almost as a short introduction to the accent on A, (Example 15).

Example 15a, II-1, page 1, measures 1-2

Musical score for Example 15a, measures 1-2. The score is in 3/4 time and marked GR and fff. It features a grand staff with three staves. The top staff has a melodic line starting with a seven-note introduction. The middle and bottom staves have accompaniment.

The heaviest accent in Example 15a is upon the third measure, while the beginning note of the first full measure receives a lesser accent.

CHAPTER XI

MELODIC DEVICES

From Vierne's own account in his *Memoirs* (q. v.) his training in plainsong was most thorough, and as assistant to both Widor and Guilmant he taught beginning students the fundamentals of the art. Throughout his artistic life as organist at Notre-Dame he was in intimate touch with the actual use of Gregorian chant, and like all the modern French organists, he made copious use of the wealth of melody to be found in such historical material. Many of the composers of the modern French organ school were accustomed to use the peculiar patterns found in the several modes as models for the construction of their own melodies. One of the effects of the use of the modal scales is to be found in the fact that in each mode there is a certain note called the dominant (not necessarily the fifth from the tonic) which recurs frequently in the melody. The frequency of appearance of the dominant gives an effect of the other tones circling around it, regardless of the actual tonic or final.

Example 16, III-5, page 24, measures 2-6

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It contains five measures of music, each starting with a fermata over a half note G4. The second staff is an alto clef with a key signature of one sharp and a 4/4 time signature. It contains five measures of music, each starting with a fermata over a half note G4. The third staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one sharp and a 4/4 time signature. It contains five measures of music, each starting with a fermata over a half note G2. The music is characterized by frequent use of the dominant note G.

The passage above makes use of the Aeolian mode. (Note the persistent E-natural.) The final is F[#]; the dominant around which the melody revolves is C[#].

Example 17, V-2, page 13, measures 6-7



This example is of the Hypophrygian mode. B is the final; E is the dominant.

Example 18, IV-1, page 5, measures 4-5



Vierne also experimented with the whole-tone scale as the above example will show. In the pedal appears the motive shown in Example 1a (page 61) which is the generating theme for much of the material in the Fourth Symphony.

Example 19, IV-2, page 18, measures 5-7



Above is another example of the use of the whole-tone scale from the second movement of the Fourth Symphony, here used as a trill, while the pedal is also in the whole-tone scale.

Example 20 below is a good instance of Vierne's ability in re-stating a melody. If the second part of the example is compared with the first, it will be seen that some note values of the second part have been quickened and that the third measure of the first part has been elided in the restatement. There are countless melodies in the six symphonies which have been altered in this manner. In some cases but a single note has been changed in order to present a melody in an entirely different aspect.

Example 20, II-4, page 33, measures 6-9; 10-12

The image displays a handwritten musical score for Example 20, II-4, page 33, measures 6-9; 10-12. The score is written on four staves. The top two staves are connected by a brace on the left, and the bottom two staves are also connected by a brace on the left. The music is written in a complex, multi-measure format, featuring various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The notation includes notes, rests, and bar lines, with some measures containing multiple notes beamed together. The overall style is that of a handwritten manuscript.

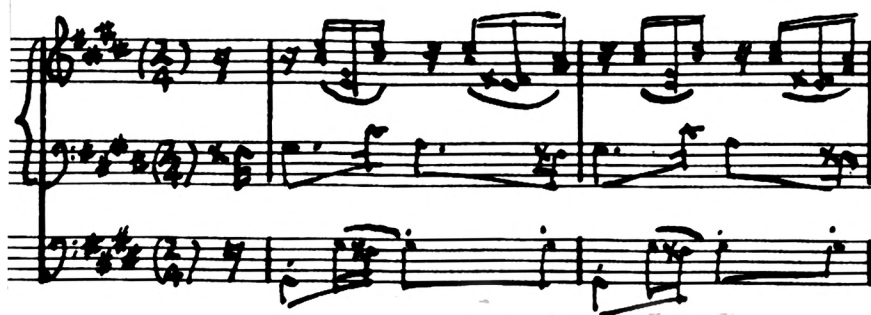
CHAPTER XII

GROUND-BASS, PEDAL-POINTS, AND OSTINATI

A short example of ground-bass will be found in Example 5c (page 71), from the Scherzo of the Sixth Symphony, section B¹. There are but two complete repetitions, each of four measures.

Example 21 is from the development section of the first movement of the Second Symphony, and demonstrates a pedal-point, or pedal-figure, which lasts fourteen measures.

Example 21, II-1, page 5, measures 14-15



The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It features a prominent pedal-point consisting of a single, sustained B-flat note in the left hand throughout the two measures.

Example 21a below is an instance of inverted pedal-point in which the B^b persists for forty measures.

Example 21a, VI-5, page 45, measures 17-19



The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It features an inverted pedal-point consisting of a single, sustained B-flat note in the right hand throughout the three measures.

See also Example 6c (page 72) for inverted pedal-point.

The following examples are all interesting uses of what might be called ostinati. Some appear in the pedals, and as such are bassi ostinati. Many other examples are to be found in the manuals, and these instances might well be called melodia ostinati. It is a device which Vierne uses with consummate effect when he wishes to impart head-long speed to a movement, or when he is building tremendous climaxes. Perhaps the most famous of these devices is the one created by Widor for the Toccata of the Fifth Symphony. Vierne has made use of many of them, both in and out of the symphonies. The Carillon de Westminster is a notable example.

Example 16 (page 87) represents a special type of ostinato. The figure itself is of ambiguous tonality, oscillating between tonic and dominant implications.

Example 4c (page 68) is taken from the Fifth Symphony.

Example 22 continues for thirty measures, and shifts from right hand to left in the middle of the section. The figure is modified to meet the changing demands of the melody it accompanies.

Example 22, V-5, page 55, measures 10-11

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in Treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 2/4. It contains a rhythmic figure of eighth notes, with a circled '8' indicating the measure number. The middle staff is in Bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, also containing a rhythmic figure of eighth notes, with a circled '8' indicating the measure number. The bottom staff is also in Bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, containing a rhythmic figure of eighth notes, with a circled '8' indicating the measure number. The label 'R ANCHES' is written below the middle staff.

Example 23 shows ostinati figurations for both right and left hands, moving in contrary motion. This is the beginning of section A⁴ of the Final of the Fifth Symphony. It demonstrates one of the decorative devices used by Vienne to lessen the effect of constant repetition in his rondo-forms.

Example 23, V-5, page 63, measures 6-7

Musical notation for Example 23, measures 6-7. The score is written for three staves: two treble clefs (right hand) and one bass clef (left hand). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The right hand consists of two staves of music, with the upper staff containing a complex, repetitive melodic line and the lower staff containing a similar but more rhythmic line. The left hand consists of one staff with a simple, repetitive bass line. Brackets are used to group the two staves of the right hand and the single staff of the left hand.

The same Final ends with the following flourish in the pedals, lasting six measures:

Example 24, V-5, page 70, measure 1

Musical notation for Example 24, measure 1. The score is written for three staves: two treble clefs (right hand) and one bass clef (left hand). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The right hand consists of two staves of music, with the upper staff containing a complex, repetitive melodic line and the lower staff containing a similar but more rhythmic line. The left hand consists of one staff with a simple, repetitive bass line. Brackets are used to group the two staves of the right hand and the single staff of the left hand.

The following examples are also representative of the ostinato figure:

Example 25, I-1, page 5, measures 9-11

A musical score for three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. It contains three measures of music. The first measure has a dynamic marking of *f*. The second measure has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The third measure has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The middle staff is in bass clef and contains three measures of music. The first measure has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The second measure has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The third measure has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains three measures of music. The first measure has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The second measure has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The third measure has a dynamic marking of *mp*.

Example 26, I-6, page 42, measures 2-4

A musical score for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. It contains four measures of music. The first measure has a dynamic marking of *ff*. The second measure has a dynamic marking of *ff*. The third measure has a dynamic marking of *ff*. The fourth measure has a dynamic marking of *ff*. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains four measures of music. The first measure has a dynamic marking of *ff*. The second measure has a dynamic marking of *ff*. The third measure has a dynamic marking of *ff*. The fourth measure has a dynamic marking of *ff*.

Example 27, II-1, page 10, measures 18-19



Example 28, II-3, page 24, measures 19-23

Musical notation for Example 28, II-3, measures 19-23. The score is written for three staves: two treble clefs and one bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 7/8. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests, with some notes beamed together.

CHAPTER XIII

CHARACTERISTICS OF REGISTRATION

Of the thirty-one separate movements comprising the six symphonies of Vierne, roughly a dozen call for what might be called specialized registration. These movements are all relatively short in length, as might be expected, for the piquancy and charm of some of the tonal combinations would soon grow dull with longer use. None of the registrations are especially unusual, unless it be in a negative sense; the Voix humaine is indicated only twice in the symphonies--in the Pastorale of the First, and in the Adagio of the Sixth, where it is coupled with the Cor de Nuit.

It can readily be seen as one looks through the symphonies that in the longer and more involved movements, the registration has always been selected in the light of perfect ensemble. In these longer movements when the interest lies in the expression and in the working-out of the musical ideas, rather than in exotic tone-color, the typical qualities of the French organ are utilized fully. One of the most common usages in this connection is the very frequent employment on all manuals of all stops of an equal or given intensity. The beginning of the Second Symphony is typical, for the registration calls for:

G. Fonds et Anches 16, 8, 4
 P. Fonds et Anches 16, 8, 4
 R. Fonds et Anches 8, 4
 Péd. Fonds et Anches 16, 8, 4.

It will be seen at once that this registration makes available at all manuals a homogenous combination of almost any desired intensity. To reduce the intensity without change in tone-color, it is then only necessary to transfer at the opportune moment to another manual, finally going to the Récit and then closing the expression-box.

Another, and perhaps more striking example of this type of registration is to be found in the Final of the Third Symphony. In this case the beginning of the movement is marked pianissimo, but the registration prepared for the movement shows the following arrangement:

Récit: Fonds et Anches 16, 8, 4
 Positif: Fonds 16, 8, 4 (Anches préparées)
 G² Orgue: Fonds 16, 8, 4 (Anches préparées)
 Pédale: Fonds 32, 16, 8, 4 (Anches préparées)
 Claviers accouplés.

The movement begins on the Récit and progresses, as a study in crescendo, to the final section which ends fff. The addition of the reeds both to pedal and to the manuals is the means whereby the increase in intensity and volume is attained. Thus the pianissimo marking must be interpreted relatively and not as an absolute value. The beginning, in other words, must be more quiet than the succeeding sections.

The Scherzo of the Sixth Symphony has perhaps the most elaborate registration of any of the movements of this type:

R. Flûtes 8, 4, Quinte, Octavin et Basson-Hautbois
 P. (expressif) Bourdon 8, Flûte 4, Nasard, Tierce,
 Quarte de Nasard
 G. Bourdon et Flûte 8
 Péd. Flûtes 16, 8.

There are no indications for any change of registration throughout the eleven pages. The Positif only is coupled to the Grand-Orgue, while the Positif and Récit are used individually, and it is by this means that contrast is secured.

In most of the cases where colorful combinations of stops are used, the registration remains constant for the duration of the movement. In only a very few movements--the slower-paced ones--are the solo stops interchanged, and modifications made in the accompaniment registration. This obviously is the result of the French organ's lack of combination pistons or similar devices for changing relatively light registrations. The interchange of solo stops is usually effected by hand, or with the aid of an assistant.

One other example shows a rather unusual combination of stops; this registration is to be found in the Aria of the Sixth Symphony:



R. Trompette et Flûte 8
P. Principal, Salicional et Bourdon 8
G. Flûte 8
Péd. Soubasse 16, Bourdon 8

Coda: P. Salicional et Unda Maris; Octave grave
et aiguë (Sub- and super-octave)
R. Cor française ou Ophicléide

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

Louis Vierne stood in an exceedingly favorable position in the matter of the influences which were at work upon him. Though he profited immeasurably by his study with both Widor and Guilmant, he himself possessed an advantage which was not given to either of these two men. For almost two years Vierne was in the organ-class of César Franck; and in that time he was able to add his own share to the almost legendary love, respect, and admiration that Franck's students bore him.

There are, in fact, many points of similarity between the careers of Franck and of Vierne. Each spent a goodly portion of his life in the service of the church: Franck at Ste.-Clothilde, Vierne at Notre-Dame. Each man devoted his entire life to music; each was a devout believer with a keen sense for beauty and the creation of it; both were superb improvisers; the students of both were avid disciples of their masters; both suffered the results of intrigue at the hands of others, and both had the necessary fortitude to rise above their troubles, taking refuge in their art.

As the assistant and close friend of both Widor and Guilmant, Vierne came to know the esthetic creed of each

artist in an intimate fashion. Vierne modeled his own compositions upon the general lines of the work of these two men. With the added impetus and the inspiration that came to him through his contact with Franck, he was able to advance in scope, in grandeur, and in emotional content to that point which places his works in the forefront of modern organ composition.

Vierne was perhaps more fortunate than his contemporaries, for he was able to profit greatly by his association both with Franck and with Widor and Guilmant. His greater point of advantage lay in the fact that he was in such close personal relationship with the latter two men.

Vierne had the inestimable advantage of an ability to produce a long melodic line, the intensity of which he was able to modify at will. The short-breathed phrases of Franck do not appear in the work of his student.

Vierne used a widely-varied phraseology. In countless movements the phrase organization is quite regular, with perfect balance of periods. In other instances, there are phrases of all degrees of length and of very odd balance.

He possessed a fine ability for the building of tremendous climaxes. In this connection must be mentioned his use of chain-phrases and his intriguing manner of extending phrases so that the moment of cadence, of resolution is

delayed, to the end that climaxes seem more impressive by reason of their delayed entrances.

One device in particular contributes to his ability for constructing a stunning climax. The ostinato, the effectiveness of which he may have learned from Widor's use of it in the Toccata of the Fifth Symphony, is used with carillon-like results in many movements in which the effect is gained almost by monotony--much in the manner of Ravel's Bolero.

It is true that Vierne exhausted nearly all of the contrapuntal and harmonic devices in the course of writing his symphonies. It is possible that many of these tricks of the musician's trade will remain to be appreciated only by those who have the knowledge and the will to examine the scores themselves.

Vierne's use of cyclic construction seems for the most part to be valuable in its strictest sense only to the practiced organist. The paces of the movements where there is identity of thematic material are usually too slow or too rapid to afford the unaided ear any opportunity of grasping the essential cyclic meaning. It remains for the eye to appreciate the tremendously skilful manipulation of the themes.

There seems to be no excellence of one type of writing over another in Vierne's work, unless it be in his

writing of scherzi. Some of the most charming pages of the symphonies are to be found in these swift, light-footed movements.

The grandeur of some of the dramatic passages is notable. Especially to be commended is the jagged, Gothic-like beginning of the Second Symphony, and the final summing up of the themes which occurs at the end of the first movement. The succeeding Choral and the Romance of the Fourth Symphony contain passages of lyrical loveliness.

The training of Franck appears nowhere more noticeably than in the Fourth Symphony with its extreme chromatic style, unless it be in the last two symphonies with their cyclical structure.

To Widor's influence can be credited the use of the symphonic form itself, as well as the tremendously difficult passages with which some of the symphonies are filled. It is possible that these bristling technical difficulties would never have been written had it not been for the thorough schooling in organ technique that Vierne received at the hands of Widor.

The purist may be comforted by the fact that Vierne's symphonic writing comes closer to the classical ideal than does that of Widor. The variety and unity achieved by Vierne in the symphonies is not far removed from that demanded by the thorough-going classicist. Vierne has truly

built upon the foundation provided by the Widor symphonies, and his own personal manner of expression has given his work an individuality and a breadth of vision that are lacking in the Widor works.

The organ symphonies of Louis Vierne represent a substantial and valuable contribution to modern organ literature because of their own intrinsic value; because they are the well-considered works of one of the preeminent members of the modern French organ school, and because they represent the vision and the work of an organist directly descended through one of the finest lines of schooling. As for their permanence in the repertoire, it remains for time and for capable organists to say.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

THE COMPOSER¹

by

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Organiste du Grand-Orgue de Saint-Étienne-du-Mont

Will the disappearance of Louis Vierne set a date in the history of organ literature? The future alone can tell. In any case it is undeniable that his powerful personality as an organist and as a composer, his considerable effect throughout the world, and the influence of his admirable teaching have exercised a constant bearing on a great number of organists of the present generation. As early as 1889, that is to say when he was twenty-nine, he came to the attention of musicians through a work which is already that of a master--his First Symphony for Organ--which would alone have sufficed to establish his reputation. We know to what extent it has been strengthened since.

In this youthful work which has victoriously withstood the test of time, the author already indicates very distinctly definite characteristics of his personality. Through the mobility and the grandeur of his style, the balance and the solidity of construction, the rich poly-

¹ Extract from In Memoriam Louis Vierne 1870-1937
(Paris: Brouwer et Cie, 1939.)

phony of his writing, Louis Vierne establishes himself without any doubt as the one who carries on the esthetics of his master, Widor, as he himself claims with enthusiasm in his Memoirs. He adds to it, however, a thematic richness, a depth of thought, a lyricism, a very personal emotion, which in this particular connects him rather with César Franck, particularly through the chromaticism of harmonic language. It is certain that, far from being a system, this mode of expression was the only one, indeed, which could suit the very nature of his inspiration--tormented by so many interior struggles. One cannot conceive of such a state of soul expressing itself through the diatonic medieval scales.

In Louis Vierne, the melodic meaning plays a leading role. He does not stop to create atmosphere or supply picturesque details. Above everything else the music must sing. Although he maintains control of his lively sensitiveness, he never completely restrains himself. Not for him this constant attempt to surprise, to mislead the hearer, to avoid at any price the obvious. "An extremely dangerous system," he said, "which often leads to artificiality if not to incoherence." On the contrary, we find in him a generosity and abandon, a surrender of his own personality, which are, indeed, the reflection of so expansive a nature. He possesses to a rare degree the privilege

of being able to conduct a long melodic phrase--to maintain or increase in any way he likes its expressive intensity. In particular he manipulates the appoggiatura in a way which is very personal.

The writing is, with few exceptions, frankly polyphonic. The author starts from this essential principle--that the sound of the organ, being of an absolutely sustained nature which "hangs on" terribly, needs constant movement to find its natural expression. This rather rigid prolongation of the sonority is ill-suited to the long harmonic heaviness, so shimmering in the orchestra, so poetic on the piano. As for the dissonances, they take on a singular sharpness from the very fact that they are automatically situated on the same level as consonances. An attempt to achieve a contrapuntal pattern suits them, therefore, infinitely better than simultaneous sounding, which runs the risk of making them aggressive. Thanks to this movement--to this air which is allowed to circulate in the interior parts of the writing--these dissonances, even the most audacious, can come together safely and be resolved freely and independently.

The registration, always sober, usually allows only three colors; or rather, three sonorous levels, of which the second, reserved for the main part of the piece, cuts clearly across the other two.

It is useless to insist on the element of so-called "composition." We know what the author is capable of getting out of a theme. We know with what logic, with what solidity the general plan has been conceived. The detail always gives way in the face of the ensemble as a whole. We can see with what balance the periods are strung together and form a contrast with one another, with what care the progression has been arranged. Transitions are never brutal; in the first movements and the finales of the symphonies in particular, it is admirable to see with what art the return of the initial theme has been brought about.

Louis Vierne has singularly enlarged the expressive possibilities of the organ by approaching, notably in his Pieces in Free Style and in his Fantasy Pieces, a variety of forms of which he remains the creator. The fact has to be recognized, furthermore, that even in the romantic Clair de Lune, in the nostalgic Evening Star, or in the charming scherzi of his symphonies--a type in which he excelled--he always remains the master of the style which never ventures into the pianistic or the orchestral vein, but which remains astonishingly peculiar to the organ.

If Vierne was charmed by the new resources of the modern organ-builder by writing several selections of secular character, particularly destined for concert use, it must not be forgotten that the greatest part of his work

is essentially religious in inspiration. His most beautiful pages have without any doubt been influenced by his magnificent instrument in Notre Dame, as well as by the unique setting in which he made it speak. Was not this loft, which he made famous for thirty-seven years, for him the supreme goal of his life, his very reason for existence, the holy place where he renewed his inspiration, where he regained a taste for life after cruel absences due to a health which was often undermined? His hearers know what ardent faith he put into his splendid improvisations. "Organ art is a form of prayer." he wrote in his Memoirs, for Vierne had a belief which was profound, tried, and ripened by long moral and physical suffering; but he had the reserve of his religious convictions. What elevation of thought, what ardent inspirations of the soul are to be found in his symphonic andantes and adagios! The "Communion" of the Triptyque, notably, offers a moving example. There is no doubt but that the organ works of Louis Vierne, already of wide-spread influence and often played during the life of their author, will be more and more so in the future. They constitute the imperishable monument.

With the recession of time, which will be responsible for measuring the loss of this great artist, who was also an exceptional man, we can say that Vierne was one of those legendary figures who leaves his mark on history. His

sudden disappearance shows up cruelly the great place
which he held in our admiration and in our affection.

* * *

Translated by William C. Bedford, November, 1941.

APPENDIX B

SPECIFICATION¹

ÉGLISE MÉTROPOLITAINE (CATHÉDRALE) DE NOTRE-DAME (PARIS)

Organ built by Cavallé-Coll, 1868; restored, 1894; Récit altered, 1899.

<u>Grand-Choeur</u>		<u>Grand-Orgue</u>		<u>Bombarde</u>	
Principal	8'	Violon-basse	16'	Principal-basse	16'
Bourdon	8'	Bourdon	16'	Sous-basse	16'
Prestant	4'	Montre	8'	Principal	8'
Quinte	2 2/3'	Flûte harmonique	8'	Flûte harmonique	8'
Doublette	2'	Viole de gambe	8'	Grosse quinte	5 1/3'
Tierce	1 3/5'	Bourdon	8'	Octave	4'
Larigot	1 1/3'	Prestant	4'	Grosse tierce	3 1/5'
Septième	1 1/7'	Octave	4'	Quinte	2 2/3'
Piccolo	1'	Doublette	2'	Septième	2 2/7'
Tuba magna	16'	Fourniture ii to v-r		Doublette	2'
Trompette	8'	Cymbale ii to v-r		Cornet ii to v-r	
Clairon	4'	Basson	16'	Bombarde	16'
		Basson-Hautbois	8'	Trompette	8'
*Flûte ²	8'	#Clairon	4'	Clairon	4'
		*Soprano	4'		

<u>Positif</u>		<u>Récit</u>		<u>Pédale</u>	
Montre	16'	Quintaton	16'	Principal-basse	32'
Bourdon	16'	Diapason	8'	Contrebasse	16'
Flûte harmonique	8'	Viole de gambe	8'	Soubasse	16'
Salicional	8'	Voix céleste	8'	Grosse quinte	10 2/3'
Bourdon	8'	Flûte harmonique	4'	Flûte	8'
Unda maris	8'	Flûte octaviante	4'	Violoncelle	8'
Prestant	4'	Prestant	4'	Grosse tierce	6 2/5'
Flûte douce	4'	Quinte	2 2/3'	Quinte	5 1/3'
Doublette	2'	Octavin	2'	Septième	4 4/7'
#Piccolo	1'	Plein-jeu iv to vii-r		Octave	4'
Plein-jeu iii to vi-r		Cornet iii to v-r		Contre Bombarde	32'
Clarinettes-basse	16'	Bombarde	16'	Bombarde	16'
Cromorne	8'	Trompette	8'	Basson	16'
Clarinettes aiguës	4'	Basson-Hautbois	8'	Trompette	8'
		Voix humaine	8'	Basson	8'
*Nasard	2 2/3'	Clairon	4'	Clairon	4'
		*Cymbale	iii-r	*Violoncelle	16'
				*Bourdon	8'

* Stops added in restoration of 1931

Stops removed in 1931

¹ Wallace Goodrich, The Organ in France (Boston: The Boston Music Company, 1917), pp. 116-117.

² Details of restoration of 1931 from Vierne, "Reminiscences of Louis Vierne; His Life and Contacts with Famous Men," The Diapason, September, 1939.

APPENDIX C

FRANCK ON STRICT COUNTERPOINT

from

"Memoirs of Louis Vierne;
His Life and Contacts with Famous Men"¹

"Strict counterpoint is the syntax of a dead language. Our modern sensibility can appreciate that language only by appealing to historical considerations outside of our present harmonic habits. Just as a writer worthy of the name cannot dispense with Greek and Latin culture, so a true composer must know everything about his art. The polyphony of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries must be as familiar to him as the accompanied monody which followed; as the symphony of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, as the lyric art from Lulli to Wagner, in fact, as all the contributions which have enriched the art of sound since its birth. Writing Latin verse would be an exercise of scholastic virtuosity, but to write French verse one must be able to perform that exercise faultlessly.

Counterpoint is the arterial system of music; in order to be able to do free counterpoint well one must begin by undergoing the limitations of the strict, which oblige one to make the best use of a limited number of

¹ The Diapason, September, 1938 to September, 1939.

possibilities. He who can do the greatest things can do the least, and, once freed from rigid restrictions, one can choose one's patterns in complete independence. Just see what Bach has done. The licences in his writing as far as the rules are concerned are countless, yet there is not one which is not logically justified by its perfection of line, by its vigor of style, by its inventiveness of expression. In order to arrive at this mastery Bach began by subjecting himself to the severest rules; after having practiced them victoriously, he strode deliberately over them whenever they stood in his way. But he acted consciously and not because he could not do otherwise. Not to be able to do otherwise is the forfeit paid by the ignorant; those who know how, can and must choose. Instinct furnishes the materials; that's all right! Then the brain arranges them, coordinates them, imposes upon them the form which makes a work of art intelligible. A meaningless but beautiful-sounding series of words cannot be called a work of art. Read Bach; but for the time being, do counterpoint incessantly, the way one practices his fourth finger at the piano to overcome its natural weakness."

APPENDIX D

CATALOGUE DES OEUVRES DE LOUIS VIERNE

Piano seul à 2 Mains

Deux Pièces Op. 7. Romance sans paroles. Intermezzo
(Hachette)
Suite Bourguignonne Op. 17 (Leduc)
Douze Préludes Op. 36 en deux Cahiers (Henn, à Geneve)
Trois Nocturnes Op. 35 (Senart)
Silhouettes d'enfants Op. 43. Cinq Petites Pièces Faciles
(Henn, à Geneve)
Solitude, Poème en quatre Parties Op. 44 (Senart)

Deux Pianos, 4 Mains

Poème Op. 50 (Lemoine)

Piano et Orchestre

Poème Op. 50. Partition d'orchestre et matériel (Lemoine)

Violon et Piano

Aubade Op. 17 (Leduc)
Idylle -----
Légende Bourguignonne -----
Clair de lune -----
Sonate Op. 23 en sol mineur (Durand)
Ballade pour violon et piano (Lemoine)

Alto et Piano

Deux Pièces Op. 5. Le Soir et Légende (Leduc)

Violoncelle et Piano

Deux Pièces Op. 5. Le Soir et Légende (Leduc)
Sonata en si mineur Op. 27 (Durand)
Soirs Étrangers, 5 pièces (Lemoine)

Hautbois et Piano

Largo et Canzonetta Op. 6 (inédit)

Cor et Piano

Romance Op. 40 (Leduc)

Quatuor à CordesQuatuor Op. 12 No^o1 (Hamelle)Quintette pour Piano et Cordes

Quintette Op. 42 (Senart)

Harpe à pedales

Rapsodie Op. 25

5 Poèmes pour Chant et Harpe

Orchestre

Suite Bourguignonne Op. 17 (Leduc) en location
Symphonie en la mineur Op. 24, en dépôt chez Lemoine
(location)

Grand Orgue

Allegretto en si mineur Op. 1 (Leduc)

Prélude Funèbre Op. 4 (Leduc)

Communion Op. 8 (Procuré Générale)

Prélude en fa dièse (Senart)

Première Symphonie Op. 14 (Hamelle) 1899

Deuxième Symphonie Op. 20 (Hamelle) 1903

Troisième Symphonie Op. 28 (Durand) 1912

Quatrième Symphonie Op. 32 (Schirmer, à New York) 1917

Cinquième Symphonie Op. 47 (Durand) 1925

24 Pièces en style libre en deux cahiers Op. 30 (Durand)

Messe Basse, 6 Pièces Op. 31 (Librarie de l'Art Catholique)

Pièces de Fantasie en 4 Suites Op. 51 (Lemoine)

Oeuvres de Bach, 3 volumes (Senart)

Messe pour les défunts (Lemoine)

Triptyque ---

Sixième Symphonie (Lemoine) 1931

Harmonium

Communion Op. 8 (Procuré Générale)

24 Pièces en style libre en deux cahiers Op. 30 (Durand)

Messe Basse, 6 pièces Op. 31 (Librarie de l'Art Catholique)

Messe pour les Défunts (Lemoine)

Triptyque (Lemoine)

Chant et Piano

Trois Mélodies Op. 11 (Jobert)
 Qu'as-tu fait de ta jeunesse. -- Donc, ce sera par un
 clair jour d'été. -- Beaux papillons blancs.
 Chanson d'Automne Op. 13 (Jobert)
 Extase --- ----
 Lied d'Amour --- ----
 Dors chère Prunelle Op. 19 (Bonnaventure, à Caen)
 O triste, triste était mon âme Op. 18 (Durand)
 L'heure du Berger -- ---
 Le Rouet -- ---
 Trois mélodies: Soleil Couchant -- Nox -- Adieu (Zurfluh)
 Cinq Stances d'amour et de rêve Op. 29 (Durand)
 Psyche, Poème de Victor Hugo Op. 33 (Lemoine)
 Les Djinns, Poème de Victor Hugo Op. 34 (Lemoine)
 Eros, poème de la Comtesse de Noailles, Op. 37 (Lemoine)
 Spleens et détresses, 10 mélodies, poème de Verlaine (Senart)
 Dal Vertice, poème de d'Annunzio (Inédit)
 Vocalise Op. 40 (Lemoine)
 Cinq poèmes de Beaudelaire Op. 45 (Senart)
 Poème de l'amour Op. 48 (Lemoine)
 Quinze poèmes de Jean Richepin
 Cinq poèmes pour chant et harpe (Lemoine)
 Ballade de Désespéré Op. 61 (Lemoine)

Chant et Orchestre

Chanson d'Automne Op. 13 (Jobert)
 Beaux Papillons blancs Op. 11 (Jobert)
 L'heure de Berger Op. 18 (Durand)
 Cinq Stances d'amour et de rêve Op. 29 (Durand)
 Psyche Op. 33 (Lemoine)
 Les Djinns Op. 34 (Lemoine)
 Eros Op. 37 (Lemoine)
 Dal Vertice Op. 39
 Spleens et détresses Op. 38 (Senart)
 Praxinoe Op. 22
 Légende en deux Parties pour solo; chœurs de femmes et
 orchestre (en dépôt chez Lemoine)
 Poème de l'Amour Op. 48 (Lemoine)
 Ballade du Désespéré Op. 61 (Lemoine)

Musique Religieuse

Ave Maria Op. 3 (Hamelle), une voix et Orgue ou Chœur à 4
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 Ave Verum Op. 15 Contralto et Orgue (Hamelle)

Messe Solennelle Op. 16 pour Choeur mixte et orchestre
(Hamelle)

La même pour chœur mixte et 2 orgues

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et planches

2^e Partie: Technique des claviers manuels

3^e Partie: Technique de la Pédale

4^e Partie: l'Art de la Régistration

Chant et Harpe

Cinq Poèmes pour chant et harpe (Lemoine)

Violon et orchestre

Ballade pour violon et orchestre Op. 52 (Lemoine)

Chant et orgue

Les Angélus, 3 Poèmes (Lemoine)

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have
examined a thesis entitled

THE ORGAN SYMPHONIES OF LOUIS VIERNE

presented by **William Charles Bedford, Mus. B.**

a candidate for the degree **MASTER OF ARTS**

and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Approved
James J. Prunier
Dillon Greenlee

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