



INFINITE

Ambient Improvisations at Saint-Ouen

JACOB PURCHES

BASE2 MUSIC

INFINITE

Part I

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| 1. Infinite I Music for two organs | 9:56 |
| 2. Soli deo gloria | 2:55 |
| 3. Infinite II 'Triste' | 2:50 |
| 4. The Highland Piper | 5:29 |
| 5. Mon Coeur | 3:39 |
| 5. Infinite III Coda | 2:12 |

Part II

- | | |
|---|------|
| 6. Prelude, Passacaglia
and Lament, Op.6 | 9:17 |
| 7. Sonorous I | 6:43 |
| 8. Sonorous II | 8:45 |

Total time: 51:45

Part I is dedicated to the memory of
Jean-Paul Imbert 1942 -2025

I N F I N I T E

'Infinite' is a series of ambient improvisations and one written composition for the two organs of Saint-Ouen Abbey, Rouen, France.

Performed in the dead of night, with just a bare lamp to give some light to the darkness, Infinite begins on the Merklin Choir-organ alone. Positioned at the east end of the abbey, its opening chords and first melodic statement establish the harmonic language quietly, without urgency or display. The sound is contained and deliberate, allowing the space to reveal itself gradually. In 5.1 surround sound, these chords are heard distantly, from behind. The tonal centre is A-flat harmonic minor, providing a dark rich coloured harmonic grounding. For around a minute and a half, the music remains suspended. Time settles. The melody repeats with slight inflections, calling out across the length of the building.

The Grand Organ, the celebrated Cavaillé-Coll of Saint-Ouen enters on a low bass, its presence calm yet unmistakable. It does not displace what the Choir Organ has already set in motion; instead, it answers.

The melody returns at a different scale, deepened and grounded, as though heard from another vantage point within the abbey. What follows is a measured exchange between the two instruments: a distant call and response, resonating across the vast interior space.

Around seven minutes in, another voice emerges, the bats of Saint-Ouen. Their ultrasonic calls, slowed into the realm of human hearing, thread through the texture like fleeting shadows beneath the vaults.

The work resists any conventional resolution. Rather than striving toward climax, it sustains a poised equilibrium until forward motion itself feels unnecessary. The Grand Organ gradually melts into the sound of the abbey bells, while the Choir Organ slows to a single, sustained tone before falling silent.

Out of this stillness arises a melancholic melody, a lament. It gives way to a further improvisation, shaped by the influence of Scottish bagpipes, with their distinctive, unwavering drones. Here the mood turns outward and more hopeful. A quiet coda follows, gentle and unforced, allowing the music to recede into silence.

'Infinite' is in memory of my friend and organ teacher,
Jean-Paul Imbert 1942-2025

Prelude, Passacaglia, and Lament, Op. 6

This composed written work by Jacob Purches, was previously released on the album Voyage (Base2 Music) and appears here in a new context.

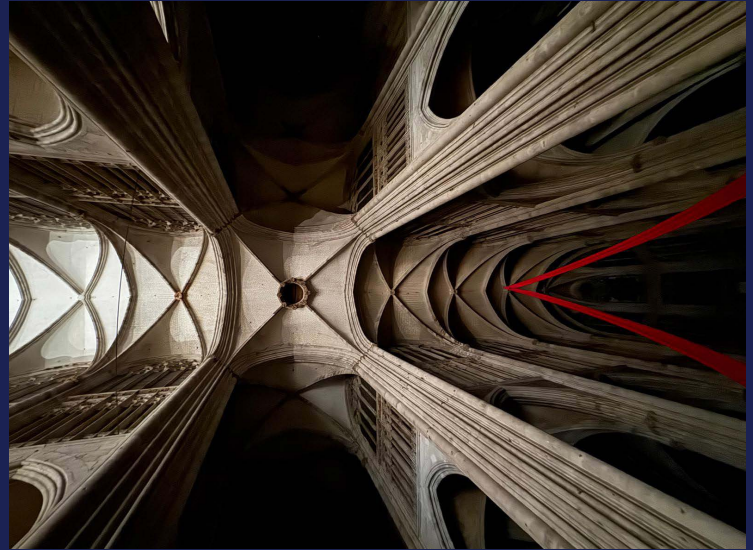
Prelude, Passacaglia, and Lament, Op. 6, is performed by Jean-Baptiste Monnot, Titular Organist of Saint-Ouen, on the Grand Organ.

Prelude presents a slow progression of rich, if not discordant harmonies which support a quiet, two-note fanfare, which becomes melodic material for the rest of the movement and even the other movements. After a reflective coda of slow harmonic progression, a jazzy Passacaglia begins without pause employing a broken octave pattern in the pedals.

Lament closes the cycle, returning to slowly unfolding poetic harmonic progressions in a similar idiom to Prelude.

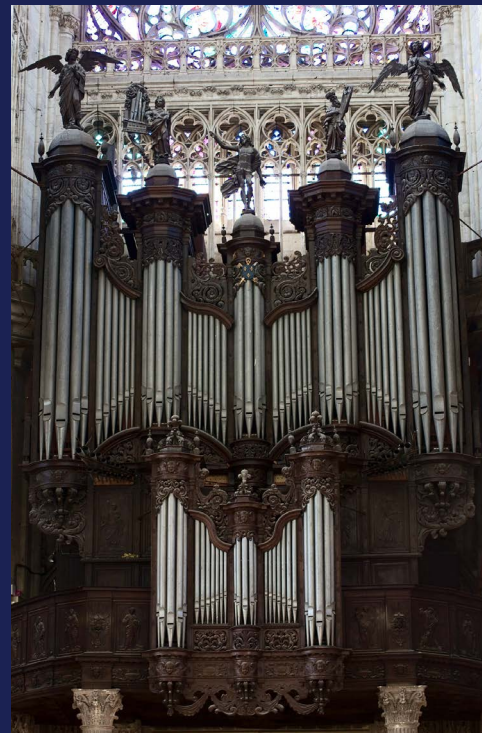
The piece is in five parts:

i) Prelude ii) Intermezzo iii) Pasacaglia iv) Sri v) Lament





Merklin choir organ 1856



Cavaillé-Coll organ 1890

Sonorous I

‘Sonorous I’ and ‘Sonorous II’ are two improvisations recorded in 2023 at the Cavaillé-Coll organ of Saint-Ouen. The inspiration comes from the mysterious combination of this beautiful instrument and the extraordinary size of the acoustics of this magical gothic abbey. It was quite unplanned and spontaneous, which of course is the nature of improvising. Like Jazz, its free form. One, of course, has to be ‘in the mood’.

‘Sonorous I’ inhabits a dark place. A repeating bass pedal motif, first introduced in the upper register anchors the music with a sinister gravity establishing tension from the outset. This persistent ground acts less as a defined key than as a pitch centre: a fixed point around which the harmony revolves. Above it, slow-moving chords unfold, from which melodic lines gradually surface and subside. These inner voices never fully detach themselves - they are absorbed back into the surrounding harmony, creating a sense of inward motion and contained intensity.

As the improvisation develops, both harmony and register begin to widen. Subtle shifts of colour and voicing allow the embedded melodic shapes to emerge with greater clarity, though they remain closely bound to the chordal fabric. The atmosphere, initially compressed and shadowed, slowly gathers breadth and assurance.

The work culminates in a grand pleno, crowned by the organ’s celebrated 32-foot Contra Bombarde. Its vast resonance affirms the space with commanding depth, transforming accumulated tension into a resolution that feels not merely triumphant, but hard-won and complete.

Sonorous II

‘Sonorous II’ follows, more open in character and more immediately communicative. From the outset it is grounded in E minor. Broad, slow-moving harmonic fields create space for a clear melody to rise gently from within the chords, giving the music a sense of clarity, ease, and quiet assurance in its repetition.

As the improvisation unfolds, the sound builds patiently and with intent. Registers widen, colour deepens, and power accumulates through gradual layering rather than harmonic departure. The melody undergoes subtle variations over a recurring bass motif, expanding outward while remaining firmly centred. Instead of moving away from its tonal foundation, the music grows from within it.

An expansive climax reveals the full depth and physical scale of the organ, its resonance anchoring the space with elemental force. Yet at the moment of greatest breadth, the music does not linger. It withdraws swiftly into a brief coda, allowing the climax to feel like something traversed rather than sustained. The closing gestures are restrained and settled. The work comes gently to rest, offering release and a sense of peace.

Credits and Rights

All music improvised and composed by Jacob A. Purches

All music performed by Jacob Purches, except

Prelude, Passacaglia, and Lament, Op. 6,
which is performed by Jean-Baptiste Monnot

Recorded in 5.1 surround sound and stereo by Jacob Purches
at 352 kHz, 32-bit resolution

Microphones: Sennheiser MKH series, Monitors: Vivid Audio

Mastering engineer: Tom Caulfield

Recorded at Abbatiale Saint-Ouen

With thanks to Jean-Baptiste Monnot

Titular Organist of Abbatiale Saint-Ouen, Rouen, France

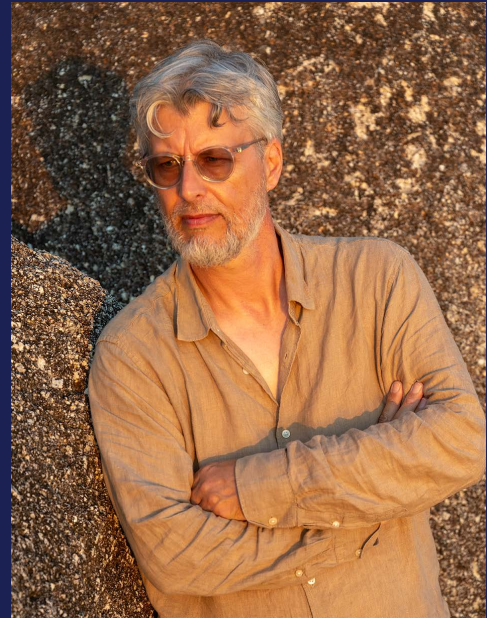
Photograph inside the abbey - Jonathan Thorne. Portrait - Sri Raharti

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