

THE COMPLETE
WORKS FOR ORGAN

Marcel Dupré
JEREMY FILSELL

Jeanne Demessieux
STEPHEN THARP



SAINT THOMAS CHURCH
FIFTH AVENUE

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Marcel Dupré

THE COMPLETE WORKS FOR ORGAN

✻ PROGRAM III ✻

JEREMY FILSELL, *organ*

MARCH 29, 2021 | MONDAY AT 6:45 PM



VITRAIL, OP. 65

The music in the first part of this program all has some connection with Dupré's native town of Rouen. As he grew older his affection was focused ever more firmly on the ancient Abbey church of Saint-Ouen, which had miraculously survived the War unscathed; and not only on the organ where his father had presided for 29 years, but also on the architecture. One of the glories of Saint-Ouen is the great rose window in the North Transept, and it was this window that inspired Dupré's final work, the *Vitrail* (Stained-glass window) which he composed in 1969, two years before his death. The window consists of a dazzling circle of prophets and saints in red, blue, gold and green, surrounded by wheeling golden stars and suns, geometrically arranged in five triangles around a central five-pointed star, and its structure is reflected in the six short sections of the music, which follow an unusual symmetrical design with three different themes, the first of which inspires sections 1 and 4, the second, sections 2 and 5, and the third, sections 3 and 6. The whole work can be briefly analyzed as follows:

- 1) *Marcato* for Mixture choruses, based on theme 1, a short chromatic phrase of rising and falling tones and semitones.
- 2) *Poco piu lento* for flutes, introducing a new theme in which the intervals are expanded to thirds.

- 3) *Energico* for Mixtures. The third theme, prefigured in the preceding section, expands the intervals again into a sequence of rising and falling fourths.
- 4) *Allegro molto*: the first theme returns in a twinkling scherzo, the alternate notes of the two hands tracing darting points of light and color . . .
- 5) *Andante*: the second theme returns in a brief meditation for Voix celeste.
- 6) *Allegro animato*: the third theme returns, and is soon joined by the other two in a resplendent coda.

SOUVENIR, OP. 65 BIS

This tiny miniature was not intended for publication, but nevertheless forms an effective postscript to the more imposing structure of *Vitrail*; it was composed shortly afterwards as a gift for a friend after the death of her mother, whom Dupré had known since his childhood. Unable to attend the funeral, he wrote this little tribute, on a single sheet of paper, in a deliberately unassuming and retrospective style. The manuscript was discovered in 1995 by Dupré's friend and tireless advocate Graham Steed, and published in *The American Organist* the following year.

LE TOMBEAU DE TITELOUZE, OP. 38

'Marcel Dupré wrote his *Tombeau de Titelouze*', wrote his first biographer, Abbé Delestre, 'after a conversation that I had with him during the Organ Week that took place in Rouen in July 1942. I showed him the tomb of the great musician in the Cathedral: its location is identified, but up to now there is no inscription to mark the spot for visitors. Dupré immediately conceived the idea of this *tombeau*.' Only a few weeks later, on 17th September, his pupil Jeanne Demessieux recorded in her diary that Dupré 'showed me something he has written during the vacation — some chorales on liturgical themes and a little toccata, entitled *Le Tombeau de Titelouze*'.

Jehan Titelouze, 'the father of French organ music', was organist

of Rouen Cathedral from 1588 until his death in 1633. In his preface to *Le Tombeau* Dupré pays tribute to the ‘rich and closely argued polyphony, the noble and pure style’ of his music. ‘Destined for those who are beginning the study of the organ,’ he explains, ‘the present collection comprises 16 chorales based on liturgical hymns, eight of which were treated by Titelouze.’ The chorales are all fingered and pedaled to assist the student, and are graded in order of difficulty, gradually adding the pedals, then a fourth and then a fifth voice, ending in a grand five-part fugue and a toccata that would surely defeat most beginners. The harmonic language ranges from extreme modal restraint in most of the earlier pieces to a more contemporary style in some of the later ones, and the textures too are imaginatively varied — Dupré thrived on self-imposed limitations. Although the *Tombeau* was conceived as a didactic work, and some of these pieces are too short even to play during a service, some of the others are perfectly suited for liturgical use, and one or two of them, notably the exquisite *Iste Confessor*, also retained a place in Dupré’s own concert repertoire in later years.

I. Creator alme siderum (3 voices) — *Chorale in the soprano*

HYMN.
IV
C Re-á-tor alme síderum, Æténa lux credénti-um,

II. Jesu Redemptor omnium (3 voices) — *Chorale in the soprano*

HYMN.
J Èsu Redémptor ómni-um, Quem lucis ante o-rí-
gi- nem,

III. A solis ortus cardine (3 voices) — *Chorale in the soprano*

HYMN.
III A so-lis ortus cárdi-ne Ad usque terræ lími-tem,

IV. Audi benigne conditor (3 voices) — Chorale in the pedal

HYMN.
A Udi, be-nígne Cón-di-tor, Nostras pre-cēs cum flé-
tibus,

V. Te lucis ante terminum (4 voices) — Chorale in the soprano

HYMN.
T E lucis ante térmi-num, Rerum Cre-á-tor, póscimus,

VI. Coelestis urbs Jerusalem (Canonic form - 4 voices) —
Chorale in canon; soprano and alto

HYMN.
C Æléstis urbs Je-rúsa-lem, Be-á-ta pa-cis ví-si-o,

VII. Ad regias agni dapes (4 voices) — Chorale in the tenor

HYMN.
A D ré-gi- as Agni dapes, Sto-lis amícti cándi-dis,

VIII. Veni creator spiritus (4 voices) — Chorale in the pedal

HYMN.
V Eni Cre-á-tor Spí-ri-tus, Mentēs tu-órum ví-si-ta:
Imple su-pérna grá-ti-a Quæ tu cre-ásti péctora.

IX. Vexilla Regis (4 voices) — Chorale in the soprano

HYMN.
V Exíl-la Re- gis pród-e-unt: Fulget Cru-cis mysté-ri-
um,

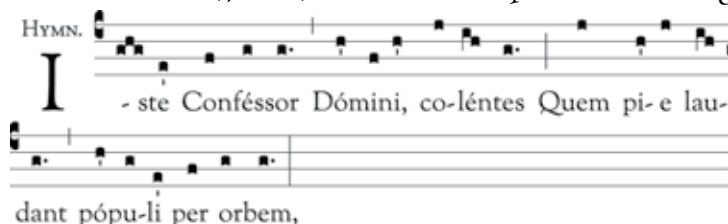
X. Pange lingua (3 voices) — Chorale in the pedal in the alto register



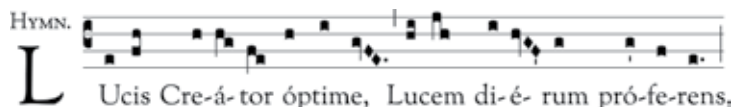
XI. Ave maris stella (4 voices) — Chorale in the alto



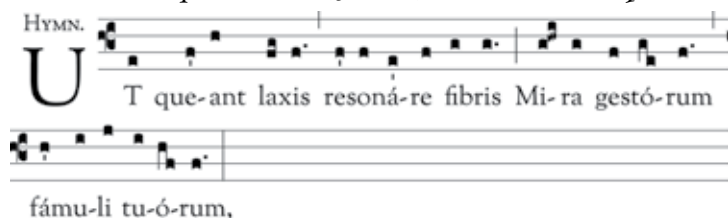
XII. Iste confessor (4 voices) — Chorale in the pedal in the tenor register



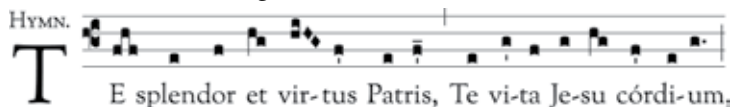
XIII. Lucis creator optime (Canonic form - 4 voices) —
Chorale in canon; soprano and pedal



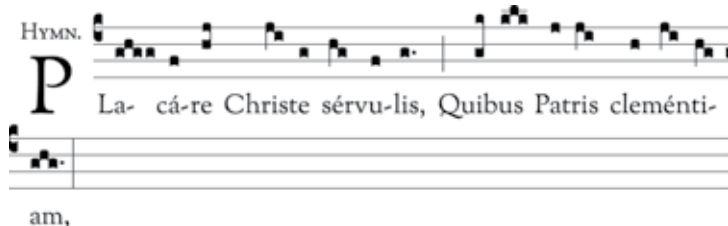
XIV. Ut queant laxis (5 voices) — Chorale in the pedal



XV. Te splendor et virtus (*Form of the chorale fugue - 5 voices*) —
Augmentation in the pedal



XVI. Placare Christe servulis — *In the form of a toccata*



CORTÈGE ET LITANIE, OP. 19

Dupré's most popular work started life around 1920 as part of a set of incidental music for a chamber orchestra of 11 musicians, which he wrote for a friend who was having a play performed in Paris. He also made an arrangement for solo piano, and when he played this to his American concert agent Dr Alexander Russell, Russell was so impressed that he persuaded Dupré to make two more arrangements, one for organ solo and another for organ and symphony orchestra. The solo version was premiered at the Wanamaker Auditorium in New York in September 1923, and the first performance of the orchestral version was given by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1925. Richly harmonized on soft strings, with the ends of the phrases punctuated by a delicate chiming bell, the melody of the *Cortège* is one of Dupré's most memorable inspirations. The poignant repetitions of the *Litanie* begin on a delicate solo flute, and move through a variety of tone-colors before a gradual increase in intensity leads to the powerful return of the *Cortège* theme and a brilliant toccata-like conclusion.

LAMENTO, OP. 24

This short occasional piece dates from 1926, and bears the touching dedication: 'To my dear friends Mr & Mrs A. Henderson, of Glasgow, In memory of their dear little Donald' (Henderson was Organist of Glasgow University, where he had entertained Dupré on his British tours). The death of this child inspired from Dupré an eloquent memorial, in a style far removed from the complexities of his contemporary Symphonies. The lament is expressed in B flat minor by the Oboe, above an ostinato chordal accompaniment that evokes the image of a frozen, motionless cortège, reminiscent of Satie's *Gymnopédies*. This is answered by a consoling second theme in the major, a kind of *In Paradisum*; with the entry of the pedals the music takes on the flavor of a gentle angelic procession, with a subtle harmonic texture that is typical of Dupré at his most imaginative. The lament returns, and rises to a powerful but short-lived climax, but the angels naturally have the last word.

IN MEMORIAM, OP. 61

*Prélude — Allegretto — Méditation — Quod libet — Ricercare —
Postlude*

The last major work of Dupré's old age arose from tragic personal circumstances, following the death from cancer of his daughter Marguerite in 1963, at the age of 54. 'The next morning, Dupré played his services at Saint-Sulpice, urged by his wife to do so, and encouraged by his own inner need. As usual, the service was almost entirely improvised. And on this day, as those present will never forget, the strictures of counterpoint, and the hard disciplines of the *ricercar* form, embraced a music so exquisite and so grand that even those downstairs, unaware of the visitors' solemn hush in the organ loft, and of the reason, remarked Dupré's eloquence. 'What has happened to Monsieur Dupré today?', the Curé of Saint-Sulpice recalls a parishioner asking: 'He has surpassed himself.' As always, intense emotion was rendered overpowering by the constraints of form, for Dupré neither violated contrapuntal laws nor took liberties with harmony to achieve his eloquence, though he played with eyes closed and tears trickling down his cheeks.' (Michael Murray)

Simply inscribed 'to my daughter', *In Memoriam* was composed during the next two years, and premiered by Dupré at his 80th birthday recital in Saint-Sulpice on 3rd May 1966. The framing of the whole work by a *Prelude* and *Postlude* reinforces the impression of a formal rite of remembrance, and the intervening movements contain some of Dupré's most intensely personal and moving music.

Dupré had asked to hear his *Lamento* at Marguerite's funeral, and the opening *Prélude* is cast in a similar mould; the contrapuntal development of an elegiac theme alternates with an ethereal *In Paradisum* for the Voix celeste, rising to an anguished climax, and ending in a serene ascent to a cloudless sky. The wayward, dancing *Allegretto* seems to be an evocation of childhood, but the bizarre harmonic language veils the music in a strangely distant, dream-like atmosphere. *Méditation* is simply scored for solo flute and celeste,

the soaring lyrical flute theme supported by evocative tints of harmonic color. The *Quod libet* is a set of eight miniature variations on a six-bar theme, dancing, whimsical, contemplative, but ending in tragedy as the theme gently disintegrates in the bleak final bars.

The sublime six-part *Ricercare* is surely a reflection of Dupré's own improvisation on the occasion described earlier; with two parts each for right hand, left hand and pedal, four contrapuntal developments of the theme unfold in a steady rhythm of even crotchets, in music of inimitable eloquence. The *Postlude* releases all the contained emotion of the preceding movements in a savage burst of energy. Toccata figuration in the form of rapid alternating chords and bristling repeated notes accompanies the legato theme first heard in the pedals, building up an effect of considerable tension; this is briefly dispelled by two more reflective interludes, but finally builds up a full head of steam as the repeated-note figure explodes onto the pedalboard in a coda of defiant and dazzling brilliance.