

150 ANNIVERSARY
FROM SAINT-SULPICE
DANIEL ROTH, ORGAN



### CONTENT

01 Prélude (Symphonie I op.14) 02 Allegretto op.1 03 Andantino (Pièces de fantaisie op.51) 04 Toccata (Pièces de fantaisie op.53) 05 Scherzo (Symphonie II op.20) 06 Romance (Symphonie IV op.32) 07 Final (Symphonie IV op.32) 08 Élégie (Pièces en style libre op.31) 09 Impromptu (Pièces de fantaisie op.54) 10 Carillon de Westminster (Pièces de fantaisie op.54) PRINCIPAL 32 Each piece is introduced by Daniel Roth Organiste titulaire du grand orque de Saint-Sulpice

## INTRODUCTION BY DANIEL ROTH

Louis Vierne's music was already well known to me during my years of study at the Mulhouse Conservatory; at 13-14 years old, I was very fond of virtuosic pieces. I was playing pieces like the **Final** of the Fourth Symphony.

Over the years, pieces like the **Prélude** of the First Symphony, the **Scherzo** of the Second Symphony, the Third Symphony, the **Romance** of the Fourth Symphony, etc. have become particularly dear to me. This is the reason why I chose to record them for this Bluray, some are even rerecordings of LPs in Saint-Ouen (Rouen) and Saint-Antoine des Quinze-Vingts (Paris).

This programme complements the recordings of the first four Symphonies performed on the Aristide Cavaillé-Coll great organ in Saint-Sulpice, which makes this music sound remarkable.

Alternating the melancholic with euphoric, this is a reflection of the very contrasting feelings of the composer who experienced great suffering in his life; this music touches us deeply.



# NOTES ON PIECES BY RICHARD CORSER

Vierne started his Symphonie I op.14 in 1898. Acting as Widor's assistant at Saint-Sulpice introduced Vierne to the enormous potential of Cavaillé-Coll's masterpiece and coupled with the composer's engagement to Arlette Taskin in the autumn of 1898 created a work where one cannot fail to appreciate the joyful confidence of the young Vierne. An informal first audition was given by Widor himself at Vierne's wedding at Saint-Sulpice in April 1899. The symphony was dedicated to Alexandre Guilmant who was so taken with it that he immediately included it in his concert tour of America in 1900. The symphony in reality is more of a great 'Suite' of movements and has a strong Widorian influence although we start to hear Vierne's individual voice particularly in some chromaticism within the harmonic structure. The powerful first movement, **Prélude**, in D minor is marked maestoso and is almost entirely based on the opening bars. These four motives are extensively explored and with increasing detail and thickening of the texture, the music culminates in a thrilling climax on full organ showing Vierne's masterly control and how much he had learned from the great organ at Saint-Sulpice. The climax dies away and the piece ends as calmly as it began.

His first catalogued work, **Allegretto**, dates from around 1894 and based heavily in the style of Widor but already does exhibit some individual characteristics of Vierne.

The **Andantino** in A minor was dedicated to Vierne's assistant and later successor, Léonce de Saint-Martin. As the story goes this piece was composed in one night for the Conservatoire's sight-reading examination. Only an artist of Vierne's ability in composition and improvisation could create so swiftly such a piece.



This famous **Toccata** in B flat minor is one of Vierne's most individual, dramatic and virtuosic pieces. Its almost unstoppable gait, *allegro risoluto*, is interrupted by a second noble theme presented in the pedals still accompanied by streams of semiquavers. We are soon back with the blazing fire of the first theme on the tutti.

The Symphonie II op.20 dates from 1902 and was dedicated to Charles Mutin. Although this work is still very much based in the tradition of Vierne's mentors, it has a strong personality of its own and marks a distinct advance on his earlier works. It is evident that Vierne spent a lot of time over its composition and for the first time, he uses the cyclic form. Claude Debussy, writing in Gil-Blas in February 1903 writes as follows: "Monsieur Vierne's Symphony is a remarkable work; it combines abundant musicianship with ingenious discoveries in the special sonority of the organ. Old J.S. Bach, the father of us all would have been very pleased with Monsieur Vierne." The **Scherzo** in E major is a wonderfully light and appealing piece, marked quasi presto and played mainly on the flutes, is typical of one side of Vierne's musical character. Its feeling of inevitability conceals a clever key scheme but the wit essential to a scherzo predominates and it is over before one realises it.

The Symphonie IV op.32 dates from summer 1914, just after the outbreak of the First World War. It was composed at La Rochelle, where Vierne had spent that summer with friends. He returns to cyclic composition and again, like the preceding symphony the writing is very intense with the movements being short with quite tormented emotional content being controlled by solid structure and clear counterpoint.

This symphony was dedicated to a pupil William C. Carl and was not heard in France until January 1923 during a recital given by the blind organist André Marchal.

It was after this audition that Vierne wrote to Marchal explaining to him that "...you have admirably understood and felt this work, which is brightened for a moment by the fragments of a happy dream and finishes in a fever." With the **Romance** we once again discover the rich vein of lyricism that lies at the heart of Vierne's musical offering. In the **Final** we are swept away by a whirlwind which doesn't seem to reach realisation. Back in G minor both themes return and are combined in a torrent of triplet quavers. Coupled with endless chromaticism this reflects Vierne's inner torment with devastating realism.

The touching nature of the **Élégie** in B flat minor has an almost Fauréan atmosphere with its admirable melody. Vierne uses his ability with chromaticism to its best in this piece and in the middle section we are never too far away from the main theme. The conclusion shows an atmosphere of complete resignation.

The **Impromptu** was dedicated to André Marchal and is the best known of several colourful scherzos to be found in the Pièces de fantaisie. Its lively course is twice interrupted by a more restful interlude for a chromatically harmonised clarinet over a drone bass, before the music vanishes in a puff of smoke over a flourish on the pedals.

The **Carillon de Westminster** was written in the mid 1920's during a relatively happy period in Vierne's life. It is dedicated to Henry Willis builder of the organ in Westminster Cathedral where Vierne had played during a tour of England. It became popular almost overnight and is based on the famous chimes of Big Ben. The composer's pupil Henri Doyen described what happened when Vierne gave an informal first performance after a service at Notre-Dame in December 1927.

"It was one of the rare occasions when I did not witness the clergy and congregation leave the church during the voluntary; everyone to the despair of the verger and sacristans, who had never seen anything like it, waited until the end, and offered a little ovation for the maître when he came down from the organ loft."



#### DANIEL ROTH



**Daniel Roth**, widely acclaimed as one of the leading French organ virtuosos, has held several prestigious positions as both performer and teacher. At the age of twenty he made his debut at the organ of the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur in Montmartre-Paris, as assistant of his teacher, Madame Rolande Falcinelli

32

He later succeded her as titular organist, a post which he held until 1985 when he was appointed titular organist at St-Sulpice, the famous Paris church where his predecessors were Charles-Marie Widor, Marcel Dupré and Jean-Jacques Grunenwald. A former student at the Paris Conservatory, Daniel Roth's teachers have included Marie-Claire Alain and Maurice Durufé. He has won several competitions, among them the Grand Prix de Chartres 1971, interpretation and improvisation.

He is invited to play concerts as a soloist and with famous orchestras. Furthermore he teaches masterclasses and participates on juries for organ competitions throughout the world.

Daniel Roth is also well known for his brilliant improvisations which are regularly included in his concerts programs. He has many recordings to his credit covering pieces of the XVIIth century to the present time. Several of them were rewarded by the critics.

www.danielroth.fr

#### ASSOCIATION POUR LE RAYONNEMENT DES ORGUES ARISTIDE CAVAILLÉ-COLL DE L'ÉGLISE SAINT-SULPICE

The aims of the **Association pour le rayonnement des orgues Aristide Cavaillé-Coll de l'église Saint-Sulpice**, à Paris (AROSS) are to make discover, develop and consolidate the image of Saint-Sulpice organs by organising concerts, masterclasses and actions with schoolchildren.



AROSS does not receive any state or city funding. The organisation of concerts, which must cover the costs of honoraria, transportation, lodging of the artists, communications, etc., as well as the upkeep of the organs, amount to considerable expense.

This special recording will help to defray costs and support the aims of AROSS. Please see our website for more information.

www.aross.fr

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