

# Principal Composers for the Pipe Organ

## from the Renaissance to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Including brief biographical and technical information,  
with selected references and musical examples

Compiled for *POPs for KIDs*, the Children's Pipe Organ Project  
of the Wichita Chapter of the American Guild of Organists,  
by Carrol Hassman, FAGO, ChM,

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## Credits for Facts and Performances Cited

Almost all details in the articles below were gleaned from *Wikipedia* (and some of their own listed sources).

All but a very few of the musical and video examples are drawn from postings on YouTube.

The section of J.S. Bach also owes credit to Corliss Arnold's *Organ Literature: a Comprehensive Survey*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.<sup>1</sup>

*However, the Italicized interpolations, and many of the texts, are my own. Feedback will be appreciated.*

— [Carrol Hassman](#), FAGO, ChM, Wichita Chapter AGO

## Earliest History of the Organ as an Instrument

See the *Wikipedia* article on the Pipe Organ in Antiquity:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pipe\\_Organ#Antiquity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pipe_Organ#Antiquity)

## Earliest Notated Keyboard Music, Late Medieval Period

Like early music for the lute, the earliest organ music is notated in Tablature, not in the musical staff notation we know today. Organists compiled music books for their own use, in bound manuscripts called "Codices." (One such manuscript is called a "Codex.") Today, when we play the music, it has to be "translated," as it were [technically, "transcribed"], into modern notation.

— Handwritten example of Tablature, with modern notation given below it:

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2a/Robertsbridgecodex\\_fol44r.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2a/Robertsbridgecodex_fol44r.jpg)

— [Anonymous] — *Adesto* from the *Robertsbridge Codex*, c. 1360:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QF4BCKYZxc&feature=results\\_video&playnext=1&list=PLA927DA8352048BA6](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QF4BCKYZxc&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PLA927DA8352048BA6). (This musical example is followed by others of similar very early organ music, so one can have a whole listening period on this music alone. It has an ancient charm all its own.)

## Time-line: Some Major Organ Composers from the Renaissance to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organ\\_repertoire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organ_repertoire). This Wikipedia time-line has biographical links to all the composers listed on it. While the composer list is by no means complete, it does give most of the well-known composers, up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The organ has more music written for it than exists for any other individual instrument, and complete listings of the composers, their music, and brief associated histories would require many volumes. Here in this short essay, we're just "hitting the highlights." (The links in this time-line lead to full Wikipedia articles, which are generally more extensive than we need — hence, the abbreviated pieces below, noting the main points.)

— C.H.

## Early Renaissance

Arnolt Schlick (c. 1455–1521) — *Maria zart* from *Tablature etlicher Lobegesang*, 1512

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvT8vJ3VXcs&feature=autoplay&list=PLA927DA8352048BA6&lf=results\\_video&playnext=12](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvT8vJ3VXcs&feature=autoplay&list=PLA927DA8352048BA6&lf=results_video&playnext=12)

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Arnolt Schlick served as court organist to the German Prince-Elector of the Palatinate, a Rhine Valley geographical division of the Holy Roman Empire, its capital then in Heidelberg, Germany. The court where he worked evidently valued him very highly, as he was paid twice as much as the next-highest-paid court musician, and at a wage which equaled that of court treasurer.

Schlick was blind, possibly from birth; still, he became not only a famous organist and composer, but also an author who was often consulted about organs and organ building. His most important book was called a *Spiegel...*, a **Mirror of Organ Builders and Organists**. Published in 1511, it was the first book on organ building and performance.

Schlick's organ music influenced other composers, and featured sophisticated [cantus firmus](#) techniques, multiple independent musical lines, and extensive [imitation](#). Thus, his work foreshadowed such features in *Baroque* music by about a hundred years, proving him to be an important, pivotal composer in the development of early keyboard music. [See a *facsimile of Schlick's published music in tablature* [here](#).]

### [English, French, Italian, and Spanish Organs up to the Protestant Reformation \(c. 1525\)](#)

*The organ in these Catholic countries was not built in order to accompany or lead the singing of the congregation. Instead, it provided pitches, made music in alternation with the choir, and played solo music to accompany the mass. Pedal keyboards were either unusual or quite limited. German and Northern European organs were, by contrast, much more developed at this time, and fell easily into the role of accompanying the congregation as the Lutheran Reformation spread there.*

*The English Church separated from Rome in 1538, but its music continued in the same basic style, merely incorporating more English into the mass. Later, after the civil war that deposed the English monarchy (1642-1651), a Puritan ethic was forced upon the English church. There is no evidence that they destroyed organs during that time, but some were definitely removed from the churches, and there is proof that worship spaces were razed, prayer books and music scores burned, and none but the simplest of music allowed. "Fancier" musical elements returned to favor with the Restoration (1660), but they required time to rebuild; then organ builders also became active again.*

### Italian "High Renaissance"

Andrea Gabrieli (1532–1585) — *Intonazione*: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev4KxbJE\\_hc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev4KxbJE_hc)

Giovanni Gabrieli (1554–1612) — *Canzona*: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Z\\_hpgdcr8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Z_hpgdcr8)

Both members of the "Venetian School" of composers, Andrea Gabrieli was the uncle of Giovanni, and both were organists and music directors at St. Mark's Church in Venice, Italy. This large church had many galleries (or balconies), and music there often featured choirs of singers, instrumentalists, and organs echoing one another back and forth across the room, in a musical style which became known as "[concertato](#)." (Such music is also called "polychoral," because it involves "many choirs.") This style led eventually to the form we know today as the *concerto*.

Andrea Gabrieli taught students from all over Europe, including his nephew Giovanni, as well as an important German composer, Hans Leo Hassler, who took the *concertato* style back to Germany.

[The Italian organ of the Renaissance and early Baroque had no pedal keyboard. The organ *toccata* there is literally a “touch piece,” so it usually includes scales and fancy “passage-work” for the fingers; however, it is not necessarily soft or loud. In addition, the tempo in the shorter toccatas (“Intonations”) and in larger toccatas (major pieces on their own) is always free and improvisatory.]

## Italian Late Renaissance into Early Baroque

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643) — *Toccata VII* from Book 1:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zWfBWBsclQ&feature=related>

[This *Toccata* is played on a one-manual organ. Listen for the changes in organ sound — the stop changes — for the various sections.]

Frescobaldi, one of the most important composers of keyboard music in the late Renaissance and early Baroque, was born in Ferrara, Italy. A child prodigy, he began his study there, and was influenced by a large number of important Italian composers. He left Ferrara in his early twenties, and was subsequently appointed organist of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, serving in that capacity from 1608–1628, and again from 1634 until his death.

Critics acknowledged Frescobaldi as the single greatest trendsetter of keyboard music in his time, and his eight collections of keyboard music were widely circulated, reprinted both in his time and in following centuries. His last set of keyboard music was for church use, the 1635 *Fiori musicali* (“Musical Flowers”), and examples from that volume were used as models of strict 16<sup>th</sup> century counterpoint, even into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His work influenced the south German/Austrian organ composer, [Johann Jakob Froberger](#), as well as composers outside Italy, such as Henry Purcell, Johann Pachelbel, and J.S. Bach. The *stylus fantasticus* (“fantasy style”) of his *toccatas*, developed from his Italian predecessors, was passed on through his student Froberger to the organists of southern Germany, and even exerted some influence on the North German Organ School

## French Late Renaissance into Early Baroque

Jean Titelouze (c.1562–1633) — Hymn verset, *Ad coenam Agni providi*, v. 2:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjPSWOAjPxx&feature=related>

*A note on the word verset (a “little verse”) and alternatim practice: Throughout Europe in the 16-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was common to alternate, in sections called “versets,” the unison [plainsong](#) chants with [polyphonic](#) [multiple-voiced] musical settings. The polyphony could be supplied by the choir’s own settings (with words), or by the organ playing its versets (of course, without words).*

*There is no direct evidence except common sense to tell us how the first verset was performed; but, in the case of the Titelouze hymns, since he always set the melody intact in the first verse, it may well have been the organ that played an “introduction.” Because he named his versets in the Magnificat chants, we can also see that the organ also began them. In other alternatim settings of chants for the mass, the beginning phrase [“incipit”] would likely have been sung in the plainsong.*

*Ad coenam Agni providi is an eight-verse vesper hymn for Eastertide, and Titelouze provides four versets. This setting is a little fugue, and the following text may well be one organ is delivering.*

Upon the Altar of the Cross  
His Body hath redeemed our loss:  
and tasting of his roseate Blood,  
our life is hid with Him in God. . [Translation by J.M. Neale (1818-1866.)]

[The verset above is played on an historic organ from the time of Titelouze, and the video shows the short pedal keys common in French organs of the day. While four distinct “voices” appear in the music, the organist has divided them to play the top two on flutes in the right hand, the tenor on an interesting sounding reed stop, and the bass on a flute in the pedal. These sounds, along with the tremulant, which shakes the organ’s wind supply to form a vibrato, make for a very colorful result.]

— Hymn verset, *Ave maris stella*, v. 2:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bT\\_OeWWBSTY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bT_OeWWBSTY&feature=related)

[This second example is played with all voices on a single manual, demonstrating more clearly the way the four parts appear in the notation itself for all the Titelouze hymns.]

The organ music of Jean Titelouze is firmly rooted in the strict polyphony of the Renaissance. Though this makes his music different from that of the distinctive style used by later composers of the “French classic” (their own term for their “music in the Baroque period), the hymn versets and Magnificat settings of Titelouze were the first published French organ music. Thus, he is widely regarded as the first composer of the French Organ School, and his influence may be seen in some fugue and hymn-like movements written by the French organ composers that followed him.

Titelouze was born and educated in St. Omer, France, his exact birth date unknown. By 1585, he had entered the priesthood and was serving as organist at the St. Omer Cathedral; and in 1588 he took over the position as organist at the Rouen Cathedral, where he remained until his death. All his music that remains is based on plainsong melodies. His collection of eight [plainchant](#) *Hymnes de l'Église* (“Hymns of the Church”) was published in 1624, and his eight Magnificat settings (one in each of the eight church modes) followed in 1626.

## Northern European Late Renaissance into Early Baroque

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621) — *Echo Fantasia à 4*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ehEW03bOeI>

The Dutch-born Sweelinck’s paternal grandfather, his father, and an uncle were also organists. He himself became a teacher and composer of great influence all across Northern Europe, and some of his compositions appear as far west as England, in the keyboard player’s manuscript later called the [Fitzwilliam Virginal Book](#). Among many others, Sweelinck’s pupils also included the core group of those performers and composers who were to become the “North German Organ School.”

Sweelinck's pupils included the core of what was to become the [north German organ school](#): [Jacob Praetorius II](#), [Heinrich Scheidemann](#), [Paul Siefert](#), [Melchior Schildt](#) and [Samuel](#) and [Gottfried Scheidt](#). Students of Sweelinck were seen as musicians against whom other organists were measured, Sweelinck known in Germany as the "maker of organists." His Dutch pupils were undoubtedly many, but none of them became composers of note. Sweelinck, however, influenced the development of the Dutch organ school, as is shown in the work of later composers. Sweelinck, in the

course of his career, had set music to the liturgies of Roman Catholicism, Calvinism and Lutheranism. He was the most important composer of the musically rich "golden era" of the Netherlands.

Organs in Northern Europe had been among the very first to have more than one manual keyboard, as well as extensive pedal keyboards, and a number of Sweelinck's compositions feature echo effects where the organist moves from a louder sound on one manual to a quieter echo on another.

## Baroque: the North German Organ School

Dieterich Buxtehude (c. 1637–1707) — Toccata in D minor:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjHkzqSOxnw&feature=related>

Buxtehude was born in Helsingborg, then a city of Denmark but given over to Sweden in his lifetime. First exposed to the organ by his organist father, Buxtehude took his own first organ position at a church in Helsingborg in 1657. By 1668, he had moved to Lübeck, Germany, where he assumed the post as organist at the Marienkirke ("Marian Church"), marrying the daughter of his predecessor Franz Tunder, and also taking over Tunder's duties as Church Bookkeeper.

Buxtehude's principal influence in his time came through a series of concerts begun by Tunder, called *Abendmusik* ("Evening Music"). These programs became quite famous and they attracted musicians, including organists and composers, from all over Germany. Among them were George Frederick Händel and the young Johann Sebastian Bach. At the age of 19, the young Johann Sebastian *walked* about 240 miles to hear Buxtehude and the Lübeck concerts, staying a whole three months — as he said, "to comprehend one thing and another about his art."

Though Buxtehude composed in all the musical styles of his day, many of these compositions have been lost. Had it not been for other organists making copies for their own use, we would not have the large body of organ music that remains. (There is evidence, for instance, that his oratorios influenced numerous other composers, but no music has been found, only copies of the words.)

His organ music features two distinctive things. The first is his treatment of **chorale** melodies (the German hymn of his day) in what is called "florid style"; in other words, he made the melodies "flowery" with musical decoration. Chorale preludes in this style borrow from an earlier version of the [chorale motet](#), with each section of the melody being first introduced by [imitation](#) in the underlying parts, before the [cantus firmus](#) melody appears, often in the soprano voice. In the florid organ version, the highly decorated chorale melody appears on a solo sound from a different manual. [A short example is Buxtehude's chorale prelude on [Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland](#) ("Savior of the Nations, Come.") Compare also J.S. Bach's later, more elaborate setting of [Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland](#), also written in florid style.]

Second: up to Buxtehude's time, free-style North German organ pieces — Preludes, Toccatas, and Fantasies — were generally organized in five (or sometimes seven) sections. These individual parts would alternate free-style, recitative or toccata-like sections with sections of stricter, imitative counterpoint (little fugues). Many of Buxtehude's free-style compositions used this format — as did just a few of Bach's after him. However, unusual in his day, Buxtehude also wrote a number of Preludes and Toccatas where there were just *two* sections: one in the free style, and a second that featured imitation only. The result, then, is the division into a "Prelude and Fugue" or a "Toccatas and Fugue" that we see much more frequently in the music of Bach.

For further listening: *The Toccata in the link above is one of the multi-sectioned free-style pieces. For an example of Buxtehude's two-section format, listen to his [Toccata and Fugue in F major](#). (The music part of this video runs about 5 minutes.) A grand example of Bach's combining both five-part and two part formats is his great [Fantasy and Fugue in G minor](#) (considerably longer), where the Fantasy itself is in five sections, and an independent Fugue follows that. (For a different performance, click [here](#).)*

## Baroque: South German Organ School

Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706) — *Der Tag, der ist so freundenreich*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQjJ6RcNTZM&feature=fvsr>

[*The sung poetry of the English translation for this Christmas chorale is “O hail this brightest day of days,” translated by Charles Stanford Terry (1864–1936). More literally, the title means “The day which is so rich in friends....” Wolfgang Rusbaum, the organist here, is enjoying the bright, buzzy sounds of the reed stops.*]

— *Toccata in E minor*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBUmbXMj-rM>

[*Pachelbel's Organ toccatas reflect the freer, Italianate influence of Frescobaldi and the other south German and Austrian organists.*]

Pachelbel was born in Nuremberg, in southern Germany, and demonstrated exceptional academic and musical aptitude as a young student. At the age of 16, he went to university and also took his first church position. After some financial difficulties with school, he resumed study as a scholarship student at the *Gymnasium Poeticum* in Regensburg. His organ teacher there had studied with Johann Kaspar Kerll, a musician strongly influenced by the Italian composers; and it is likely that at this time Pachelbel began to develop an interest in contemporary Italian music, as well as the music of the Catholic church. (Northern Germany was strongly Protestant, but southern Germany and Austria still had large Catholic populations.)

From 1673, Pachelbel spent five years living in Vienna, the cosmopolitan cultural center of the [Hapsburg Empire](#), there absorbing the music of Catholic composers from southern Germany and from Italy. It is possible that the young Pachelbel studied with Johann Kaspar Kerll there too at this time, as Kerll retired to Vienna in 1674.

In 1677, Pachelbel accepted a position in central Germany at Eisenach, the home of J.S. Bach's father, Johann Ambrosius Bach. A close friend of the Bach family, Pachelbel served as godfather to J.S. Bach's older sister Johanna and as teacher to his older brother Johann Christoph.

After a year in Eisenach, Pachelbel moved to the nearby town of Erfurt, where he spent twelve years as organist of the *Predigerkirche* (the “Preacher's Church”). (In Erfurt, he rented, and then bought his home from a member of the extended Bach family, another Johann Christoph.) Then, beginning in 1690, he served two years as court organist in Stuttgart, followed by two years as town organist in Gotha; finally, he moved back to Nuremberg, where he lived until his death. Aside from the five years in Vienna, Pachelbel spent all his life in central or southern Germany.

Pachelbel's organ chorales — like those of the South German School in general — are usually relatively simple, and often written for manuals only. This is partly due to the Lutheran practice of singing the chorales in the home, where household instruments like [clavichords](#) or [virginals](#) would be used to introduce the chorale (with the chorale *prelude*) and then to accompany the singing. Keeping the chorale preludes simple made them more useful in these situations.

To an extent, the degree of development for organs in southern Germany also played a role in the relative simplicity of all the organ works. As a rule, these organs were neither as complex nor as versatile as the larger North German instruments, often containing only two manuals and a modest pedal division. In truth, church music in the Italianate, Catholic style simply required less aggressive roles for the instrument, and all the organ music reflects that fact.

## French High Baroque<sup>2</sup>

François Couperin, “le Grande” (1668–1733) — *Tierce en taille* (organ “cornet” in tenor) from *Mass for the Convents*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbzdRZhtwA>

[The Tierce is a voice of the Cornet sound (pronounced “kor-nay”). The tierce reinforces the fifth “partial” of the [harmonic series](#) that makes up every musical sound. Its pitch-length at the organ equals 8' divided by the number of the partial, 5, or 8/5. Thus, a Tierce is a 1 3/5' stop; it is usually used with the Nasard 2 2/3 (which reinforces the third partial). All stops that have fractions in their foot-lengths sound off-unison pitches. In the tenor range, the Tierce is particularly distinctive, as the tenor hovers around the lowest pitches in which the Tierce can blend well with the fundamental 8' tone. (Clarinets have strong third and fifth partials in their basic tonal makeup — but the organ's Cornet is a “composite sound,” certainly not a clarinet! The cromorne in the second example is more like a clarinet, though its reed makes it a very buzzy and raucous one!)]

— *Cromorne en taille* from *Mass for the Convents*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5h-Xn5mTOw&feature=related>

[This historic organ has some noisy pedal trackers, but the Cromorne makes a wonderfully big sound. The cromorne stop imitates an early crooked, double-reed instrument; sets of them can be seen and heard [here](#) and [here](#). For centuries organ builders have “invented” stops that imitate the sounds of various other instruments, and such imitative stops will be seen in looking at the list of stops for almost any organ.]

The Parisian-born François Couperin was one of a large family of musicians, and in his later years he was called Couperin “*le Grande*” (“the Great”), to distinguish him from other members of the family. His first music study was with his father Charles, who was organist at the Church of St. Gervais in Paris. Charles died when little François was 10; but, after a few years for growing, François inherited the St. Gervais position. In 1693, Couperin passed that post on to his cousin Nicolas, as he went to the Chapelle Royale (“Royal Chapel”), succeeding one of his teachers, Jacques-Denis Thomelin, as Organist to the King (Louis XIV) — the best post in the land. In 1717,

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<sup>2</sup> Although music of other High Baroque composers — for instance, Bach, Händel, Telemann, and Vivaldi — exhibited a high degree of “pan-European” similarity, the music of the French Baroque composers remained distinctively French. By 1725 or so, along with art of the day, it moved to a simpler, more light-hearted style that can be labeled “Rococo.” (See Clérambault below.)



he further became the court organist and composer, leading “music of the Kings chamber,” usually weekly musical concerts with harpsichord and other instruments.

Couperin’s most famous book, *L’art de toucher le clavecin* (“The Art of Harpsichord Playing”, published in 1716), contains suggestions for fingerings, touch, ornamentation (trills and such) and other features of keyboard technique. Couperin’s four volumes of harpsichord music, published in Paris in 1713, 1717, 1722, and 1730, contain over 230 individual pieces which can be played on solo harpsichord or performed as small chamber works. Many of Couperin’s keyboard pieces have evocative, picturesque titles, and they have been likened to miniature tone poems. These features particularly attracted [Richard Strauss](#), who orchestrated some of them.

Only one, early collection of organ music by Couperin survives, the *Pièces d’orgue* (“Pieces for the Organ”), the first manuscript from around 1690. It consists of full pieces and plainsong versets for two organ masses, one mass for the parishes and secular churches “pour les fêtes solennelles” (“for solemn festivals”), and another for the convents. [Both pieces in the links above come from the Mass for the Convents, which contained more modest pieces written for the smaller organs and less celebratory liturgies found in the houses of religious orders. These pieces quote no plainsong themes, as each of the various convents and monasteries maintained its own non-standard body of chant.] His practice in both the mass settings follows that of French Baroque composers who had preceded him, among them [Nivers](#), [Lebègue](#), [Boyvin](#), and others.

There is evidence that Bach knew and learned Couperin’s music; Bach certainly used Couperin’s system of trill notation. [Johannes Brahms](#)’ piano music was also influenced by the keyboard music of Couperin. Brahms performed Couperin’s keyboard music in public and contributed to the first complete edition of Couperin’s *Pièces de clavecin* by [Friedrich Chrysander](#) in the 1880s.

## French High Baroque

Nicolas de Grigny (1672–1703) — *Organ Mass*, last verset of the *Gloria*, a *Dialogue sur les Grands Jeux* (“full choruses”): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07sznl6Wei8>

[*This composition is performed on a new organ in Karlsruhe, Germany, just across the border with French Alsace — around 240 miles from Reims, where De Grigny was born, and about 55 miles from Strasbourg, the Alsatian capital. The new organ was built especially to honor the French-style organs of 18<sup>th</sup> century builder Andreas Silbermann, whose base was Strasbourg. Silbermann’s younger brother Gottlieb built German-style organs in central Germany, many known by J.S. Bach.*]

Nicolas de Grigny died young, and left only one surviving volume of organ music, his *Premier livre d’orgue*; but, together with the work of François Couperin, it represents the pinnacle of organ music in the French High Baroque. From yet another family of organists, De Grigny was born in Reims, where his father was organist at Reims Cathedral; his grandfather, at the Basilica of St. Pierre; and his uncle, at the Basilica of St. Hilaire.

The young Nicolas studied in Paris with a famous organ teacher, [Nicolas Lebègue](#), and there he was organist at the Church of St. Denis from 1693 to 1695. He was married there too, but by 1696, when his first child was born, he had returned to Reims. Late in 1697, he was appointed organist at the Reims Cathedral; but he died prematurely in 1703, aged 31. Through the efforts of his widow, De Grigny’s *Livre d’orgue* was reissued in 1711. The collection became well known abroad, and there is evidence that Bach made a copy of it in 1713.

## High Baroque

George Fredrick Händel (1685-1759) — Organ Concerto, Op. 7, No. 4:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsAzR6Zu2Gc&feature=related>

[While Händel was an organist, his compositions for the organ consist primarily of the sixteen organ concertos of opus 4 and opus 7, which were published and popularized in his lifetime. Even though these organ compositions are few, they are staples of their genre. The link above shows a strong and compelling performance, though both orchestra and organ are probably larger than Händel would have used in his own time. He played many of these concertos between the acts and in the intermissions of his operas and oratorios.]

Händel was born in Halle, Germany, in what was then the Duchy of Magdeburg. According to Händel's first biographer, John Mainwaring, the young George Frederick "had discovered such a strong propensity to Music, that his father who always intended him for the study of the Civil Law, had reason to be alarmed. He strictly forbade the young man to 'meddle' with any musical instrument. But Händel found means to get a little [clavichord](#) privately conveyed to a room at the top of the house. To this room he constantly stole when the family was asleep." At an early age, then, Händel became a skilful performer on the harpsichord and pipe organ.

One of Händel's close relatives was employed by Duke Johann Adolf in Weissenfels, and when Händel and his father travelled there to visit, he and the Duke convinced his father to allow him to study with Halle organist [Frederick Wilhelm Zachow](#), who taught Händel musical counterpoint, as well as violin, oboe, harpsichord, and organ playing.

At the age of 17, when he began the study of Law to satisfy his father, the young musician was also appointed to the post as organist at the former Cathedral in Halle, which had become an Evangelical Reformed Church. (This was the only church organ position Händel was ever to hold.) Whether it was the law, or the church that led to his dissatisfaction, he moved to Hamburg in 1703, to become a violinist and harpsichordist in the Hamburg Opera. From that point, his career veered toward the composition of dramatic and orchestral music.

In 1706, lured to Italy by the Italians he met in Hamburg, Händel expanded his operatic composition "for the benefit of clergy," incorporating multi-movement Psalm settings and oratorios into his output.

He moved to London in 1710, to serve as Music Master to the German Prince George, Elector of Hanover (who in 1714 would become King George I of Great Britain); and in 1712, he decided to settle permanently in London, where he had developed a number of wealthy patrons. He remained there until his death, working with and even himself helping to establish a number of London opera houses.

One of these new houses was the Royal Academy of Music, which, though troubled politically, was a tremendous musical success. The Royal Academy of Music remains a strong institution to this day.

Through all this time, Händel himself was in a rather curious political position: he was a German-born composer writing Italian music in England. However, through his years there, he himself became a proverbial English institution.

## High Baroque

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) — *Toccatà & Fugue in D minor*.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTVraVgzC9U&feature=fvsr>

— *Fantasy and Fugue in G minor* (also cited above with Buxtehude)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6Kul3JzKI0&feature=related>

[Today, we think of Bach as first and foremost an organist and a church musician. At the end of each of his scores, he wrote *Soli Deo Gloria*, “to God alone be glory.” In our time, the *Toccatà & Fugue in D minor* is probably his best *known* organ work, but it is only one piece in the midst of a very large set of organ music, including many chorale-based “preludes.” Bach’s other compositions include a huge output of pieces for choirs, vocal soloists, solo harpsichord, and various other instruments of the day.]

Photo of J.S. Bach: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Johann\\_Sebastian\\_Bach.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Johann_Sebastian_Bach.jpg).

Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany, into a very musical family. [In fact, there were so many Bach musicians that, for a time, the word *Bach* was used to indicate a musician. In addition, many of the Bachs were Johanns! Now days, when we say “Bach,” we mean Johann Sebastian, and indicate the other Bachs by giving their full names.] Bach’s father, [Johann Ambrosius Bach](#), taught him violin and harpsichord; and an uncle, [Johann Christoph Bach](#), taught him the organ.

Both of Johann Sebastian’s parents died within eight months of one another when he was 10. At that time he moved to Ohrdruf to live with his oldest brother, another [Johann Christoph](#), who exposed the young Sebastian to the music of his own teacher, Pachelbel, as well as that of Italian and French composers Frescobaldi, [Lully](#), and [Marchand](#). Young Johann also learned Theology, Latin, Greek, French, and Italian in the local [gymnasium](#). (Of course, he knew German, too.)

Then at 14, Bach was awarded a choral scholarship to study at the highly selective St. Michael’s School in Lüneburg, in north Germany. In this wealthy area, he was exposed to an even wider section of European culture and studied alongside the sons of noblemen from all over the north. Seeing the fine pipe organs in the rich city also likely made a strong impression.

[*This is perhaps an appropriate place to show the diagram of “[Places where Bach lived](#).” It shows cities of his birth and schooling, and locations of his employment, discussed in the next section.*]

The productive periods of Bach’s life are usually divided into three sections. The periods are basically chronological, but are named after the places where he worked.

1. Early Years and Weimar period (including also Arnstadt and Mühlhausen) (1703-1717)
2. Anhalt-Cöthen period (1717-1723); and
3. Leipzig Period (1723-1750).

Period 1. In 1703, after Bach graduated from St. Michael’s School, he accepted a job back in central Germany, as a court musician in the chapel of Johann Ernst, Duke of Weimar. During his seven months there, his fame as a keyboard player spread, and he was offered many other jobs. He accepted one as organist at the church of St. Boniface in Arnstadt, where he had recently inspected and played the first recital on a new pipe organ. [Such first recitals are called “inaugural” or “dedication” recitals.]

Remember the story of Bach walking the 240 miles to Lübeck to hear Buxtehude's [Abendmusik](#) concerts? The unexpected three months he was away became an "absence without leave" from Arnstadt. [It is said that, while Bach was there, Buxtehude offered him a job as his assistant and successor in Lübeck, if Bach would only marry Buxtehude's eldest daughter. This had become a standard condition at Lübeck; Bach was not the first organist to turn down Buxtehude's offer!]

So, tensions had developed between Bach and his Arnstadt employers: they, upset with his unauthorized absence; and he, increasingly unhappy with the quality of his choir singers. In 1706, he accepted a new post as organist of St. Blasius Church in Mülhausen, where he enjoyed higher pay, better conditions, and a much better choir. There he married a second cousin, [Maria Barbara Bach](#), and over their years together they had seven children, four of whom survived — two of those the major composers [Wilhelm Friedemann](#) and [Carl Phillip Emmanuel](#).

In 1708, Bach returned to Weimar, this time as organist and concertmaster to the ducal court, where he worked with a well-funded group of professional musicians. [He and Maria Barbara had a nice apartment close to the Duke's palace, and their first child was born here.] Bach served the Duke in Weimar for approximately ten years, and it is thought that many of his major organ works were composed during this period.

Bach definitely planned his *Orgelbüchlein* ("Little Organ Book") here, originally intending it to include 164 chorale settings — to serve as a study and exercise book for organists (and also as collection of practical church music). However, before it was completed, he accepted a post as music master for Prince Leopold of Anhalt Cöthen, against the Duke of Weimar's wishes. Weimar refused to release him, and jailed him for nearly three months. It is said that much of the *Orgelbüchlein* we have today was completed while Bach was detained in Weimar; but he never completed the full set as planned, and the title page says it was "composed by Johann Sebast. Bach, *pro tempore* Capellmeister to His Serene Highness the Prince of Anhalt Cöthen." [This volume of forty-six pieces is still in standard use today as a teaching tool and music resource.]

Period 2. After his release from the Duke's dungeon, Bach went to his new job in Cöthen, where for six years he served as *Kapellmeister* (literally, "chapel [music] master" — which had come to mean "court music director" for a monarch). The Prince was a Calvinist, so worship in his chapel was not elaborate; but the Prince was also a musician, and highly valued Bach's skills. It was a very productive period for the composer's secular music, including the *Orchestral Suites*, the *Brandenburg Concertos*, sets of solo works for both cello and violin, and a number of secular cantatas.

[It should be pointed out that, although in his own time Bach gained considerable fame as an organist, he was not widely known or respected as a composer until his works were revived in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century — largely due to the influence of [Felix Mendelssohn](#).]

In July of 1720, while Bach was travelling with the Prince, his first wife Maria Barbara died suddenly; and in December of 1721, he married Anna Magdalena Wilcke, a gifted soprano 17 years younger than he. She was the daughter of the court trumpeter, and herself performed as a singer at court. Together over the ensuing years, they had 13 more children, six of whom survived: [Gottfried Heinrich](#), [Johann Christoph Friedrich](#), and [Johann Christian](#) became significant musicians; Elisabeth Juliane Friederica (1726–81) married Bach's pupil Johann Christoph Altnikol; Johanna Carolina (1737–81); and Regina Susanna (1742–1809). [1809 is the year [Felix Mendelssohn](#) was born.]

Period 3. In 1723, Bach was appointed Cantor of the St. Thomas School at St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, where he was also Director of Music for the city's principal churches (including St. Thomas; St. Nicolas; and St. Paul, the church of the [University of Leipzig](#)). This was a prestigious municipal post in a major mercantile city of the Electorate of Saxony.

Bach was to instruct the students in Latin, as well as in music and singing, and to provide a cantata for the city's churches on every Sunday and every church holy day. For this purpose, he usually mounted performances his own pieces. There is evidence that he wrote over 300 cantatas, but only 200 of them survive.

Three full cycles of cantatas were written during his first three years in Leipzig. Each related to the Gospel reading for the day, and was also based on a corresponding chorale tune and text. From the cantatas, and from the two Passions (major oratorios on Gospel Passion texts of Matthew and John), we also have Bach's exquisite harmonizations of the chorales themselves, and these stand well on their own merit alone.

The sopranos and altos for Bach's choirs in the churches were drawn from the boys of the School, with tenors and basses from the School and elsewhere in Leipzig. [Instrumentalists were also drawn from students at the School, in many cases.] In order to provide weekly music for all three churches, Bach also needed the utmost of care to schedule the singers, the soloists, the instrumentalists, and all their music. For most church music directors today, this alone would be very difficult. Along with directing the School and composing too, he had a major task indeed!

By 1729, he was proficient enough at it that he also could make time to be Director of the Collegium Musicum in Leipzig, a secular performance ensemble started by [Georg Philipp Telemann](#). This gave Bach firm control over all Leipzig's major musical organizations. Many of his works in the 1730's and 1740's were written for the Collegium, including his concertos for violin and harpsichords.

Bach composed the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* of what would become his *Mass in B minor* in 1733, presenting the score to August III, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Lithuania, and the Elector of Saxony. It was Bach's eventually successful bid to become the Royal Court Composer, and he evidently was awarded that post between 1737 and 1739, when one of his former pupils took over as Director of the Collegium Musicum. (It has been speculated that Bach's post as Court Composer gave him more of the bargaining power he needed with the Leipzig City Council.)

Another monumental work for harpsichord Bach composed in 1741. [The Goldberg Variations](#) were written for his occasional student Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, whose own benefactor Count Kaiserling was a former Russian ambassador to the Electoral court. He still visited often at court, and brought his keyboard player along to study with Bach. The Count once mentioned that, during his frequent sleepless nights, Goldberg would play for him, for comfort and good cheer. For that purpose, then, Bach supplied what is his only work in this form, a huge set of variations which are based on an aria in the shape of a sarabande, a slow dance found in the keyboard suites. See the aria itself [here](#).

In 1747, Bach visited the court of Frederick the Great, the [King of Prussia](#), in [Potsdam](#). There the King played a [theme](#) for Bach and challenged him to improvise a fugue based on his theme. Bach improvised a three-part fugue on Frederick's [pianoforte](#), then a novelty instrument. On the same theme, he later presented the King with the [Musical Offering](#), which consists of fugues, canons and a trio sonata for violin, flute [the musical instrument King Frederick played], and [basso continuo](#).

Perhaps Bach's largest contrapuntal work on one musical theme, [The Art of the Fugue](#) is 14 fugues and 4 canons, with the final fugue using the name B-A-C-H as a counter-subject; but that fugue was not completed by the time of Bach's death. (Some have speculated that a sketch of the ending might be somewhere on a lost or missing manuscript page. Bach's obituary mentions a "draft of a fugue that was to contain four themes in four voices," and this would have been a fitting climax for *The Art of the Fugue*.) Many musicians and musicologists have tried to "work out" an ending for the fugue, and some performances provide an ending, while others stop where Bach's manuscript ends. The work can be played on the organ, or by an ensemble of four instruments.

Bach was blind in his last days, and in poor health. It is sometimes considered that his declining health was due to complications from a failed operation on his eyes, which had hoped to restore his sight. The final work he composed was a chorale prelude for organ, entitled "*Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit*" ("*Before thy throne I now appear*"), which he dictated to his son-in-law Johann Altnikol from his deathbed.

Though Bach spent most of his musical life in the central German state of Thuringia — which, as with Pachelbel above, was considered "south Germany" — the German music of the late Baroque no longer showed much difference from south to north Germany, because composers were familiar with music from both schools of their German heritage, as well as that of both Italy and France. Today, in fact, we see all these various styles as coming together in the music of J.S. Bach.

After his death, Bach's reputation at first declined; his compositions were regarded as old-fashioned compared to the emerging [classical style](#). Even so, during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, though, Bach was widely recognized for his keyboard compositions. [Mozart](#), [Beethoven](#), [Chopin](#), [Schumann](#), and [Mendelssohn](#) were among his most prominent admirers; they began writing in more contrapuntal styles after being exposed to Bach's music. Beethoven even described him as the "original father of harmony."

Bach's reputation among the wider public was enhanced in part by [Johann Nikolaus Forkel](#)'s 1802 biography of Bach. In addition, Felix Mendelssohn's 1829 revival performance of Bach's [St Matthew Passion](#) in Berlin helped to significantly expand Bach's reputation as a composer of more than just keyboard music.

The [Bach Gesellschaft](#), or "Bach Society," was formed in 1850, with the purpose of publishing a scholarly edition of the complete works of Johann Sebastian Bach. After the first volume in 1851, forty-five more volumes followed, which were not completed until 1900. *The Art of the Fugue* came as a supplemental 47<sup>th</sup> volume in 1926.

The complete organ works of J.S. Bach alone have usually been issued in nine volumes, and some new compositions were discovered in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century — which made for yet a 10<sup>th</sup> volume. A prolific and polished composer in all forms, Bach's counterpoint and composition is considered the pinnacle of Baroque music in general, and a major part of the musical repertory for the pipe organ.

For further listing:

- *Chorale Prelude, "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland"* (also cited above with Buxtehude)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6piOhwgopg&feature=related>
- *Chorale Prelude, "Wer nur den lieben Gott läßt walten"* (*Orgelbüchlein*)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdJYCnrSwxE>
- *Chorale Prelude, "In dir ist Freude"* (*Orgelbüchlein*)  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipe6AB1n6\\_U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipe6AB1n6_U)

## High Baroque into the Classical Period: The French Rococo<sup>3</sup>

Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676–1749) — *Basse et Dessus de Trompette ou de Cornet* (“Bass and Treble of Trumpet or Cornet”) from the *Suite du Premier Ton*:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9XUytkbjho>

Clérambault was an organist and composer, a contemporary of Bach and Handel. He produced many sacred vocal pieces, over 25 secular cantatas, a number of sonatas for violin and [basso continuo](#), a book of dance pieces for the harpsichord, and one book of two suites for the organ (1710). Since those suites are on the first and second tones, it may be speculated that he expected to write more on the subsequent tones, but just never came back to that task.

Born into a musical family, Clérambault learned to play violin and harpsichord at a young age. He later studied organ with the French master, [André Raison](#), and composition and voice with [Jean-Baptiste Moreau](#). Clérambault first became the organist at the Church of the Grands-Augustins, and after the death of [Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers](#), succeeded him at the organ of the church of [Saint-Sulpice](#) and the royal house of Saint-Cyr, an institution for young girls from the poor nobility. In the latter post, he was responsible for music, the organ, and directing chants and choir. It was in this post that he developed the genre of the French cantata, of which he was the uncontested master. In 1719 he succeeded his teacher André Raison at the organs of the church of the Grands-Jacobins.

A somewhat secular style prevails much of Clérambault’s music, even the sacred. However, its tuneful nature makes it ever appealing, and it relates well to the new [style galante](#) popular from the 1720’s to the 1770’s, a simplified style which led into the Classical Period.

## English Late Baroque into the Classical Period

John Stanley (1712–1786) — Trumpet Voluntary:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dl3eZk9J3xQ>

(performance from *The Joy of Music*, with Diane Bish)

*[Though there is a long tradition of English composers who served as organists, not a lot of actual organ music from them that remains. One might speculate that, since the early English organ did not often have well developed pedals, the keyboard works of many of these composers can also be considered for playing on the organ. In addition, many of their works for solo melody over a figured bass could have been played on the organ. John Stanley, however, is actually the first to leave a fairly significant body of music specifically for the organ. We just need to remember he is not by any means the “first English organ composer.”]*

John Stanley was born in London, and an accident when he was just 2 years old left him almost completely blind. He began studying music at the age of 7; and, with [Maurice Greene](#), composer and organist at St. Paul’s Cathedral, he studied “with great diligence, and a success that was astonishing” (Burney).

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<sup>3</sup> *Although music of other High Baroque composers — for instance, Bach, Händel, Telemann, and Vivaldi— exhibited a high degree of “pan-European” similarity, the music of the French Baroque composers remained distinctively French. By 1725 or so, along with art of the day, it moved to a simpler, more light-hearted style that can be labeled “Rococo.”*

He began church duties at the Church of All Hallows, Bread Street, at the age of 9 — probably as a deputy and occasional assistant — and, when the organist died in 1723, he was appointed to the position at the age of 11 years! At 14, he was chosen from many competitors for the post of organist at St. Andrew's, Holborn; and at 17, he became the youngest person ever to complete the Bachelor of Music degree at Oxford University.

In 1734, Stanley was appointed organist at the ancient Temple Church in London, a post he held until his death. His brilliant playing there attracted the attention of many fine musicians, and Händel regularly visited the Church to hear him. After Händel's death in 1759, Stanley formed partnerships with a number of other composers to continue Händel's series of oratorio performances at Covent Garden. Stanley would accompany the oratorios from memory, and play an organ concerto in each intermission. [The English call this an "interval."]

Stanley's works for organ include three sets of ten Voluntaries each, as well as six concertos for organ or harpsichord. [A [voluntary](#) is the name the English gave to an organ piece for church use.] His organ style includes Baroque passage-work and free cadenza, as well as imitative counterpoint (fugue); but it also features much tuneful writing, consistent with the newer "[gallant style](#)" which took on greater favor as the Baroque period was ending.

### Classical Period (1750–1830) — Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven

Organ music by these major classical composers is scarce, although there are certainly other composers of the period, principally church organists, who did write for the organ. However, their scores circulated only among themselves and students who copied them. One notable organ composer in the classical style was [Alexandre Pierre François Boëly](#), who lived well into the Romantic (1785-1858), but maintained a compositional style that was essentially a classical one.

Gradually, [patronage](#) for composers had been moving from church and prince to a wider public, with composers more and more having to write for individual commissions and to rely on published work and sales. In addition, the styles of "fashionable" music were changing, from the grand and ornate styles of the Baroque, to music that was (at least at first) simpler and more quietly expressive (and in some later cases, more theatrical). The orchestra was gaining more dominance among ensembles, as was the [pianoforte](#) among keyboard instruments. The organ's best music, on the other hand, was associated with the older styles.

Haydn wrote a number of "keyboard concertos, some of which go quite well on the organ. The young Mozart *played* the organ in his early tours, and the organ at St. Bravo Church in Haarlem, Netherlands, is sometimes called the "Mozart organ," because he played it in 1766 at the age of 10. A few organ pieces remain in his catalog. Mozart also used the organ in several of his sacred works, and a set of "Church Sonatas" in which it is the [continuo](#) instrument, not really a soloist.

Other than these examples, the only organ music by major composers of the Classical era was written for mechanical organs — played by pegs inserted into a barrel that rolled around to catch the pipe controls like fingers. Haydn wrote 32 such pieces; Mozart, two large pieces and one smaller one; and Beethoven, just five pieces. The majority of them were written for the very small mechanical organs found in musical clocks of the day; and, although they are small, they are still quite delightful.



## Franz Josef Haydn (1732–1809) — Die Flötenuhr, 1772, 1792, 1793, + 2 MSS pieces

Frederick Hohman plays two fluteclock pieces on a hand-pumped organ in Montego Bay, Jamaica. [*The backside of the first person you see is that of the organ pumper*):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgLnjoOyK2o>

Diane Bish plays three fluteclock pieces on a large modern organ (Rufatti, Coral Gables FL):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcaQXXEUDWU>.

For further listening: The following Philippine recording of Haydn's C major Keyboard Concerto is very effective on the organ. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZoUJxx2Fgc>

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

For organ, besides the Overture in C major Mozart's catalog lists four fugues, one of them a gigue. The other three organ pieces are for mechanical instruments: Adagio and Allegro in F minor, K. 594 (1790); *Fantasia in F minor*, K. 608 (1791); and *Andante in F*, K. 616 (1791)

The first two pieces listed above are rather large pieces, and organists often play them with full registrations, as if they were written for a large organ. Thus, they are not really as Mozart conceived them, but the size and gravity of the pieces makes them well suited to the larger, symphonic treatment.

The third piece, the *Andante*, is more frequently played on flute sounds that would have characterized the mechanical organs of Mozart's day. The following recording of the *Andante*, though it shows no actual organ playing, is one of the best available on the Internet:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2avwwg1Cac>.

## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Amidst a full catalog of Beethoven works, the only organ works are five pieces for musical clock. Here are two short ones, marked by their straightforward simplicity as work of his early years: a [\*Scherzo\*](#) and an [\*Allegro\*](#) in G major:

Scherzo:

<http://www.kids.agowichita.org/resources/Beethove%20Scherzo%20in%20G%20for%20Fluteclock.mp3>

Allegro:

<http://www.kids.agowichita.org/resources/Beethoven%20Allegro%20in%20G%20for%20Fluteclock.mp3>

## Early German Romantic: Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

— Organ Sonata IV, op. 65, no. 4

Third Movement, *Allegretto*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BINurK64Smg>

Fourth Movement, *Allegro maestoso*: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RqZw\\_HSx9E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RqZw_HSx9E)

Born into a prominent Jewish family in Hamburg, Felix Mendelssohn's grandfather was Moses Mendelssohn, a leading philosopher of his time who, though he was a practicing orthodox Jew, has

by his philosophical thought been referred to as the “Father of Reform Judaism.” Mendelssohn’s father Abraham was a banker who used his financial influence to help break Napoleon’s trade embargo of the British Isles (called the “[Continental System](#)”); and, fearing retribution because of that, the family moved from Hamburg to Berlin when Felix was 2 years old and his sister Fanny, 5.

Abraham and Lea (Salomon) Mendelssohn had renounced the Jewish religion, and set out to raise their children (Fanny, Felix, Paul, and Rebecka) without religious education. In 1816, however — perhaps to avoid anti-Semitism — the children were baptized Lutheran, and in 1822 the parents were baptized as well. At that time, they adopted the name Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, following the example of Lea’s brother Joseph Salomon Bartholdy, who had inherited a property of this name and adopted it as his own surname. [*This may also have helped to sidestep Jewish association with the name Mendelssohn alone.*]

Both Felix and Fanny showed precocious musical talent; and, likely at the recommendation of their aunt [Sarah Levy](#) — who was a talented keyboard player, a student and patron of Bach sons Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philip Emmanuel — the two studied both counterpoint and composition with Carl Friedrich Zeiter at the *Berlin Singakademie*, where Sarah often played with the orchestra. [With her Bach connection, Sarah had formed an important library of Bach-family manuscripts, and at her death she willed the remainder of the collection to the *Singakademie*.]

The young Felix Mendelssohn probably made his first public appearance at the age of 9, accompanying a horn duo in a chamber music concert. Between the ages of 12 and 14, he wrote 12 string symphonies for private concerts mounted in the Mendelssohn home for associates of his wealthy parents amongst the intellectual elite of Berlin. (These works were long ignored, but are sometimes programmed today.) His first published work, at the age of 13, was a piano quartet; and in 1824, the 15-year old wrote his first symphony for full orchestra.

Through his teacher Zeiter, Felix Mendelssohn met the important German poet [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#), and Mendelssohn set a number of his poems. Other poetry of Goethe inspired Felix to compose the overture “Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage” (op. 27, 1828), and he later completed a cantata [The First Walpurgis Night](#) (op. 60, 1832), which Goethe had written to be set to music. (Zeiter had twice attempted setting it, but never completed it.)

Mendelssohn was also interested in other literary works, and his Overture to Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is perhaps the earliest example of an overture strictly for concert use, a genre which became very popular in musical Romanticism. Mendelssohn’s masterful *String Octet in E-flat major* (written at age 16) and the *Overture* to the Shakespeare play (age 17) are the best known of his early works.

In 1824, Mendelssohn first studied under composer and piano virtuoso Ignaz Moscheles, who became a close colleague and lifetime friend, important later in the composer’s “English connection.” In 1825, his maternal grandmother Bella Salomon gave Mendelssohn a score of Bach’s [St. Matthew Passion](#); and four years later, with the backing of Zeiter and Eduard Devrient (a German baritone, librettist, playwright, actor, theatre director, theatre reformer and historian), the 20-year-old Mendelssohn was able to arrange and conduct a Berlin performance of the *Passion*, a work by then all but forgotten. The success of this performance, the first since Bach’s death in 1750, was an important element in the revival of J.S. Bach’s music in Germany and, eventually, throughout Europe; and it earned the young Mendelssohn widespread acclaim.

In the spring of 1833, Mendelssohn conducted the Lower Rhenish Music Festival in Düsseldorf, where he mounted another “revival,” this time of Händel’s oratorio *Israel in Egypt*, prepared from an original score which he had found in London. His success at this endeavor gained him appointment as a music director in the city. There that year also, he worked with dramatist Karl Immermann to improve local theater standards, and made his first appearance as an opera conductor in Immermann’s production of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.

Mendelssohn first visited England in 1829, and his former teacher Moscheles, already settled in London, introduced him in musical circles there. That summer he also visited Edinburgh, and Britain was destined to be a place where Mendelssohn won a strong following. He made ten visits during his life, totaling about twenty months. On subsequent visits, he met Queen Victoria and Prince Albert; and in the summer of 1844, he conducted five of the Philharmonic concerts in London.

Since his youth, Mendelssohn had performed at both organ and piano, and was particularly known for his improvisations, both at home and in England. His *Three Preludes & Fugues* for organ, op. 37, were published in 1837; and his *Organ Sonatas*, op. 65, were commissioned as a “set of voluntaries” by the English publishers Coventry and Hollier in 1844, who also requested from him an edition of the organ chorales of J.S. Bach. [Proof reading of the *Sonatas* was probably done by Vincent Novello.] Coventry and Hollier advertised them as “*Six Grand Sonatas for the Organ.*,” also calling them the “Mendelssohn School of Organ Playing,” which title Mendelssohn later asked that they remove when the music itself was published in July of 1845.

The composer first drafted seven individual voluntaries, but then decided to extend and regroup them into a set of six sonatas — meaning not necessarily pieces in classical sonata form, but instead using the word loosely, as Bach had used it, for a collection or suite of varying pieces. The *Sonatas* also incorporate a number of Bach chorales [specifically, Sonata no. 3 in A major, and no. 6 in D minor].

The *Sonatas* demanded standards of lighter touch and fuller pedal range that few English organs were yet ready to meet; but the *Sonatas* did help to raise standards for English instruments. The first performances of any of the *Sonatas* were by Edmund Chipp in 1846 and 1847; and Mendelssohn wrote that he had heard Mr. Chipp perform “one of the most difficult..., [which had] given me a very high opinion of his talents and his skill as a musician and as a performer.” Chipp played the entire set of *Sonatas* by memory at the William Hill Organ Factory in December of 1848.

Mendelssohn’s *Sonatas* were well received in other European countries. They were published simultaneously by Schlesinger in Paris, Ricordi in Milan, and Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. Schumann wrote to Mendelssohn that they were “intensely poetical...; what a perfect picture they form!” They may have prompted Schumann’s *Six Fugues on B-A-C-H*, and, later in the century, the organ sonatas of Josef Rheinberger.

Mendelssohn was married in 1837, to Cecile Jeanrenaud, daughter of a French clergyman. They had five children: Carl, Marie, Paul, Lilli, and Felix.

- Carl went on to become a distinguished historian and professor of history at Heidelberg and Freiburg universities;
- Marie married Victor Benecke and lived in London;
- Paul became a noted chemist and pioneered the manufacture of aniline dye;
- Lilli married Adolph Wach, later Professor of Law at Leipzig University;
- and Felix August contracted measles in 1844 and was left in bad health, dying in 1851.

The family papers inherited by Marie and Lilli's children form the basis of the extensive collection of Mendelssohn manuscripts, including his correspondence, now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

Mendelssohn's sister Fanny died in Berlin in 1847, of complications from a stroke suffered while rehearsing one of her brother's oratorios, *The First Walpurgis Night*. Felix himself died less than six months later from the same cause (which also caused the death of both their parents and their grandfather Moses Mendelssohn). After Fanny's death, in memory of his sister Felix Mendelssohn wrote his [String Quartet No. 6 in F minor](#), a highly emotive work which was to be his last.

### Early German Romantic: Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805–1847): *Prelude in F major*

Performed by Els Biesemans at a recital in the Church "Our Lady over the Dyle [River]" in Mechelen, Belgium: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuVRt3KSgek>

Mendelssohn's sister Fanny was also musically talented, and their father Abraham had thought that she, rather than Felix, would be the more musical. In their era, though, it was not considered proper for a woman to have a career in music; in fact, Abraham was also at first even against allowing Felix to follow a musical career, until it became clear that he would not be deterred. Shortly before her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, Fanny's father wrote to her, "Perhaps for [Felix] music will become a profession, but for you it will always remain but an ornament; never can nor should it become the foundation of your existence and daily life...." [Quoted by S Rothenberg, "Thus Far, but No Farther," Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's Unfinished Journey," *The Musical Quarterly*, 1993.]

So, although Fanny continued to be active as an "amateur" keyboard performer and composer, she was kept from a professional musical career. Nonetheless, a [list of her compositions](#) numbers 466 individual pieces. Some of Fanny Mendelssohn's *Klavierstücke* (keyboard pieces) are well suited to the organ, and the Prelude above is one of these.

As the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have seen a rise in what are called "women's studies," musicologists have gone back to look more carefully at Fanny Mendelssohn's music, as well as that of Clara Schumann and many other long-neglected women composers. It seems only fair that we represent Fanny to some extent in these notes. [An Internet search of "women composers in history" will be found very revealing of this renewed interest in our day.] Eugene Gates has written a fine and detailed article for [The Kapralova Society Journal, vol. 5, no. 2](#), one well worth reading: "Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel: A Life of Music within Domestic Limits."

### French Romantic: Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) — from *7 Improvisations*, op. 150

Young performer Robert Smith, plays "*Allegro giocoso*" number 7 of Saint-Saëns' *7 Improvisations*, op. 150, in the Sommerville College Chapel, Oxford University [Runs 4'20"]:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B029n9aWk4c>

{*Though this is not the kind of large French organ Saint-Saëns was writing for, the performance is interesting because one can see the action of mechanical pedal couplers, and it is high resolution video that can be played full-screen. Saint-Saëns "Improvisations" here may have been first improvised at the organ, or he may have simply chosen the name because they were free-style pieces of an improvisatory nature.*}

Camille Saint-Saëns is sometimes called a “late Romantic” composer, because he lived until 1920, sometimes considered the end of the Romantic Era. However, though his music includes a lot of the loud, bombastic Romantic style, he was essentially a relatively conservative composer — using a number of the older forms, as well as the characteristically Romantic [tone poem](#), relying on strong melodic development, but not using excessively chromatic harmony — and the spirit of his music puts him squarely in the center of the era. He was friends with Liszt and Berlioz, and later taught [Gabriel Fauré](#), who was soon his favorite student and closest friend.

Saint-Saëns was born in Paris, and schooled at the [Paris Conservatory](#), where he studied organ and composition and took many top prizes. After serving as organist in a number of minor churches, he was appointed in 1857 to an excellent position at the [Church of the Madeleine](#) in Paris, where he remained until 1877. His weekly improvisations there “stunned the Parisian public and earned Liszt’s 1866 observation that Saint- Saëns was ‘the greatest organist in the world.’ He also composed his famous [Danse Macabre](#) at this time.” [Wikipedia]

The only teaching post Saint-Saëns ever held was at the [École Niedermeyer](#), from 1861-1865, where he met and befriended Fauré. Even so, he was an intellectual of many varied talents. He had long been interested in geology, archaeology, and botany; and he was an expert at mathematics. Besides performing, composing, and writing musical criticism, he also wrote scholarly articles on acoustics, ancient instruments, and philosophy — in the lattermost, his ideas foreshadowed Existentialism. With Romain Bussine in 1871, he cofounded the [Société Nationale de Musique](#) in order to promote new French music and composers. The Society premiered works by members such as Fauré, Franck, Lalo, and Saint-Saëns himself, who served as co-president, thus becoming an influential figure in shaping the future of French music.

In 1875, nearing forty, Saint-Saëns married Marie Truffot, who was twenty years younger. They had two children, both of whom died tragically within six months of each other, and the couple did not survive this emotionally; they separated in 1881 but never divorced.

Two of his most renowned compositions were premiered in 1886, [The Carnival of the Animals](#) and [Symphony No. 3](#). But that same year, [Vincent d’Indy](#) and his allies had Saint-Saëns removed from the *Société Nationale de Musique*. [Wikipedia] When Saint-Saëns’ mother died two years later, he simply left France, traveling around the world to exotic places under an alias, “Sannois” — which he also used as a pen name to write many popular books about his travels. He also continued to compose, and spent his last years in Algiers.

There remain four particular distinctions which should be noted. In 1908, Saint-Saëns was the first major composer to write music for a motion picture. [The Assassination of the Duke of Guise](#) ran 18 minutes, and was a long film for its day. Then in 1915, he was invited to conduct the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra during the [Panama-Pacific International Exposition](#), one of two world’s fairs celebrating the completion of the Panama Canal. At his death in 1921, the French government awarded him the Grand Cross of the [Légion d’honneur](#), and streets in Paris and Marseilles were named in his honor.

Though Saint-Saëns charted his career, and will be remembered, first and foremost as a composer, rather than an organist, his extensive catalog does include a goodly amount of organ music, around fifty pieces in solo and ensemble. However, the organ works are not frequently performed. It will be the “*Organ Symphony*” that will make his most long-lasting impression for the organ. Though the organ part is basically simple, and only appears in two of the four movements, it is also stunningly powerful, and pivotal to the work itself, which has over the years become a staple of the symphonic

literature. After it was completed, Saint-Saëns said “I have given all that I had to give. What I have done I shall never do again.”

Finale from Saint-Saëns’ *Symphony No. 3, “The Organ Symphony,”* performed by a very large youth orchestra in Caracas, Venezuela — an extremely exciting performance, an excellent video, and a hallmark undertaking for these young players [Runs 8’45”]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=XEocEUSVqac&feature=endscreen>

### French Romantic: César Franck (1822-1990) — *Prelude, Fugue, & Variation*, op. 18

A young, unfortunately unnamed performer plays well here, on what may be an **electronically simulated** pipe organ with [digitally sampled tone](#).<sup>4</sup> This composition was published in 1868.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Sm39xz61Rk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Sm39xz61Rk)

[For the Prelude only, stop at 3:26; the Variation runs from 6:23 to 9:42.]

César-Auguste Franck was born in [Liège](#), then part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (from 1830 part of [Walloon](#) speaking Belgium). His father entered him in the [Royal Conservatory of Liège](#), studying [solfège](#), piano, organ, and harmony; and in that city he gave his first concerts in 1834 at the age of 12. He studied privately in Paris from 1835, and after a brief return to Belgium and a disastrous reception for his early oratorio *Ruth*, he moved to Paris, where he married and embarked on a career as teacher and organist. He gained a reputation as a formidable improviser, and travelled widely in France to demonstrate new instruments built by [Aristide Cavaillé-Coll](#).

In 1858 he was appointed organist at [Sainte-Clotilde](#), a position he retained for the rest of his life. He became professor of organ at the Paris Conservatory in 1872, and took French nationality, a requirement of the appointment. His pupils included [Vincent d’Indy](#), [Ernest Chausson](#), [Louis Vierne](#), [Charles Tournemire](#), [Guillaume Lekeu](#), and [Henri Duparc](#). In his book on Franck, d’Indy notes that this group became increasingly tight-knit in their mutual esteem and affection between teacher and pupils, that independently but unanimously each new student came to call their professor *Père Franck*, “Father Franck” After acquiring the Conservatoire professorship, Franck wrote several pieces which have entered the standard classical repertoire, including symphonic, choral, chamber, and keyboard works.

During July of 1890, Franck was riding in a cab which was struck by a horse-drawn trolley, injuring his head and causing a short fainting spell. There seemed to be no immediate after-effects; he completed his trip and he himself considered it of no import. However, walking became painful and he found himself increasingly obliged to restrict his activities. He took his vacation as soon as he could in [Nemours](#) (a commune in north-central France), where he hoped to work on projected organ pieces and some commissioned works for [harmonium](#).

While Franck did not complete the harmonium collection, the organ pieces were finished in August and September 1890. They are the *Trois Chorals*, which are among the greatest treasures of organ literature, and form a regular part of the repertory today. (Of them, 1950s biographer Léon Vallas

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<sup>4</sup> Click the link to *Wikipedia*, then move to contents, and click “3.3 Pipe Organ Simulations.” In general, students are not encouraged to make a study of electronic organs; but it is important to recognize that they exist. Digital sampling is the element that has finally made their tone acceptable, though the tone broadcast from speakers will never quite compare to that of real pipes spread out in the space of a chamber or organ case. (*Would you rather hear a **live** symphony orchestra, or a **recording** of one?*)

says: "Their beauty and importance are such that they may be properly considered as a kind of musical last will and testament.")

Franck started the new term at the Conservatoire in October, but caught a cold mid-month. It led to an infection involving lungs and heart, in a day before there were antibiotics; his condition rapidly worsened, and he died on November 8. The funeral mass at Sainte-Clotilde was attended by a large congregation, including many important musicians of the day, and he was first buried at Montrouge. Later, his body was moved to Montparnasse, to a tomb designed by his friend, architect [Gaston Redon](#). A number of Franck's students commissioned a bronze medallion from [Auguste Rodin](#), and in 1893 a three-quarter bust of Franck was also placed at the side of the tomb. In 1904, a monument to Franck by sculptor [Alfred Lenoir](#), *César Franck at the Organ*,<sup>5</sup> was placed in the Square Samuel-Rousseau across the street from Sainte-Clotilde.

Many of Franck's works employ "cyclic form", a method of achieving unity among several movements or sections. In it, the main themes from the composition are recapitulated, and sometimes combined by way of development, in the final movement or section. Of this form the Encyclopedia Britannica says, "A kind of cyclic 'school' arose for a time among Liszt's disciples, especially the Franco-Belgian composer César Franck, whose techniques were well publicized by his pupil Vincent d'Indy."

In addition, Franck showed a penchant for frequent, graceful [modulations](#) of key. These modulatory passages, often achieved through a [pivot chord](#) or note, arrive or move through harmonically remote keys. Indeed, Franck's improvisation students report that his most frequent admonition was "modulate, modulate." Franck's harmonic style and his method of inflecting melodic phrases are among his most recognizable traits. His distinctive modulatory style often used chromatically descending diminished seventh chords (as seen earlier in Chopin), and also foreshadowed the extreme chromaticism of the late Romantic era — which eventually led to ventures outside tonality itself in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Franck's complete organ works contain the following: *Andantino* in G minor (1857), *Trois Antiennes* (1859); *44 Petites Pièces* (1858–1863); *Six Pièces*, Op. 16-21 (published 1868); *Trois Pièces* (1878); *Andantino* (1889); *Trois Chorals* (1890); and the incomplete collection of 59 short works known as "*L'Organiste*," written for the [harmonium](#) but most often played on organ (1889–1890). The major organ works are most frequently performed: those from the *Six Pièces*, Op. 16-21,<sup>5</sup> the *Trois Pièces*; and the *Trois Chorals*.

For further listening     Young organist Daniel Gabčo plays Franck's *Choral No. 3 in A minor* at St. Martin's Cathedral, Bratislava, Slovakia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vuZfa6nu-I> [Full timing: 14'10"]

*[In the middle, solo voice section, notice the "downward sliding" chromaticism; and later, the combination of the first section's juxtaposed choral phrases and arpeggio motion as they come back combined in the development and final ending.]*

German Romantic: Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

— *Prelude & Fugue in A minor, WoO post. 9*

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted the op. 17 of the *Six Pièces* is the *Grand Pièce Symphonique*, which may be considered a forerunner of the later organ symphonies of Widor and Vierne.

Organist Philippe Ourselin, playing the Cavallé-Coll organ at the Church of Notre-Dame-des-Champs, Paris: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Z6-oZX\\_Pyo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Z6-oZX_Pyo)

Johannes Brahms was a German composer and pianist, and one of the leading musicians of the [Romantic period](#). Born in Hamburg, Brahms spent much of his professional life in Vienna, Austria, where he was a leader of the musical scene. In his lifetime, Brahms's popularity and influence were considerable; following a comment by the nineteenth-century conductor [Hans von Bülow](#), he is sometimes grouped with [Johann Sebastian Bach](#) and [Ludwig van Beethoven](#) as one of the “[Three Bs](#).”

Brahms can be considered both a traditionalist and an innovator. His music is firmly rooted in the structures and compositional techniques of the Baroque and Classical masters. He was a master of [counterpoint](#), and also of [development](#). Brahms aimed to honor the purity of these venerable "German" techniques and advance them into a Romantic idiom, in the process creating bold new approaches to harmony and melody. [*It might be noted that Brahms enjoyed the rhythmic play of twos and threes: vertically, simultaneously dividing the beat into duplets and triplets in contrapuntal voices. Horizontally as well, he also often sets up a distinctive [syncopation](#) called [hemiola](#).*]

While many contemporaries found his music too academic, his contribution and craftsmanship have been admired by subsequent figures as diverse as [Arnold Schoenberg](#) and [Edward Elgar](#). The diligent, highly constructed nature of Brahms's works was a starting point and an inspiration for a generation of composers. Many of his works have become staples of the modern repertoire. However, Brahms was an uncompromising perfectionist; he destroyed many of his works and simply left others of them unpublished. Even so, his catalog of music for all genres is quite extensive.

The extant organ music includes the following pieces, all unpublished in his lifetime [hence the WoO numbers instead of opus numbers]: three Preludes and Fugues (WoO 7, 9, & 10 — all in minor keys, and one on a chorale theme), and a Fugue in the “dark” key of A-flat minor (seven flats — WoO 8). He finished his *Eleven Chorale Preludes* shortly before his death, and arranged to have them published as opus 122.

For further listening: Brahms’ “Lo, How a Rose,” from *11 Chorale Preludes*; op. post. 122, performed at St. Mary's of the Assumption Basilica Cathedral in Cagli (central Italy): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdKKNwSbEEE>

Brahms’ “O Sacred Head,” from *11 Chorale Preludes*; performed on the Cavaille-Coll organ at St. Eustache, Paris: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VX3GGioaThM>

Brahms’ “Blessed Are You, Faithful Souls,” from *11 Chorale Preludes*; performed by Bernard Legacé on the Wolff Organ At the Eighth Church of Christ, Scientist, New York City: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJfUECmHw7A&feature=results\\_video&playnext=1&list=PL36F251D6C5492B50](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJfUECmHw7A&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PL36F251D6C5492B50). [*Stop player after 1'47", or it goes on to another piece.*]

German Romantic: Josef Rheinberger (1839-1901)

— “Cantilena” from *Organ Sonata No. 11*, op. 148

[Holland organist Gert van Hoef only began playing the organ at age 13, and here the 16-year-old records Rheinberger on his home organ, a digitally sampled electronic by the pioneer Netherlands



firm Johannus. (Today's pipe organs sometimes have similar stop controls.) Gert played his first full recital in January of 2012. Now, just graduated, he is planning to go on to a conservatory.]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YM0k9OLZk2s>

Joseph Rheinberger was a German organist and composer born in Vaduz, [Liechtenstein](#). At the age of only seven Rheinberger became organist at Vaduz Parish Church, and his first composition was performed the following year. In 1851 he entered the Munich Conservatory (today called the "Hochschule für Musik und Theater"), where he later became professor of piano, and subsequently professor of composition. When the Conservatory was dissolved he was appointed *répétiteur* ("music coach") at the Theatre of the King of Bavaria in Munich, from which he resigned in 1867.

In 1877 Rheinberger obtained the rank of court conductor, a position that gave him responsibility for the music in the royal chapel. He was later awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. A distinguished teacher, he numbered many Americans among his pupils, including [Horatio Parker](#), and [George Whitefield Chadwick](#). When the present Conservatorium was re-founded in Munich, Rheinberger was appointed its professor of organ and composition, a post he held until his death. Rheinberger is buried in the [Alter Südfriedhof](#) ("Old South Cemetery") in Munich.

A contemporary of Brahms, Rheinberger is not remembered as well. However, in his own time he was a popular and productive composer. His church works include twelve masses, a requiem, and a [Stabat Mater](#). His other works include operas, symphonies, chamber music, and choral works. Today, Rheinberger is remembered most for his organ compositions, which exist at all ranges of difficulty, and the less grand ones are adaptable on almost any organ. There are two organ concertos, 20 sonatas, 22 trios, 12 Meditations, 24 fuguetas, and 36 other solo pieces. His organ sonatas were once declared to be

...undoubtedly the most valuable addition to organ music since the time of Mendelssohn. They are characterized by a happy blending of the modern romantic spirit with masterly counterpoint and dignified organ style.

—J. Weston Nicholl, Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1908 edition)

For further listening: Dmitry Ushankov plays the Toccata from Rheinberger's *Sonata No. 14* at an International Organ Music Festival in Yalta, the Ukraine:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Cw0v5k7MRQ>

[Notice that the console's stop controls are a bit unusual.]

French, Late Romantic: Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911)

— Marche Triomphale, op. 34 no. 5

[This young, unfortunately unnamed performer is a student at the [Hochschule für katholische Kirchenmusik & Musikpädagogik](#) (college for sacred music and music education) in Regensburg, Germany. Though the acoustic is drier than it would be in a Parisian church, it is a good performance. The piece was originally written as a duet for harmonium and piano (1872), Guilmant also transcribed it for organ solo (published in 1899 by Novello, part of *Seven Pieces for Organ* Op. 77.)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZP1zedxuQA>

Felix Alexandre Guilmant, slightly older than Widor, but also a student of [Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens](#), was born in Boulogne, in northern France, just down the coast from Calais. After working as an

organist and teacher in his place of birth, he took the church position at [La Trinité](#) in Paris in 1871, which he held for 30 years.

He followed a career as a virtuoso, and was the first major French organist to tour the United States, giving a series of no fewer than 40 recitals on what was then the largest organ in the world, the St. Louis Exposition organ, now the nucleus of the Philadelphia Wanamaker Organ. He also published two collections of the work of early organ masters, and in 1894 founded the Paris [Schola Cantorum](#). He succeeded Widor as organ professor at the Conservatory, when Widor moved on to the composition faculty. Marcel Dupré was the most celebrated of his many students. Others included [Augustin Barié](#), [Joseph-Arthur Bernier](#), [Joseph Bonnet](#), [Alexandre Cellier](#), [Abel Decaux](#), [Gabriel Dupont](#), [Philip Hale](#), [Edgar Henrichsen](#), and [Édouard Mignan](#).

Guilmant's organ collections include over 40 volumes, plus 8 Organ Sonatas in the symphonic style.

Twentieth century French organists liked to trace their tutelage (their organ teachers) back to J.S. Bach himself. Here in Wichita KS, we might trace back the connection from Wichita State University organ teachers something like this. (*Guilmant and Widor would both fit in position #4 below.*)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Robert Town, <i>who studied with</i>                     | 1. Lynne Davis, <i>who studied with</i>                     |
| 2. Arthur Poister (1898-1980), <i>who studied with</i>      | 2. Marie-Claire Alain (1926–), <i>who studied with</i>      |
| 3. Marcel Dupré (1886-1971), <i>who studied with</i>        | 3. Marcel Dupré (1886-1971), <i>who studied with</i>        |
| 4. Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937), <i>who studied with</i> | 4. Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937), <i>who studied with</i> |
| 5. J.-N. Lemmens (1823-1881), <i>who studied with</i>       | 5. J.-N. Lemmens (1823-1881), <i>who studied with</i>       |
| 6. Adolf Hesse (1809-1863), <i>who studied with</i>         | 6. Adolf Hesse (1809-1863), <i>who studied with</i>         |
| 7. J.C. Rinck (1770-1846), <i>who studied with</i>          | 7. J.C. Rinck (1770-1846), <i>who studied with</i>          |
| 8. J.C. Kittel (1732-1809), <i>who studied with</i>         | 8. J.C. Kittel (1732-1809), <i>who studied with</i>         |
| 9. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)                        | 9. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)                        |

## French, Late Romantic into 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)

— *Andante sostenuto* from *Symphonie Gothique* (No. 9), op. 70

[Widor himself is playing in this recording from 1935, shortly before his death. (He had composed this *Symphony* forty years earlier, when sound recording was only in its infancy. By 1935, the art of recording had moved into its early electronic era, and more was possible.) Though not of the sound quality we're used to today, it has special value because it is played by the composer. In addition, the period pictures of him and his Church, *Saint Sulpice* (inside and out), make it very special.]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMuQC27a0Ko>

Born in the French city of [Lyon](#) to a family of organ builders, Charles-Marie Widor showed early ability at the organ, studying initially with his father, who was organist at Lyon's *Church of Saint-François-de-Sales*. Renowned French organ builder [Aristide Cavallé-Coll](#) was a friend of the Widor family, and in 1863 he arranged for the young organist to study organ in Brussels with [Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens](#) and composition with [François-Joseph Fétis](#) at the [Royal Brussels Conservatory](#). In the following years, Cavallé-Coll took an almost paternal role in guiding Widor's career.

After this term of study in Brussels, Widor moved to Paris, where he would make his home for the rest of his life. At the age of 24, he was appointed assistant to Camille Saint-Saëns at the [Church of](#)

[the Madeleine](#); and in 1870, with the combined support of Cavallé-Coll, Saint-Saëns, and [Charles Gounod](#), he was appointed as “provisional” organist of [Saint-Sulpice](#) in Paris, the most prominent position for any French organist. “Provisional” or not, he remained at the post for nearly 64 years, until the end of 1933, succeeded in 1934 by his former student and assistant, [Marcel Dupré](#).

Cavallé-Coll had revolutionized French organ building by innovations, both in tonal approach and control capabilities. The result was a new, “symphonic organ” tailored to the legato style of the Romantic; and the organ at Saint-Sulpice was Cavallé-Coll's masterwork, featuring 100 stops and five manuals. Its spectacular capabilities proved an inspiration to Widor in developing his own symphonic approach to organ composition.

When Franck died in 1890, Widor succeeded him as organ professor at the Paris Conservatory, and the class he inherited was stunned by this new teacher, who suddenly demanded a formidable technique and a knowledge of the organ works of J.S. Bach as prerequisites to effective improvisation. Widor later gave up the post as organ teacher to become the Conservatory's professor of composition.

He had several students in Paris who were to become famous composers and organists in their own right, most notably the aforementioned Dupré, as well as [Louis Vierne](#), [Charles Tournemire](#), [Darius Milhaud](#), the American [Alexander Schreiner](#), American-to-be [Edgard Varèse](#), and the Canadian [Henri Gagnon](#). [Albert Schweitzer](#) also studied with Widor, and the two collaborated on an annotated edition of J. S. Bach's organ works published in 1912-14. Widor, whose own master Lemmens was an important Bach exponent, encouraged Schweitzer's theological exploration of Bach's music.

Among the leading organ recitalists of his time, Widor toured all over Europe; In addition, he participated in the inaugural concerts of many of Cavallé-Coll's greatest instruments, notably [Notre-Dame de Paris](#), [Saint-Germain-des-Près](#), the [Trocadéro](#) and [Saint-Ouen de Rouen](#). He was made a [chevalier](#) of the [Légion d'Honneur](#) in 1892, named to the [Institut de France](#) in 1910, and elected [Secrétaire perpétuel](#) (permanent secretary) of the [Académie des Beaux-Arts](#) in 1914, succeeding [Henry Roujon](#).

In 1921, Widor founded the [American Conservatory](#) at [Fontainebleau](#) with Francis-Louis [Casadesus](#). He was the Director until 1934, when he was succeeded by [Maurice Ravel](#). His close friend, [Isidor Philipp](#) gave piano lessons there, and [Nadia Boulanger](#) taught entire generations of composers.

Widor wrote music for a wide variety of instruments and ensembles, including over 70 songs for voice and piano, five symphonies, four operas, and a ballet; but his organ works are the ones played most regularly today. These include ten solo Organ Symphonies (plus three Symphonies for orchestra with organ), a *Suite Latine*, and *Trois Nouvelles Pièces*. Yet the solo organ symphonies are hailed as his most significant contribution to the repertory.

Though it may seem unusual to apply the term “symphony” to a solo work, it was not out of character with the French organ music revival of Widor's day. The “symphonic” organs of Cavallé-Coll certainly helped lead the way: Franck himself was appointed to the new [1846] Cavallé-Coll organ at *Sainte-Clotilde* in 1858, and wrote his *Grand Pièce Symphonique* in the early 1860's. Widor was appointed to *Sainte-Sulpice* in 1870, and published his first four Symphonies, op. 13, in 1872 — though they may include some pieces that he wrote earlier, as Saint-Saëns' assistant at the 1845 Cavallé-Coll in the Church of the *Madeleine*.

These first four symphonies, op. 13, were constructed a bit more like suites; Widor himself called them "collections". But by the time Widor wrote his Fifth Symphony, the spirit and order of movements were beginning more to resemble that of their orchestral counterparts. Symphonies numbered 5 through 8 are dated 1878-87; *Symphony No. 9* (the "*Gothique*"), 1895; and *Symphony No. 10* (the "*Romane*"), 1900. These two later symphonies are much more introspective, and derive thematic material from plainchant: the *Gothique* using the Christmas Day introtit "*Puer natus est,*" and the *Romane*, the Easter gradual "Haec dies."

The degree of chromaticism in the various Symphonies does increase in the later works; and his frequent use of minor keys, with the differing versions of harmonic and melodic scales, helps allow this, as does his facile use of modal alteration. His demands upon the organist and the organ increase somewhat, as well. For instance, though he has not been shy of using "double pedal" parts earlier (particularly to double the bass in octaves), in the second movement of the *Symphony No. 7*, the top voice of a 2-voice pedal part doubles the soprano melody over the lower, bass voice,<sup>6</sup> and then carries the melody alone in a subsequent variation under running 32<sup>nd</sup> notes.

Widor in his later years spent considerable time revising his earlier symphonies, and thus made it somewhat difficult to consider what is actually an "authoritative" edition. His *Symphony No. 1*, for instance, exists in its originally published 1872 form, as well as in versions from 1901 and 1918.

The *Toccata* finale from *Symphony No. 5* is Widor's best-known single piece, and the first of the many toccatas that later became so characteristic of French Romantic organ music. Its publication as a separate piece sold many copies, simply due to its extreme popularity.

For further listening: the famous *Toccata* from Widor's *Symphony No. 5*, performed by Oliver Latty on the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&NR=1&v=ijtj300j129k>

## French, Late Romantic into 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

— *Toccata* from 2<sup>o</sup> *Suite, Pièces de fantaisie*, op. 53. No. 6

[This piece is a fairly late Vierne work, published in 1926, and a short example of the usual French toccata. The organ is actually an electronic instrument, playing *Hauptwerk*<sup>®</sup>-sampled sounds from the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Church of Saint-Étienne in Caen, France (built in 1885, picture [here](#)).]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zAxDJh8UDA>

Vierne was born in Poitiers, in west-central France, nearly blind due to congenital cataracts. Early on he showed an unusual gift for music: at age 2 he heard the piano for the first time, a Schubert lullaby, and afterwards promptly began to pick out the melody.

The young musician completed his schooling in Poitiers, and then entered the Paris Conservatory. Not entirely blind, but what we would call today "legally blind," he at first was able to read and write in large print; but later in life, as his sight began to diminish, he resorted to [Braille](#) to do most of his work. (Even large print, of course, would never have allowed him to *play* from a printed score. All of his performance would have been done from memory.)

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<sup>6</sup> Perhaps is the precursor to later French organ composers' doubling of melody in soprano and 16' bass — not uncommon in works of Jean Langlais.

From 1892, Vierne served as assistant to Charles-Marie Widor at the Church of Saint-Sulpice in Paris. Then, in 1900, he was appointed organist at the [Cathedral of Notre Dame](#), where with his leadership the 86-stop 5-manual 1868 Cavaillé-Coll organ was expanded in 1902 and 1932. (The organ now has 111 stops, and still includes some pipework of an earlier builder, [François-Henri Clicquot](#). Of its 7800 pipes, 900 are classified as historical.) Vierne held this post up to his death.

Vierne's was not an easy life. Besides the blindness, his wife had an affair with one of his friends, his brother René and his elder son Jacques were killed in World War I, and his younger son died of tuberculosis. His superiors at the Conservatory twice declined to grant him a professorship; and, though he held one of the most prestigious organ posts in France, the Notre-Dame organ was in disrepair through much of his tenure. He eventually undertook a concert tour of North America in 1927 to raise money for its restoration. (Among others places, he played at the Wanamaker stores in [New York](#) and Philadelphia.) The organ tour was a good success — it must have helped pay for the 1932 organ work — but it drained him physically.

A street accident in Paris caused him to badly fracture his leg, and it was briefly thought his leg would need to be amputated. The leg was saved, but his recovery, and the task of completely re-learning his pedal technique, took a full year during one of the busiest times of his life. Despite his difficulties, however, his students uniformly described him as a kind, patient and encouraging teacher. Among his pupils were [Augustin Barié](#), [Edward Shippen Barnes](#), [Lili Boulanger](#), [Nadia Boulanger](#), [Marcel Dupré](#), [André Fleury](#), [Isadore Freed](#), [Henri Gagnebin](#), [Gaston Litaize](#), [Édouard Mignan](#), [Alexander Schreiner](#), and [Georges-Émile Tanguay](#).

While giving his 1750th organ recital [yes, 1750], at *Notre-Dame de Paris* on the evening of June 2, 1937, Vierne suffered either a stroke or a heart attack (eyewitness reports differ). He had completed the main concert, which members of the audience said showed him at his full powers, 'as well as he has ever played.' The closing section was to be two improvisations on submitted themes. He read the first theme in Braille, then selected the stops he would use for the improvisation. He suddenly pitched forward, and fell off the bench as his foot hit the low "E" pedal of the organ. He lost consciousness as the single note echoed throughout the church.

Vierne's extensive catalog of organ works includes *6 Organ Symphonies*, *24 Pièces en style libre*, *2 Messes basses* for organ, *3 Improvisations*, the *24 Pièces de fantaisie* in four separate suites, plus a few miscellaneous works. Though his fine symphonies are important to the organist's repertory, the smaller pieces in the various suites are also often played; and the *24 Pièces* in free style, written for organ or harmonium, are of easy to medium difficulty, making them accessible to a large number of players.

Much of Vierne's music shows evidence of what later was called "Impressionism," in particular, his use of the whole tone scale, sometimes relatively static harmony, and program-related titles for music that tells a story or paints an effect. In addition, Vierne's later works — particularly the symphonies, like those of Widor — show a more marked chromaticism in both melody and harmony.

For further listening: David Baskeyfield plays "Naiades" ["Water sprites"] from the *Pièces de Fantaisie*, 4<sup>th</sup> suite: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBEcgRJArps>

Geoff Olson plays "Berceuse," from *24 Pièces en style libre*, at St. Paul's UCC, St. Paul MN: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiibqoHi0Jw>

## German, Late Romantic into 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Max Reger\_(1873-1916)

— “*Pastorale*” from *Zwölf Stücke*, op. 59. No. 2

[*The Pastorale is one of Reger’s quieter pieces, written basically in trio style. It is, however, also an excellent short example for showing Reger’s extremely chromatic writing: listen carefully to hear all the motion by half steps, both harmonic and melodic. Also notice the stop controls on this organ, which are tilting tablets on either side of the keyboards.*]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ75PBAQ6ul>

Johann Baptist Joseph Maximilian Reger was born in Brand, Bavaria (Germany), and studied music in Munich and Wiesbaden with eminent pianist and music theorist [Hugo Reimann](#). From September 1901 he settled in Munich, where he obtained concert offers and where his rapid rise to fame began. During his first Munich season, Reger appeared in ten concerts as an organist, chamber pianist and accompanist. He continued to compose without interruption. From 1907 he worked in Leipzig, where he was music director of at Leipzig university until 1908, and professor of composition at the Leipzig Conservatory until his death. In 1911 he moved to [Meiningen](#), where he took the position of Court Music Master at the court of [Georg II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen](#); and In 1915 he moved to [Jena](#), commuting once a week to teach in Leipzig. He died in May 1916 on one of these trips of a heart attack at age 43.

Reger had also been active internationally as a conductor and pianist. Among his students were [Joseph Haas](#), [Sándor Jemnitz](#), [Jaroslav Kvapil](#), [Ruben Liljefors](#), [George Szell](#) and [Cristófor Taltabull](#).

{*The following information is taken from the website of [The Max Reger Foundation of America](#).*}

Max Reger was a progressive, early modernist composer, who expanded upon the styles of Johann Sebastian Bach and Johannes Brahms. During his lifetime, Reger was considered one of the great composers of the era, alongside [Richard Strauss](#) and [Gustav Mahler](#). Reger was a prolific composer who [*in just 25 years*] wrote more than 1000 works, in all forms except opera. In America, he is best known for his organ works, which consist of symphonic-like compositions, short character pieces and chorale preludes. The organ works are a significant part of his work, [*but he*] ...also contributed extensively to the chamber, orchestral, vocal, piano, and choral repertoire throughout his life....

Although the primary influences upon Reger were Bach and Brahms, it is the [*chromatic*] harmonic language of [Richard Wagner](#) that permeates his [tonal](#) style. He is noted by many scholars and musicians as being the person who *emancipated* dissonance to a level that allowed [Arnold Schoenberg](#) to more easily develop [serialism](#) in the 1920’s. Still, Reger himself wrote tonal music exclusively, expounding on the chromatic relationships between key structures.

In 1947, Albert Schweitzer wrote:

The significance of Reger’s work will only be appreciated in the future. I have had many opportunities to see that other countries are not yet really acquainted, much less familiar, with him. The fault is to be found largely in the two wars and the interwar period, which set up barriers to becoming acquainted and familiar with him—barriers that would otherwise not have existed when it was time for Reger’s art to go out into the world.

Reger’s legacy extends to other composers who were influenced by him. They include [Bela Bartok](#) (who visited with Reger in 1907, in Leipzig), [Alban Berg](#), [Paul Hindemith](#) (who attributed his

compositional style to Reger), [Arthur Honegger](#), [Sergey Prokofiev](#), and Arnold Schoenberg (who considered him a genius).

Grammy-Award-Winning organist Paul Jacobs, head of organ department at the Julliard School, plays Reger's Phantasie...über B-A-C-H, op. 46a (first half of a Phantasie und Fuge...) at New York's Trinity Church Wall Street: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aR4YEDcXBI>.

[The motif B-A-C-H relies on the old German spelling, where B is always B-flat, and the letter H is used to indicate B-natural. Liszt wrote an organ Prelude & Fugue on B-A-C-H too, in 1855. See title page of 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, called "Fantasie," with B-A-C-H on musical staff, [here](#).]

Organist and Reger scholar Henrico Stewen plays Reger's *Toccata*, op. 59, on the organ built by Wilhelm Sauer at St. Thomas Church, Leipzig: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZzQzrVJhfw>.

Reger's friend, organist, and editor Karl Straube played at St. Thomas Church, and the video is particularly interesting because it shows what could be called a "Reger organ." It was built in 1889, and expanded in 1908. Notice particularly the "Crescendo Roller," an early kind of Crescendo Pedal, which the organist rolls with his foot to add (and then subtract) stops. The stop controls and pistons are also distinctive.

### German-American, Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Wilhelm Middelschulte (1863–1943)

— *Perpetuum mobile*

Virgil Fox, who early in his career was a student of Middelschulte, plays *Perpetuum mobile*, "Perpetual Motion" (an etude for pedal solo, based on the Wedge Fugue subject of J. S. Bach). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HF0ArsotX3g>

Middelschulte Photos from 1893 & 1929:

[http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Pic-Lib-BIG/Middelschulte-Wilhelm-01\[1893-Chicago\].jpg](http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Pic-Lib-BIG/Middelschulte-Wilhelm-01[1893-Chicago].jpg)

[http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Pic-Lib-BIG/Middelschulte-Wilhelm-02\[1929-Chicago\].jpg](http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Pic-Lib-BIG/Middelschulte-Wilhelm-02[1929-Chicago].jpg)

Born (and died) in Werne, near Dortmund, Germany, Middelschulte initially studied organ with [August Knabe](#). He later attended the Royal Institute of Church Music in Berlin, where he studied organ and theory with [August Haupt](#). After briefly holding a position at the Royal Institute and acquiring a post at the [Lukaskirche](#) in Berlin, he moved to Chicago in 1891. In 1893, he gave three performances entirely from memory at the [Chicago World's Fair](#). From 1896–1918 he was organist for what would later become the [Chicago Symphony Orchestra](#). Until 1895, he was also organist at the Cathedral of the Holy Name, and then organist at Milwaukee's St. James's Church from 1899–1919. There he served as professor of organ at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. In 1935 he became instructor of theory and organ at Detroit's Foundation Music School.

During the 1920s, Middelschulte regularly returned to his native Germany to give performances. He is regarded there as one of the most significant organists of his time, and was critically acclaimed for his performances of J.S. Bach. In 1939, after nearly fifty years in America, Middelschulte returned to Germany, where he died only four years later.

There is clear evidence that Middelschulte and [Ferruccio Busoni](#) were friends, and colleagues of a common mind. Not only were both rather "severe contrapuntalists" who wrote in highly chromatic styles; but, in addition, two of Busoni's works of 1910 bear the dedication, "To Wilhelm

Middelschulte, Master of Counterpoint.” One of these dedications is on Busoni’s large piano piece *Fantasia contrappuntistica* (labeled “definitive edition”), one of Busoni’s most ambitious works.

The second, similar dedication is his *Große Fuge* (based on the subject from Bach’s *Art of the Fugue*), which in its page 39 dating says: “Begun on the steamship ‘Barbarossa’ on New Year’s 1910. Finished in New Orleans on 1 March 1910.” It is obvious that both men discussed some compositional aspects of the work, too, because the sketches for the *Große Fuge* contain contrapuntal studies based on the *Art of Fugue* by both Middelschulte and [Bernhard Ziehn](#) (another German-born contrapuntalist transplanted to Chicago). There are also two four-voice canons bearing the dedication, “To Herr Ferruccio Busoni, at the friendly memory, by W. Middelschulte, Chicago, 16 January 1910.” Middelschulte is the author of the first transcription of the *Fantasia contrappuntistica* [for organ]. Even though it was published in 1912, a year after the completion of Friedrich Stock’s version [for orchestra], this arrangement was already completed by late January 1911. Middelschulte also participated in the first performance of Stock’s orchestral arrangement.<sup>7</sup>

Besides a *Concerto for Organ and Orchestra*, Middelschulte’s published organ compositions total only ten separate works, but almost every one is characterized by massive size and complex, contrapuntal style. The counterpoint, and his frequent use of the B-A-C-H theme, certainly pay homage to the Baroque master. However, his harmonic control, though basically tonal in approach, is couched in the most chromatic of styles, even surpassing the chromaticism of Reger.

Middelschulte is not well known nor often played today, even among organists. However, In our day of high technology, where the living room can be a concert hall, many have heard recorded performances of his music; and a current blog (*The Organ Forum*), when it asks organ aficionados to list the five greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century organ composers, finds votes for such diverse composers as Middelschulte, as well as [Percy Whitlock](#), [György Ligeti](#), [Kaikhosru Sorabji](#), and [Naji Hakim](#).

The pedal solo played by Virgil Fox in the video above was published only posthumously with the title “*Perpetuum mobile*.” Originally, it appeared in 1906 as just one movement of a very large “Konzert”<sup>8</sup> on a theme by J.S. Bach — namely, the theme from the “Wedge” fugue. Just like the B-A-C-H theme, of course, the “Wedge” theme is also distinctive chromatic “fodder” for this composer’s genius.

— C.H.

### French Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)

— “*Amen finale*,” verset IV of *Ave Maris stella*, from *Fifteen Pieces*, op. 18

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8nhgr0TT8U>

Alesander Därr performs on an organ built by Wilhelm Sauer for the Marian Church in Mülhausen, Germany.

The *15 Pieces* are antiphons and versets from the Marian vesper liturgy, and were originally improvised by Dupré on August 15, 1919, at choral vespers for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The versets would have been performed in alternation with the choir’s verses. This one, a “finale,” is another version of a French toccata.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Lib/Middelschulte-Wilhelm.htm>

<sup>8</sup> This title, “Konzert,” is probably best translated as “Concert Piece,” rather than “Concerto,” the usual translation of that word. The piece is certainly a solo work.



Marcel Dupré was a child prodigy born into a musical family at Rouen in Normandy, France. His father Albert was a friend of Aristide Cavallé-Coll, who built an organ in the family house when Marcel was 14 years old. He entered the Paris Conservatory in 1904, studying organ with [Alexandre Guilmant](#) and Louis Vierne, and fugue and composition with Charles-Marie Widor.

In 1920-21, he performed, entirely from memory, two series of the complete organ works of J.S. Bach, in 10 recitals at the Paris Conservatory, and again at [the old Palais de Trocadéro](#). The subsequent sponsorship of an American transcontinental tour by the Wanamaker department stores rocketed his name into international prominence; and, in the mold of his teacher Guilmant, Dupré became a famous touring virtuoso, in his lifetime performing more than 2000 organ recitals throughout Australia, the United States, Canada, and Europe. He amazed audiences with his improvisations — and throughout his life various compositions began as concert improvisations. (One example is the *Symphonie-Passion*, improvised on his first American tour of 1924,)

In 1934, Dupré succeeded Widor as organist at [St. Sulpice](#) in Paris, a post he held until his death in 1971. From 1947-1954, he was director of the [American Conservatory at Fontainebleau](#); and from 1954–1956, director of the Paris Conservatory. He died at his home in [Meudon](#) (near Paris) in 1971, at the age of 85.

As a composer, he produced a large catalog of 65 opus numbers, and also taught two generations of well-known organists, including [Jehan Alain](#) and [Marie-Claire Alain](#), [Jean-Marie Beaudet](#), [Pierre Cochereau](#), [Jeanne Demessieux](#),<sup>9</sup> [Rolande Falcinelli](#), [Jean-Jacques Grunenwald](#), [Jean Guillou](#), [Jean Langlais](#), [Carl Weinrich](#) and [Olivier Messiaen](#), to name only a few. Aside from a few fine works for aspiring organists (such as the *79 Chorales*, op. 28), most of Dupré's music for the organ ranges from moderately to extremely difficult, and some of it makes almost impossible technical demands on the performer (e.g., *Évocation* op. 37; *Suite*, op. 39; *Deux Esquisses*, op. 41; *Vision*, op. 44).

Dupré's most often heard and recorded compositions tend to be from the earlier years of his career. During this time he wrote the *Three Preludes and Fugues*, op. 7 (1914), with the First (in B major) and Third Preludes (the G minor with its phenomenally fast tempo/figurations and pedal chords) being pronounced “unplayable” by no less a figure than Widor. Indeed, such is their difficulty that Dupré was the only organist able to play them until several years later.

For further listening: Joseph Ripka plays the “unplayable,” at the Cavallé-Coll organ at St. Sulpice, Dupré's *Prelude & Fugue in B major*, op. 7, no. 1:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IniaqocbLjM>.

Daniel Gabčo plays Dupré's *Variations on a Noël on a new Woehl pipe organ at St. Martin's Cathedral, in Bratislava, Slovakia*::  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3ftu3fJuOk>.

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<sup>9</sup> A video of *Etude 1*, “alternate toes,” by Demessieux – Maxime Patel plays the Waldsassen Basilica's 6-manual organ, largest organ in Europe: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4eQH3YPqPw>.

Notice these stop controls, too. Also, click here for a great 360° panorama of the huge room: <http://www.abtei-waldsassen.de/panoramas/Basilika.htm> (wait for it to load).

German-American 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

— *Organ Sonata 2* (1937), movement 1, *Lebhaft*

<http://www.kids.agowichita.org/resources/Hindemith%20Sonata%202,%20Lebhaft%20-%20Peter%20Hurford.mp3>

*In this performance by English organist Peter Hurford, the registration may be a bit brighter than Hindemith expected in 1937, when he wrote the first two Sonatas with the large, 1928 E.M. Skinner organ in mind at [Woolsey Hall](#), Yale University. Its tone is considerably warmer and “rounder” than most of our contemporary organs today. However, Hurford uses interesting color in his registration, and Hindemith’s spare and straightforward style lends itself well to newer organs, too.*

— C.H.

Born in Hanau, near Frankfurt, Germany, Hindemith was taught violin as a child. He entered Frankfurt’s [Hoch Conservatory](#) and studied violin, conducting, and composition. Later, he supported himself by playing in dance bands and musical-comedy groups. Then in 1914, he became deputy leader of the Frankfurt Opera Orchestra, and was promoted to leader in 1917. He also played second violin in the Rebner String Quartet from 1914, and in 1921 he founded the Amar Quartet, playing viola, and the group toured extensively in Europe.

When some of his pieces were played in a festival for the [International Society for Contemporary Music](#) in 1922, he came to the attention of an international audience. From 1927, he taught composition at the [Berlin Hochschule für Musik](#); wrote music for a Hans Richter avant-garde film; and played the solo part in the premiere of William Walton’s Viola Concerto.

During the 1930s, he made a visit to Cairo, and several visits to Ankara, where he led the task of reorganizing Turkish music education and the early efforts to establish a new [Turkish State Opera and Ballet](#), and he returned there a number of times. Hindemith had a difficult, “on and off” relationship with the Nazis during this time, and he finally emigrated to Switzerland in 1938. Towards the end of the 1930s, he also made several tours in America as a viola and [viola d’amore](#) soloist.

In 1940, Hindemith emigrated to the United States. At the same time that he was codifying his musical language, his teaching and compositions began to be affected by his theories, according to critics like [Ernest Ansermet](#). Once in the U.S., he taught primarily at [Yale University](#), where he had such notable students as [Lukas Foss](#), [Graham George](#), [Norman Dello Joio](#), [Mel Powell](#), [Harold Shapero](#), [Hans Otte](#), [Ruth Schonthal](#), and Oscar-winning film director [George Roy Hill](#). During this time he also gave the [Charles Eliot Norton Lectures](#) at [Harvard](#), from which the book *A Composer’s World* was extracted (1952).<sup>10</sup>

He became an American citizen in 1946, but returned to Europe in 1953, living in [Zürich](#) and teaching at the university there. Towards the end of his life he began to conduct more, and made numerous recordings, mostly of his own music. He was awarded the [Balzan Prize](#) in 1962.

After a prolonged decline in his physical health (though he kept composing until almost the last), Hindemith died in Frankfurt from [pancreatitis](#) at the age of 68.

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<sup>10</sup> For an interesting, short excerpt read from the book, click [here](#).

For further listening: *Organ Sonata I* (1937), movement 2, *Sehr langsam* (Piet Kee) [mp3]  
<http://www.kids.agowichita.org/resources/Hindemith%20Sonata%20I,%20Sehr%20langsam%20-%20Piet%20Kee.mp3>

*Organ Sonata I* (1937), movement 3, *Phantasie, frei* (Peter Hurford) [mp3]  
<http://www.kids.agowichita.org/resources/Hindemith%20Sonata%20I,%20Phantasie%20frei%20-%20Peter%20Hurford.mp3>

*Organ Concerto* (1962), movement 2, *Sehr langsam und ganz ruhig*  
Martin Haselböck, organ, and the Vienna Symphony under Raphael Frühbeck de Burgos:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZh7YcfYUWw&feature=results\\_video&playnext=1&list=PLE20492DC83B7C41D](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZh7YcfYUWw&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PLE20492DC83B7C41D).

French 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Jean Langlais (1907-1991)

— *Pasticcio*, No. 10 from the *Organ Book* (1956):

[*The musical output of Jean Langlais is large and quite diverse. This delightful piece is only of medium difficulty, but features manual changes for the echoes, and contrasting short sections characteristic of Langlais' organ music. It would be more fun to watch it played, but this is the best performance available in the recordings we can access.*]

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33DarBs17Bw&feature=results\\_video&playnext=1&list=PL8376BFB54002BB05](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33DarBs17Bw&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PL8376BFB54002BB05) [Stop at 2'18" or player continues.]

Jean Langlais was born in La Fontenelle, a small Brittany village about half an hour's drive from Mon St. Michel, on the Norman coastline. Glaucoma made him blind when he was two years old, and he was sent to the [National Institute for Blind Children](#) in Paris, where he eventually studied organ with [André Marchal](#).

Later, he entered the Paris Conservatory in Marcel Dupré's organ class, obtaining a First Prize in 1930. In 1931, he received the "Grand Prize in Performance and Improvisation," having studied improvisation with [Charles Tournemire](#). In [Paul Dukas](#)' composition class, he received the Composition Prize in 1934.

After graduating, he returned to the National Institute for Blind Children, where he taught for forty years. From 1961 to 1976, he also taught at the [Schola Cantorum](#). He worked with many students, both French and foreign, many of whom went on to become important musicians, including organist and composer [Naji Hakim](#).

However, it was as an organist that Langlais made his name, following in the steps of César Franck and Charles Tournemire as *organiste titulaire* at the [Basilica of Sainte-Clotilde](#) in Paris in 1945, a post in which he remained until 1988. He was also much in demand as a concert organist, and toured widely across Europe and the United States. In North America alone, he played over 300 recitals.

Outside music, Langlais was a colorful and charismatic character. He died in Paris aged 84, and was survived by his second wife Marie-Louise Jaquet-Langlais and three children, Janine, Claude and Caroline.

Langlais was a prolific composer, composing 254 works with opus numbers, the first of which was his *Prelude and Fugue* for organ (1927), and the last his *Trio* (1990), another organ piece. Although best known as a composer of organ music and sacred choral music, he also composed a number of instrumental, orchestral and chamber works and some secular song settings.

The majority of Langlais' music is written in a late, freely tonal style, representative of mid-twentieth-century French music, with rich and complex harmonies and overlapping modes. His music is more tonal than that of his contemporary, friend, and countryman Olivier Messiaen, and more related to the work of his two predecessors at Sainte-Clotilde, Franck and Tournemire.

For further listening: Organist Christopher Young of Indiana University plays Langlais' *Fête*:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gWPI-kMMJs>. [*This video is very professionally made.*]

French Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Jehan Alain (1911-1940) — *Litanies* (1937):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2OTIVgZQao>

*Philippe Delacour's performance of Litanies here is undoubtedly the very fastest that I have ever heard. However, it is fun to watch the organist fly through it! — C.H.*

*The inscription on the piece reads, in translation, "When the Christian soul in its distress no longer finds new words to implore the mercy of God, it repeats the same invocation incessantly with a vehement faith. Reason has reached its limit. Faith alone continues upward." This description, "repeating the same theme incessantly," well describes the form of this piece. The main litany theme is given a consequent phrase in the recitative opening, but after that is restated again and again, developed within that format. It is juxtaposed with one contrasting theme through the opening pages; with a slightly different one before the cadenza-like downward scale; and then, when the litany is stated in chord stream at the end, with yet another brief contrast, reminiscent of lifting the hands in supplication.*

*The litany theme's distinctive rhythm (3+5+6+2) is developed throughout by occasional alteration; and, on the final page, the chords — the roots for which move in whole tones — develop the rhythm predominantly, harmonically using a kind of "dominant extension" that moves radically away from the dominant, falls a half step to the subdominant, and cadences "screaming."*

*It is said that Alain wrote the piece on the train, and that the familiar, obsessive rhythm of pre-war trains strongly influenced the composer's imagination... — C.H., with credit also to Martin Setchell, at Great Australasian Organs VII. [See <http://www.nzorgan.com/martinsetchell/recordings-great-australasian-organsVII.htm>.]*

Jehan Alain was born in [Saint-Germain-en-Laye](#), in the western suburbs of Paris, into a family of musicians. His father, Albert Alain (1880–1971), was an enthusiastic organist, composer and organ-builder who had studied with Alexandre Guilmant and Louis Vierne. His younger brother was the composer, organist and pianist [Olivier Alain](#) (1918–1994); his younger sister the organist Marie-Odile Alain (who died in a mountain climbing accident in 1937); and his youngest sister the organist [Marie-Claire Alain](#) (b. 1926). Jehan received his initial training in the piano from Augustin Pierson, the organist of Saint-Louis at Versailles, and in the organ from his father, who had built a four-manual instrument in the family sitting room. By the age of 11, Jehan was substituting at his local *Church, St. Germain*.

Between 1927 and 1939, he attended the Paris Conservatory and achieved First Prize in Harmony under [André Bloch](#) and First Prize in Fugue with [Georges Caussade](#). He studied the organ with [Marcel Dupré](#), under whose direction he took first prize for Organ and Improvisation in 1939. His studies in composition with [Paul Dukas](#) and [Jean Roger-Ducasse](#) won him the *Prix des amis de l'orgue* in 1936 for his *Suite for Organ* op. 48. He was appointed organist of Saint-Nicholas de Maisons Lafitte in Paris in 1935, and remained there for four years. He also played regularly at the Rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth synagogue, where the only known recording of his playing—a six-minute improvisation—was made in 1938.

Alain's short career as a composer began in 1929, when Alain was 18, and lasted until the outbreak of the Second World War ten years later. His output was influenced not only by the musical language not only of the earlier [Claude Debussy](#), but also [Francis Poulenc](#), and by that of his contemporary Olivier Messiaen (seen in *Le jardin suspendu*, 1934) — but also by an interest in the music, dance, and philosophies of the far east (acquired at the [Paris Exposition](#) of 1931 and seen in *Deux danses à Agni Yavishta*, 1932, and *Deuxième fantaisie*, 1936), by a revival of Renaissance and Baroque music (seen in *Variations sur un thème de Clément Janequin*, 1937), and by the growing influence of jazz (seen in *Trois danses*, 1939).

He wrote choral music, including a Requiem mass, chamber music, songs, and three volumes of piano music. But it is for his organ music for which he is best known. His most famous work, without doubt, is *Litanies Deuils* ('mourning'), the second of the *Trois danses*, is dedicated to his sister Marie-Odile, as a *Funeral Dance to an Heroic Memory*." The centennial of his birth in 2011 was the occasion for Alain Festivals in France and other countries. [*In the U.S., one was held in Wichita, Kansas.*]

Always interested in mechanics, Alain was a skilled motorcyclist and became a dispatch rider in the Eighth Motorised Armour Division of the French Army in the second World War. On June 20, 1940, he was assigned to reconnoiter the German advance on the eastern side of [Saumur](#), and encountered a group of German soldiers at Le Petit-Puy. Coming around a curve, and hearing the approaching tread of the Germans, he abandoned his motorcycle and engaged the enemy troops with his carbine, killing 16 of them before being killed himself.

He was posthumously awarded the French *Croix de Guerre* for his bravery, and according to [Nicolas Slonimsky](#) was buried, by the Germans with full military honors. He left behind his wife, Madeleine Payan whom he had married in 1935, their three children, and a musical output viewed by many to have been amongst the most original of the 20th century.

[Henri Dutilleux](#)'s work *Les citations* contains a quotation from Jehan Alain's music. [Maurice Duruflé](#) also wrote a musical tribute to Jehan Alain with his *Prélude et fugue sur le nom d'A-L-A-I-N*, op. 7, for organ.

For further listening: Postlude for the Office of Complines:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rT6yyySIOsE>

According to his sister [Marie-Claire](#), young Jehan Alain loved to go with his family to the Abbey of Valloires and its lovely rococo chapel for the Office of Complines, sung at night by candlelight by women. This postlude was an effort to prolong the feeling he got from that service. Inspired by the free rhythm of the Gregorian chant he borrowed for this piece, Alain used irregular divisions within the bar lines, thus giving the music a sense of rhythmic liberty. Befitting its nocturnal setting, the

postlude establishes a long, sustained berceuse rhythm (a lullaby), over which flit fragments of Gregorian chant that pass among the manuals and occasionally engage each other in conversation. The first melody heard is *Miserere mei, Domine*, which gives way to *Te lucis ante terminum*. Next, found lurking in the bass, is *In manus tuas*, which, after a few more phrases of *Te lucis*, ascends to the treble. More melodies file past: *Salve nos, Domine* and then *Gloria Patri et Filio*, the whole brief fantasy capped by a series of *Amens*. — Allmusic.com

2<sup>nd</sup> Fantasy: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pty9fUrwJU>

This performance from the *International Symposium*, not really on a good “Alain organ,” is a bit loud and bright, but the voices are quite clear and distinct. The stop pullers on each side are getting quite a workout, on this mechanical action organ, which has no piston system. (They are called “registrants” because they are helping

The opening theme is the incipit of the chant *Exultabunt Domino* (“They will exult in the Lord”). The quiet of that opening is interrupted by the quasi-rubato second theme on the Cromorne stop, sounding distinctly exotic, with the annunciatory spirit of, perhaps, the shofar. Melodically, it is most reminiscent of taqsim, the improvisation of middle eastern music (Arabic, Greek, or Turkish sources). Not only are outlines of the tri-tone found in the melody, but also the underlying harmony combines and juxtaposes chords based on E-flat and A-natural, a tri-tone away from each other.

The fluttering toccata figure in the development which follows also emphasizes the tri-tone, as its sixteenth notes in North African rhythm (3+3+2) represent the second theme in combination with the first. Colors and dynamics build, rhythms are diminished for excitement, and then augmented as the development backs off and broadens, finally relaxing again to the spirit of the opening. The last allusion to the plainchant theme is couched in the terms of the middle eastern second theme. —C.H., with credit to Matthew Sellier, whose 2011 honors thesis discusses the piece in detail. [See [http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1689&context=etd\\_hon\\_theses](http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1689&context=etd_hon_theses).]

French 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Olivier Messiaen (1907-1991)

— “*Transports de joie*“ from *L’ascension*” (1934):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09lIP2uaHnw>

[This recording by Daniel Moulton was made at the organ of the Priory Church of St. Mary, Bridlington Priory, East Yorkshire, England. The organ, built in 1889 by Belgian organ builder Charles Anneessens, and restored in 2004, has a warm fundamental tone, in the same spirit as Cavallé-Coll’s own.]

At the Paris [Exposition Universelle](#) of 1889 (where the [Eiffel Tower](#) debuted), Debussy and other French musicians were first introduced to the music of the [gamelan](#) by an ensemble from Java. Debussy’s *Pagodes* is the directly inspired result, evoking the pentatonic structures employed by Javanese music. He was not alone in his search for exotic harmonies and influences. Wagner’s chromaticism developed what is called the “[Tristan Chord](#)”; Scriabin sought relief from tonality in synthetic scales, and developed the “[Mystic Chord](#)”; there are also Strauss’s “[Elektra chord](#),” and Stravinsky’s “[Petroushka chord](#).”

Olivier Messiaen, a generation after Debussy, also looked for “his voice” and inspiration in exotic sources. When he first began piano lessons, having already taught himself to play, his interest

included recent music of Debussy and Ravel; and around 1918, one of his music teachers gave him a score of Debussy's opera [Pelléas et Mélisande](#), which Messiaen later described as "a thunderbolt" and "probably the most decisive influence on me."

Messiaen was to become one of the major composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his influence was cast upon generations of composers who followed him and studied with him. His music is rhythmically complex (from ancient Greek and Hindu sources), and his harmonic and melodic control is based on his own "[modes of limited transposition](#)" (abstracted from his early compositions and improvisations). He thought of his harmony and affect as the combination of colors, and he was also primarily a programmatic composer, "acting" as a painter on the canvas and a director in the theater. Many of his "programs" come from what he termed "the marvelous aspects of the [*Roman Catholic*] faith." He also travelled widely, and wrote works inspired by such diverse influences as Japanese music, the landscape of [Bryce Canyon](#) in Utah, and the life of [St. Francis of Assisi](#).

He found birdsong fascinating, believed birds to be the greatest musicians, and considered himself as much an [ornithologist](#) as a composer. He notated bird songs worldwide and incorporated birdsong transcriptions into most of his music. His innovative use of color, his conception of the relationship between time and music, his use of birdsong, and his desire to express religious ideas are among the features that make Messiaen's music distinctive.

Olivier Eugène Prosper Charles Messiaen was born in [Avignon](#), France, into a literary family. He was the elder of two sons of Cécile Sauvage, a poet, and Pierre Messiaen, a teacher of English who translated the plays of William Shakespeare into French. Messiaen's mother published a sequence of poems, *L'âme en bourgeon* ("The Budding Soul") — the last chapter of *Tandis que la terre tourne* ("As the Earth Turns") — which address her unborn son. Messiaen later said this sequence of poems influenced him deeply and he cited it as prophetic of his future artistic career. [*Anyone who reads Messiaen's treatise The Technique of My Musical Language will also see the evidence of his parent's subsequent influence: his mother's poetic, and his father's theatrical.*]

Messiaen entered the Paris Conservatory in 1919, aged 11. In 1926, he gained first prize in counterpoint and fugue; and in 1927, first prize in piano accompaniment. After studying with Maurice Emmanuel, he was awarded first prize for the history of music in 1928. Emmanuel's example engendered an interest in ancient Greek rhythms and exotic modes. After showing improvisation skills on the piano, Messiaen was recommended to study organ with Marcel Dupré. He gained first prize in organ playing and improvisation in 1929. After a year studying composition with Charles-Marie Widor, in the autumn of 1927 he entered the class of the newly appointed Paul Dukas, who instilled in Messiaen a mastery of orchestration. In 1930 Messiaen won first prize in composition. [*Other students in Dukas' composition class at the time included Alain and Langlais.*]

While a student he composed his first published works — his eight Préludes for piano (the earlier *Le banquet céleste* was published subsequently). These exhibit Messiaen's use of his "modes of limited transposition" and palindromic rhythms. [*Messiaen called these "non-retrogradable rhythms,"*] His public début came in 1931 with his orchestral suite *Les offrandes oubliées*. That same year he first heard a gamelan group, which sparked his interest in the use of tuned percussion.

From 1929, two years after taking up the organ, Messiaen had played regularly for the Church of the [Holy Trinity](#) ("*La Trinité*"), substituting for the "titular" organist, [Charles Quef](#), who was ill.<sup>11</sup> Upon

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<sup>11</sup> In more direct words, Quef was the "titled" organist, but he "deputized" Messiaen to do the playing for him.

Quef's death in 1931 — with the support of Dupré, Tournemire, and Widor — the 22-year-old Messiaen was appointed to the post, which he held for more than sixty years.

He married the violinist and composer [Claire Delbos](#) in 1932. Their marriage inspired him to both compose works for her to play (*Thème et variations* for violin and piano in the year they were married) and to write pieces to celebrate their domestic happiness, including the soprano song cycle *Poèmes pour Mi* in 1936, which he orchestrated in 1937. *Mi* was Messiaen's affectionate nickname for his wife. [This was also the productive period in which the organ works *L'Ascension* (1934) and *La nativité du Seigneur* (1935) were published.]

Delbos suffered a series of miscarriages in the early years of their marriage, but in 1937 their son Pascal was born, and Messiaen produced another song cycle, *Chants de terre et de ciel* (1938), in which all three members of the family were portrayed. Unfortunately, towards the end of WWII, the marriage turned to tragedy when Delbos began to suffer from memory loss after an operation; and she spent the rest of her life institutionalized, dying in 1959.

In 1936, along with [André Jolivet](#), [Daniel-Lesur](#) and [Yves Baudrier](#), Messiaen formed the group [La jeune France](#) ("Young France"). Their manifesto implicitly attacked the frivolity predominant in contemporary Parisian music and rejected [Jean Cocteau's](#) 1918 "*Le coq et l'arlequin*" manifesto in favour of a "living music, having the impetus of sincerity, generosity and artistic conscientiousness." Messiaen's career soon departed from this polemical phase. *La jeune France* composer's individual styles were widely different; and their only commonality, that they were organists. Thus, the group itself was not to survive through the second World War.

In response to a commission for a piece to accompany light-and water-shows on the River Seine during the [Paris Exposition](#), in 1937 Messiaen demonstrated his interest in using the [Ondes Martenot](#), an electronic instrument, by composing *Fêtes des belles eaux* for an ensemble of six of them. He included a part for the instrument in several of his subsequent compositions, as well.

At the outbreak of WWII, Messiaen was drafted into the French army. Due to poor eyesight, he was enlisted as a medical auxiliary, rather than an active combatant, but was captured at Verdun in June 1940 and imprisoned at [Stalag VIII-A](#). There he met a violinist, a cellist and a clarinetist among his fellow prisoners and for them wrote a trio which he gradually incorporated into his [Quatuor pour la fin du temps](#) ("Quartet for the End of Time"). The quartet was first performed in the hut that was the camp's theater on January 15, 1941, to an audience of about 400 fellow prisoners and prison guards. The title's "end of time" alludes to the [Apocalypse](#) [particularly *Rev 10:1-2, 5-7*], and also to the way in which Messiaen used time in a manner completely different from his predecessors and contemporaries. The work has been hailed by many, but Nigel Simeone, in notes for the *Philharmonia Orchestra* in 2008, called it "one of the most remarkable works to have come out of World War II, composed by a musician whose religious faith was a constant inspiration, even in the most arduous circumstances."

Shortly after his release as a prisoner of war in May 1941, Messiaen was appointed a professor of harmony at the Paris Conservatory, where he taught until his retirement in 1978. He then compiled his *Technique de mon langage musical* ("The technique of my musical language"), published in 1944, in which he quotes many examples from his music, particularly the *Quartet*. Although he was only in his mid-thirties, his students described him as an outstanding teacher — who, rather than imposing his own ideas, encouraged his pupils to find their own voices.



Messiaen's music has been described as outside the western musical tradition, although growing out of that tradition and being influenced by it. Much of his output denies the western conventions of forward motion, [development](#), and [diatonic](#) harmonic resolution. This is partly due to the symmetries of his technique — for instance, the symmetrical “modes of limited transposition” do not admit the *conventional* [cadences](#) found in western classical music.

Messiaen continually evolved new composition techniques, always integrating them into his existing musical style. For many commentators this continual development made every *major* work from the *Quatuor* onwards a conscious summation of all that Messiaen had composed up to that time. However, very few of these major works lack for new technical ideas. [To read an extended description the elements of his musical style, in the Wikipedia article on [Messiaen](#), click on #2 in the outline, “Music.”]

For further listening: Tour of the organ at Messiaen’s Church of *La Trinité* in Paris:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grla2-xP7kc>

At *La Trinité* in Paris, concert organist Naji Hakim plays Messiaen’s “*Dieu parmi nous*” (“God among us”), from *La Nativité du Seigneur*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMIYI2hCd-Y>

[*Though this video is made with the microphone right next to the organist, so there is a lot of ambient noise — you hear everything, including noise of the stops as they’re changed by pistons, and even the page turns! — nonetheless, it is an excellent performance, and we have an advantage in being right there with Naji Hakim, as he plays the organ in Messiaen’s own church.*]

### **Other 20<sup>th</sup> Century Organ Composers of Interest:**

[Sir Charles Stanford](#) (1852–1924) (Also see <http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/acc/stanford.php>.)

[Sigfrid Karg-Elert](#) (1877–1933)

[Healey Willan](#) (1880–1968)

[Leo Sowerby](#) (1895–1968) (Also see <http://www.albany.edu/piporg-l/Sowerby.html>.)

[Maurice Duruflé](#) (1902–1986)

[Flor Peeters](#) (1903–1986)

[Helmut Walcha](#) (1907-1991)

[Hugo Distler](#) (1908–1942)

[Naji Hakim](#) (1955–)

Other interesting sites:

Other young performers

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpp0H8tv5Hw&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3EZPf3fhys&feature=related>

Pipe Organ Reference sites:

*PipeDreams* resources

Programs & recordings: <http://pipedreams.publicradio.org/listings/>

Organ Gallery: <http://pipedreams.publicradio.org/gallery/> (in some cases linking to stoplists)

[Beware Google translations from the French, particularly in stoplists! To read stoplists properly, one needs to make the web page revert to the original language.]

[Encyclopedia of Organ Stops](#)