



The Organ At Grace Cathedral, San Francisco

John Fenstermaker plays
French Organ Music

Music By

Balbastre	Vierne
Dandrieu	Widor
Guilain	Alain

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SIDE ONE

Votre Bonté, Grand Dieu	Claude Balbastre	6'50"
Ofertoire; Muzète	Jean François Dandrieu	8'23"
Suite du Premier Ton	Antoine Guilain	9'40"
		Total: 20'15"

THE MUSIC

Ever since the twelfth century when Léonin and Pérotin as organists of Notre-Dame in Paris helped make France the musical center of western civilization, the organ in France has maintained a vitality and popularity peculiar to that country. The rich melodic mine of Gregorian chant, the unbroken emphasis on liturgical improvisation, the imaginative and innovative developments in organ building; all these have been factors in a strong tradition which has produced such composers and performers as François Couperin, César Franck and Olivier Messiaen. This recording is a sampling of the last two and one-half centuries of French organ music. Grace Cathedral is an especially appropriate setting for the performance of this music because of its fine, large organ and excellent acoustics.



SIDE ONE

Carol: "Votre bonté, grand Dieu"	Claude Balbastre	1789-1799
This is a delicate Christmas carol ("Your Goodness, Great God") typical of the many naïve noëls of eighteenth-century France. Balbastre was a pupil of Rameau. Balbastre's light and fanciful style as a player earned him the title of 'organist of the graces'. Until the Revolution he was one of the four organists of Notre-Dame in Paris, each of whom played for three months each year.		
Suite de L'Ofertoire; Muzète	Jean François Dandrieu	1682-1738

Dandrieu, a priest, was organist at a number of Parisian churches and was a member of the French chapel royal. He was also a harpsichordist and composer. The first of these two short pieces is from the Ofertoire in A major. The word musette (archaic spelling: muzète) denotes either an intricate seventeenth-century bellows-blown French bagpipe of highly-developed musical quality, or, a simple air having generally a pedal-bass imitating the drone of a bagpipe. The upper part of the musical form usually abounds in grace notes, further evoking the bagpipe. It is odd that the fashionable instrument became extinct in the latter part of the eighteenth century, while the more primitive mouth-blown bagpipe has survived.

Suite du deuxième Ton	Antoine Guilain	17th century
Plein Jeu		
Trio		
Duo		
Basse de Trompette		
Récit		
Dialogue sur les grands Jeux		
Petit plein Jeu		

Guilain was known in Paris as an excellent organist. Many of the suites were intended for use in worship, the various sections of the suite supplanting certain verses of canticles sung by the choir. This suite appeared in 1706 and is dedicated to another virtuoso of the day, Louis Marchand.

SIDE TWO

Litanies (1939)	Jehan Alain	1911-1940
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A brilliant young composer of great promise and the brother of present-day virtuoso organist Marie-Claire Alain, Jehan Alain was one of the first Frenchmen killed in World War II. His death was a shock to the French musical world. He himself inscribed at the top of this piece:

"Quand l'âme chrétienne ne trouve plus de mots nouveaux dans la détresse pour implorer la miséricorde de Dieu, elle répète sans cesse la même invocation avec une foi vénémente. La raison atteint sa limite. Seule la foi poursuit son ascension."

"When the Christian soul in its distress can no longer find new

words to ask God's mercy, it repeats unceasingly the same prayer with a vehement faith: reason has attained its limit; faith alone can go further."

Chorale (Symphonie II)

Vierne studied under César Franck and Charles Widor at the Paris Conservatoire. He was Widor's assistant at the church of Saint-Sulpice. From there, he was appointed to the post of titular organist at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame at the age of thirty. He is part of the long French tradition of organists, improvisors and composers which has shown such brilliance and vigor. Vierne wrote six 'symphonies' for solo organ, and was working on another at the time of his death. He died dramatically at the console of the great organ of Notre-Dame. This piece is the second movement of his Symphony No. 2 in E minor for organ. It begins with a noble and slow theme, first in the pedals, then played softly in a chorale style. Presently a foreboding triplet theme appears in A-flat minor; this subsides briefly giving way to the first theme again. The theme in minor then reasserts itself and, just when it seems to be gaining ascendancy, the harmonies change suddenly to a major key when the first theme triumphantly sings out in the treble fortissimo, while the triplet theme (now also in the major key) accompanies in the pedals.

Adagio (Symphonie VI)

Widor succeeded Franck as organ professor at the Conservatoire and later followed Dubois as professor of composition. He was organist of Saint-Sulpice in Paris which had the largest organ in France. The church is a vast and reverberant building. This beautiful slow movement employs the string voices of the organ. It is said that Widor composed this piece after hearing a performance of "Tristan und Isolde" by Richard Wagner.



THE ORGAN

The gift of Mrs. Harriet Crocker Alexander, Grace Cathedral's Alexander Memorial Organ was built in 1934 by the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company of Boston, Massachusetts, as their Opus 910. G. Donald Harrison, technical director of the firm, was responsible for the design of the instrument in consultation with J. Sidney Lewis (then organist of Grace Cathedral). With them were also associated Wallace A. Sabin, Warren D. Allen and Stanley W. Williams, then Pacific coast representative of Aeolian-Skinner. Harrison sought to combine the beautiful, ethereal orchestral voices (perfected by Ernest M. Skinner) with the classical flue and reed ensembles which are necessary for the successful performance of organ literature written prior to the nineteenth century. Harrison called this kind of eclectic instrument the "American Classic Organ." The Grace Cathedral organ is one of the finest of his early instruments in this style.

As originally installed in 1934, the organ consisted of the following divisions: Choir, Great, Swell, Solo and Pedal. All of these were housed behind carved organ cases located high on the North wall (see cover) and South wall of the Choir.

In 1952, Aeolian-Skinner, under the direction of Harrison, made several alterations and additions to the instrument as well as minor tonal revisions.

The interior mechanisms of the console were replaced in 1968 by the Ruffatti company of Italy. Casavant-Frères of Quebec built two new divisions for the organ in 1972: a commanding Bombarde organ, located high on the liturgical east wall, speaking down the length of the nave; and a Gallery division located in the rear gallery, three hundred feet from the main organ, which provides additional support for congregational singing. A stop list is enclosed in the jacket.

All of the original nine manual windchests are of the electro-pneumatic Pitman

SIDE TWO

Litanies	Jehan Alain	5'20"
Chorale (Symphonie II)	Louis Vierne	8'30"
Adagio (Symphonie VI)	Charles Marie Widor	6'45"
		Total: 20'35"

type, originally designed by Ernest M. Skinner. Each pipe has a small pouch valve directly beneath its toe-hole and is exhausted by a double primary action. The majority of the pipes longer than four feet in length are installed on off-set chests.

Wind for all original divisions is supplied by a twenty-horsepower Spencer turbine, which delivers wind rated at seven inches of water and at fifteen. Sixteen regulators are employed to deliver from three-inch to fifteen-inch pressure to the many chests.

The organ consists of one hundred twenty-three ranks comprising 7,286 pipes. Since 1960, the maintenance, tuning and restoration of the cathedral's organs has been conducted by Edward M. Stout III, Curator of Musical Instruments.



THE ARTIST

John Fenstermaker is organist and choirmaster of Grace Cathedral. He began the study of piano at the age of seven and the organ at fourteen. He was a choirboy at Trinity Parish in Indianapolis, his home town. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, with high honors in French and music, and a Master's degree from the College of Church Musicians in Washington, D.C. He studied at the Sorbonne (University of Paris) and with André Marchal, noted French organist and scholar.

In Washington he studied composition with Leo Sowerby. He is an Associate of the American Guild of Organists, and was a Fellow in Harpsichord at Tanglewood (Berkshire Music Center) under Igor Kipnis. He has translated Marcel Dupré's *Traité d'Improvisation à l'Orgue* (Organ Improvisation, published by Leduc), the author's major treatise on that subject. He was a student and assistant of Paul Callaway at the Washington National Cathedral, and studied for one year at Canterbury Cathedral with Allan Wicks before coming to Grace Cathedral in 1971.

THE RECORDING

David Wilson utilized two Schoeps transformerless omnidirectional condenser microphones to capture the unique sound of Grace Cathedral. Extensive tests spanning more than fourteen months had eliminated numerous other microphone configurations. The Schoeps consistently exhibited the smoothest frequency response, lowest IM distortion, and the least midrange nasality of any of the units tested. The microphones were carefully spaced to minimize out-of-phase bass pick-up. Coincident pairs of capsules were tested and rejected for this record because, while sounding accurate over headphones, they simply did not provide to the listener of loudspeakers a convincing sense of the cathedral's spacious ambience. A custom-built vacuum tube microphone preamp was found to yield the most natural tonal and spatial characteristics. Scotch 250 Studio Mastering Tape was selected because of its superior S/N ratio and low asperity modulation. Lacquers were cut using high quality half-speed mastering, with minimal signal processing, at the JVC Cutting Center. Superb matrixing at Sheffield Lab produced flawless stampers. Pressing was done in Swedish Alpha Toolpresses using virgin vinyl. Reference equipment included the Denon 103D cartridge, Dahlquist DQ-10a, RTR ESR-15 electrostatics, Magnaplanar Tympant 1D and KEF-105 loudspeakers. A high performance subwoofer system was, of course, included.

Recording Direction: David Wilson

Technical Assistance: Craig Good

Mastering Engineer: Bruce Leek

Matrix Engineer: Richard Doss

Manufactured By: Europadisk

Photographs: David Haygood

Produced By: Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, CA 94108

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PRODUCED BY: Wilson Audiophile Recordings, LLC

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PROJECT MANAGER: Daryl C. Wilson

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TRANSFER EDITING: Bruce Brown, Puget Sound Studios

SONIC EVALUATION: David A. Wilson, Sheryl Lee Wilson, Daryl C. Wilson

DIRECTOR OF MORAL SUPPORT: Sasha Wilson

TECHNICAL NOTES:

Description of equipment and processes used for Master Tape transfers at
Puget Sound Studios:

PUGET SOUND STUDIOS RECEIVED THE TAPES FROM WILSON AUDIOPHILE RECORDINGS, LLC, IN A WOODEN CRATE. MASTER TAPES WERE THEN CATALOGUED IN AN EXCEL SPREADSHEET. EACH MASTER TAPE WAS THEN INSPECTED, CLEANED WITH AN ANTI-FUNGAL SOLUTION, AND THEN A LUBRICANT WAS APPLIED TO PREPARE THE MASTER TAPES FOR THE TRANSFER PROCESS. APPROXIMATELY 8 OF THE FIRST 13 REELS HAD TO BE BAKED TO REFORMULATE THE BINDING. THIS WAS DONE IN AN INCUBATOR AT 135 DEGREES FOR 24 HOURS AND THEN THEY WERE LEFT TO COOL BACK DOWN TO ROOM TEMPERATURE FOR THE NEXT 24 HOURS. ALL SPLICES WERE INSPECTED AND REPAIRED, IF NECESSARY.

EACH TRANSFER WAS EXECUTED ON A STUDER A-80 RC MK II, WHICH HAD EITHER A FLUX MAGNETICS EXTENDED RESPONSE REPRO HEAD OR A WOLKE DIN BUTTERFLY REPRO HEAD. CUSTOM MODIFICATIONS TO THE MACHINES HAVE BEEN PERFORMED BY JOHN FRENCH AND/OR KI CHOI.

EACH MASTER TAPE WAS STORED BY WILSON AUDIOPHILE "TAILS-OUT" IN WHICH PUGET SOUND STUDIOS DID A LIBRARY WIND TO THE TAKE-UP REEL. ALL LEVELS WERE SET ACCORDING TO INCLUDED EQ SHEETS AND EACH 1KHZ TONE WAS FURTHER SET AT PRECISELY 1KHZ, VIA A CUSTOM VARI-SPEED ADJUSTMENT. THIS PROVIDED THE EXACT SPEED THE MASTER TAPES WERE RECORDED AT. ALL CABLING USED IN THIS PROCESS WAS JPS LABS ALUMINATA AND ELECTRICAL POWER WAS PROVIDED BY AN EQUI=TECH BALANCED WALL CABINET USING OYAIDE RECEPTACLES.

A TOTAL OF FIVE DIFFERENT ANALOG-TO-DIGITAL CONVERTERS WERE USED TO PROVIDE SAMPLES FOR THE WILSONS TO EVALUATE. ULTIMATELY AN EMM LABS ADC-8 MK IV, CUSTOM MODIFIED BY ANDREAS KOCH, WAS CHOSEN BY DAVE AND DARYL WILSON FOR THE TRANSFERS INTO A SONOMA DSD WORKSTATION FOR CAPTURE AND EDITING. ALL SIGNALS WERE ROUTED THROUGH A RUPERT NEVE ANALOG MASTERING CONSOLE IF ANY GAIN, PANNING, OR EQ CHANGES NEEDED TO BE MADE.

ALL DSD FILES WERE TRANSFERRED INTO A MERGING TECHNOLOGIES PYRAMIX DSD/DXD MASSCORE WORKSTATION FOR SAMPLE RATE CONVERSION, FORMAT CONVERSION, AND META-DATA TAGGING. THE PYRAMIX APODIZING FILTER WAS USED FOR CONVERSION TO PCM. FILES WERE THEN UPLOADED TO A SECURE SERVER FOR THE WILSONS TO DOWNLOAD AND QA.

Description of the Equipment used in the Provo, Utah "Wilson Music Room" that Wilson Audiophile Recordings, LLC put to use for Sonic Evaluation:

SPEAKERS: WILSON AUDIO ALEXANDRIA XLF, THOR'S HAMMER
ELECTRONICS: APPLE MAC MINI, AMARRA & AUDIRVANA PLUS, WEISS INT 202, AUDIO RESEARCH DAC8, AUDIO RESEARCH 40TH ANNIVERSARY PRE-AMP, VTL SIEGFRIED AND/OR D'AGOSTINO MOMENTUM AMPLIFIERS
CABLES: AUDIOQUEST FIREWIRE, TRANSPARENT OPUS

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