THE EVOLUTION OF WIDOR’S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE, AS EVIDENCED IN HIS TEN ORGAN SYMPHONIES

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The Evolution of Widor’s Compositional Style, as Evienced in his Ten Organ Symphonies

Widor’s ten organ symphonies may be divided into three groups: early symphonies, Op. 13 set (Symphonies I—IV); mature ones, Op. 42 set (Symphonies V—VIII); and later ones, *Symphonie gothique*, Op. 70 and *Symphonie romane*, Op. 73. Most research about these works has consisted of analyses of a particular symphony or a general overview. This document discusses the characteristics of the symphonies in each period and, by analyzing a movement of a symphony from each period, observes how Widor’s compositional style developed. The conclusion is drawn that the characteristics of each period clearly show his compositional evolution: the early symphonies demonstrate his simple and conservative tendencies; the mature ones display a more complicated structure with a variety of contrasts in tempo, dynamics, color, rhythm, and mood; the last symphony develops to improvisational, impressionistic and programmatic manner with religious expression. It would be beneficial for performers to understand the stylistic characteristics of Widor’s compositional periods in order to play his works with appropriate musical expression.
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The organ of St. Sulpice

5
Introduction

Cavaillé-Coll and the St. Sulpice Organ

The greatest influence on Romantic organ music was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding French organ builders, Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811–1899). His “orchestral” organs gave French organ composers such as Franck, Widor, and Vierne inspiration to write symphonic organ music. Cavaillé-Coll built or rebuilt a number of organs for great churches in Paris including St. Denis, St. Sulpice, Notre-Dame de Paris, Ste. Clotilde, La Madeleine, St. Vincent de Paul, and La Trinité, and he expanded his organ building to England and other countries.

Cavaillé-Coll made many innovations in organ building. He used the Barker pneumatic lever, which overcame the resistance of the pallet, consequently making the organ’s key action much lighter than it had been when the manuals were coupled together. He introduced divided windchests controlled by ventils. These allowed higher wind pressures, which in turn made it possible to include harmonic pipes as well as brilliant reeds. Unlike the Classical French organ, in which the Grand-orgue division dominated the entire instrument, Cavaillé-Coll designed each manual to be independent. The most remarkable change was in the pedal division. According to Corliss Arnold, in the Classical French organ there were rarely more than three pedal stops which usually carried the plainsong melody in long notes on the trumpet or played a soft part in trios. The left hand part performed the real bass function on the manuals. However, Cavaillé-Coll increased the size of the pedal division considerably and moved the voice which
performed the bass function into the pedal.¹

Cavaillé-Coll invented the Flûte harmonique², and provided strings and orchestral reeds³ such as Clarinet and English horn. He furnished various flute voices of the same pitches⁴: Flûte harmonique 8’, Flûte traversière 8’, Flûte à pavillon 8’, Flûte douce 4’ and Flûte octaviance 4’. “Cavaillé-Coll generally suppressed the inclusion of mutations and mixtures, a practice which transformed the basic character of the organ from a polyphonic instrument to a homophonic, orchestral one.”⁵

Cavaillé-Coll furnished the ventil system to manipulate the Jeux de combinaison separately from the Jeux de fond, placing them on two different chests. The Jeux de fond generally contained the flues and some solo stops; the Jeux de combinaison, the upper work of some foundations, mutations, and mixtures as well as the reeds. The stops from the Jeux de combinaison can be drawn in advance, and they will sound only when the proper Jeux de combinaison (or Anches) pedal is depressed,⁶ allowing air to enter into the chest for the Jeux de combinaison. This system enabled preparing the stops needed later in a piece, as nineteenth-century French organ composers indicated by “Anches préparées” on the score at the beginning of a piece, and then can be brought into play at the desired moment by depressing the ventil pedal. Such indications on the score as Anches du récit, Anches du grand-orgue, or Anches du pédale refer to operating the Jeux de combinaison pedal of the division in question.

² Celia Grasty Jones, “The French Organ Symphony from Franck to Langlais” (DMA document, University of Rochester, 1979), 12.
³ Arnold, Organ Literature, 188.
⁵ Arnold, Organ Literature, 188.
In addition to the ventil pedals, Cavaillé-Coll developed an expressive Récit division with a swell box, thus increasing the organ’s capability for expression. Crescendos and diminuendos were more easily controlled by the ventil system and the swell box.

The St. Sulpice organ was originally built in 1781 by François-Henri Clicquot (1732–1790), with five manuals and 65 stops including a Montre 32’. Cavaillé-Coll rebuilt the St. Sulpice organ with five manuals and 100 stops in 1862. Thus this organ was one of three “100-stop” European organs, the others being Ulm Cathedral (Walcker) and Liverpool Cathedral (Willis), during the nineteenth century. Charles-Marie Widor (1844–1937) was the organist at St. Sulpice from 1870 to 1933. He composed his organ symphonies for this organ during his tenure at St. Sulpice. On this organ, Cavaillé-Coll used the new devices such as the Barker lever and ventil system, discussed above. He set the names and order of the manuals on this organ as follows. (Grand-choeur is the lowest manual.):

1. Grand-choeur
2. Grand-orgue
3. Bombarde (later became Solo)
4. Positif
5. Récit

Upon Widor’s request in 1903, the order of the manuals was changed as follows:

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
1. Grand-choeur
2. Grand- orgue
3. Positif
4. Récit
5. Solo (name changed from Bombard)

The Récit division was moved from the fifth to the fourth manual, a change that made organ playing more practical because it is physically hard for the organist to play frequently on the top manual, operating the swell box. After Widor resigned his organist position at St. Sulpice on December 31, 1933, in honor of his service to the St. Sulpice two principal pedal stops (16’ and 8’) were added to the organ, which had always been a desire of Widor, thus enlarging the instrument to 102 stops. The specifications of the St. Sulpice organ are given on the following page.

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### The Organ of Saint Sulpice

#### Grand-choeur
(First manual: C–g′′′, 56 keys)
1. Octave .................................. 4
2. Doublette ................................. 2
3. Fourniture ......................... IV ranks
4. Cymbale ................................. VI ranks
5. Plein jeu ................................ IV ranks
6. Cornet (from d′) .............. V ranks
7. Bombarde ................................. 16
8. Basson ................................. 16
9. 1ère trompette .......... 8
10. 2ème trompette .......... 8
11. Basson ................................. 8
12. Clairon ................................. 4
13. Clairon-doublette ........... 2

#### Grand-orgue
(Second manual: C–g′′′, 56 keys)
1. Principal harmonique ........ 16
2. Montre ................................. 16
3. Bourdon ................................. 16
4. Flûte conique (from d′) ........ 16
5. Montre ................................. 8
6. Diapason ................................. 8
7. Flûte harmonique ........................ 8
8. Flûte à pavillon ........ 8
9. Flûte traversière (from d′) .... 8
10. Bourdon ................................. 8
11. Salicional ................................. 8
12. Grosse quinte ................ 5½
13. Prestant ................................. 4

#### Positif
(Third manual: C–g′′′, 56 keys)
1. Violon-basse .......................... 16
2. Quintaton ................................. 16
3. Flûte traversière ........ 8
4. Quintaton ................................. 8
5. Salicional ................................. 8
6. Gambe ................................. 8
7. Unda maris (from d) ........ 8

8. Flûte douce ................................. 4
9. Flûte octaviante ........ 4
10. Dulciana ................................. 4

#### Jeux de combinaison
11. Quinte ......................... 2½
12. Doublette ......................... 2
13. Trièce ................................. 1½
14. Larigot ................................. 1½
15. Picolo ................................. 1
16. Plein jeu harmonique .... III–VI ranks
17. Basson ................................. 16
18. Trompette ................................. 8
19. Baryton ................................. 8
20. Clairon ................................. 4

#### Récit expressif
(Fourth manual: C–g′′′, 56 keys)
1. Quintaton ................................. 16
2. Diapason ................................. 8
3. Flûte harmonique ................ 8
4. Bourdon ................................. 8
5. Violoncelle ................................. 8
6. Voix céleste (from c) .... 8
7. Prestant ................................. 4
8. Flûte octaviante ........ 4
9. Doublette ................................. 2
10. Basson-Hautbois .......... 8
11. Cromorne ................................. 8
12. Voix humaine ........ 8

#### Jeux de combinaison
13. Dulciana ................................. 4
14. Nasard ......................... 2½
15. Octavin ................................. 2
16. Fourniture ................................. III ranks
17. Cymbale ................................. IV ranks
18. Cornet (from c) ............. V ranks
19. Bombarde ................................. 16
20. Trompette ................................. 8
21. Clairon ................................. 4
22. Tremblant du Récit

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**Solo**
(Fifth manual, C–g’’’, 56 keys)
1. Bourdon.........................16
2. Flûte conique (from c’)....16
3. Principal......................... 8
4. Flûte harmonique............. 8
5. Bourdon......................... 8
6. Violoncelle...................... 8
7. Gambe (from c)................. 8
8. Kéraulophone................... 8
9. Prestant......................... 4
10. Flûte octaviante.............. 4

**Jeux de combinaison**
11. Grosse quinte.............. 5½
12. Octave......................... 4
13. Grosse tierce.............. 3½
14. Quinte......................... 2½
15. Septième...................... 2 2/7
16. Octavin........................ 2
17. Cornet (from c’)....V ranks
18. Bombarde..................... 16
19. Trompette...................... 8
20. Clairon......................... 4
21. Trompette en chamade.....8

**Pédale**
(C–f’, 30 keys)
1. Principal.........................32
2. Principal......................... 16
3. Contrebasse..................... 16
4. Soubasse......................... 16
5. Principal......................... 8
6. Violoncelle...................... 8
7. Flûte............................... 8
8. Flûte............................... 4

**Jeux de Combinaison**
9. Contre Bombarde...........32
10. Bombarde...................... 16
11. Basson......................... 16
12. Trompette...................... 8
13. Ophicléide..................... 8
14. Clairon......................... 4

**Registres de combinaison**
(One each for left and right sides of
the console)
1. Pédale
2. Grand-orgue/Grand-choeur
3. Solo
4. Positif
5. Récit

**Pédales de combinaison**
(left to right)
1. Tirasse Grand-choeur
2. Tirasse Grand-orgue
3. Tirasse Récit
4. Jeux de combinaison Pédale
5. Octaves graves Grand-choeur
6. Octaves graves Grand-orgue
7. Octaves graves Solo
8. Octaves graves Positif
9. Octaves graves Récit
10. Jeux de combinaison Grand-orgue
11. Jeux de combinaison Solo
12. Jeux de combinaison Positif
13. Jeux de combinaison Récit
14. Accouplement Grand-choeur/Grand-choeur
15. Accouplement Grand-orgue/Grand-choeur
16. Accouplement Solo/ Grand-choeur
17. Accouplement Positif/ Grand-choeur
18. Accouplement Récit/ Grand-choeur
19. Accouplement Récit/ Positif
20. Expression du Récit (Hook-down pedal with 3 positions: pp, p, f)
21. Appel Trompette en chamade
   (placed center, above other
   Pédales de combinaison)
The lowest manual on this organ is the Grand-choeur division, which functions as the *Jeux de combinaison* for the Grand-orgue.\(^{13}\) It acts simply as a coupling manual, allowing the entire tonal resources of the organ to be played from the Grand-choeur by the couplers.\(^{14}\)

The *Registres de combinaison* (combination registers) are a unique feature of the St. Sulpice organ and a few other Cavaillé-Coll organs.\(^{15}\) According to Near, these are draw stops that allow the stops of their respective division to sound when drawn. After the first combination of a division has been set, drawing the proper combination register brings the combination into play and locks it on. The combination register can then be pushed in again with the first registration still sounding, and a new combination can be set. By redrawing the combination register at the desired moment, the first combination disappears and the new combination instantly sounds.\(^{16}\)

Unlike the *Registres de combinaison*, the *Pédales de combinaison* operate all the couplers and the ventils.\(^{17}\) The ventils control the wind supply to the stops listed under *Jeux de combinaison*,\(^{18}\) as mentioned above under the ventil system.

The *Octaves graves accouplements* (16’ couplers) are used to enlarge the sound to the lower range, and the 16’ coupler of each division couples along with the unison intermanual coupler of the respective division.\(^{19}\) Consequently, by means of the 16’ couplers, the full organ can be played in the upper range without sounding harsh.

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\(^{13}\) Widor, Works, Vol. 11, xxii.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., xxii.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., 411–12.
\(^{17}\) Widor, Works, Vol. 11, xxii.
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) Widor, Works, Vol. 11, xxiii.
The Expression pedal is a large, spoon-shaped pedal located at the extreme right end of the pedal board. To make a crescendo, the pedal must be depressed and held with the foot or hooked in one of two notches that hold the shades in either a partially opened or fully opened position. The dynamic markings $f$, $p$, and $pp$ commonly found for the Récit in Widor’s works represent the three stationary positions of the Expression pedal.\textsuperscript{20}

Gerard Brooks comments:

Although Aristide Cavaillé-Coll had built important organs at St. Denis, St[e]. Clotilde, La Madeleine and elsewhere before being awarded the contract at Saint Sulpice, the latter is an organ of major importance in his output (and remains so today as it is largely unchanged), not only because of its unique mechanical features, but because it was the first truly symphonic organ from Cavaillé-Coll’s workshop, and was to be the inspiration of many instruments to come, including Henry Willis’s organ at the Royal Albert Hall in London.\textsuperscript{21}

Cavaillé-Coll created an instrument that had orchestral tonal resources and an ensemble character that is symphonic. Widor’s organ symphonies would not have been possible without the innovations of this organ. “This organ would have a decisive influence on his further career, as its tonal riches inspired him to write his organ symphonies.”\textsuperscript{22} These pieces make use of the full range of the organ’s expressive possibilities.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
Chapter 1

Widor’s Ten Organ Symphonies

For nearly a century after J. S. Bach’s death, organ music entered a decline. The most significant organ works after Bach’s death were composed by Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847). His Three Preludes and Fugues, Op. 37 (1837), mix elements of Bach’s skill with the early Romantic approach of his time, and his Six Sonatas, Op. 65 (1845), were a successful organ set comparable to the numerous remarkable sonatas for piano or other instruments from the Classical period.

“[T]he organists of the French school proclaimed themselves to be in possession of a tradition that was said to go directly back to Johann Sebastian Bach—in other words, a claim to an authentic interpretation of Bach.”¹ A Belgian organist, Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens (1823–1881), went to Breslau to study the tradition of the art of J. S. Bach under Adolph Hesse (1809–1863).² After returning to Belgium, Lemmens became professor of organ at the Brussels Conservatory in 1849.³ Ewald Kooiman has noted of that time:

Since the 18th century, Germany has been superior to France in organ playing as well as in organ composition. The French emphasis on improvisation is definitely one of the chief causes of this: by emphasizing improvisation most organists limit themselves to playing things that are literal and obvious.⁴

John Near notes.

² Ibid., 58.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., 59.
… in 1850, the year the Belgian organist Jacques Lemmens made his debut in France. His playing introduced a totally new approach along with a heightened understanding of what is idiomatic and unique to organ music. From his strict classical training, founded on the works of Bach, Lemmens developed a keen understanding of style and a technical mastery of the organ that reached far beyond his contemporaries. It soon became apparent to Cavaillé-Coll that the serious art of organ playing as well as the future of that style belonged to this master.5

Cavaillé-Coll felt that French organ playing needed to be reformed, and he sent two young men, Alexandre Guilmant (1837–1911) and Charles-Marie Widor, to Brussels for organ study with Lemmens.6 In addition Widor studied composition with François Joseph Fétis (1784–1871) in Brussels.7 “Lemmens, who was the most recent member of a line of teachers connected directly to Bach, taught him traditional German interpretations of Bach to which he remained loyal for the rest of his life.”8

After the death of Louis-James-Alfred-Lefébure-Wély (1817–1869), organist at St. Sulpice, Widor became organist of St. Sulpice in 1870 upon the recommendation of Cavaillé-Coll, Saint Saëns, and Gounod.9 Widor and Guilmant, who had studied with Lemmens, handed down the Bach tradition to their pupils, such as Marcel Dupré (1886–1971) at the Paris Conservatory.10 Widor’s Bach edition prepared in collaboration with Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) illustrates his interest in Bach’s music, and Widor himself wrote the performance indications in this edition.

Genuinely devoted to the music of Bach, Widor aspired to re[-]identify the organ with the nearly forgotten but solid traditions of the past. Widor was

6 Ibid., ix.
no mere imitator, however; he sought to restore greatness to the instrument in the new language of the 19th-century Cavaillé-Coll organ.\footnote{Near, “Charles-Marie Widor,” 51.}

Thus the French romantic organ school shows two distinct traditions: an older generation such as Franck and Saint-Saëns who did not participate directly in the Bach tradition, and a younger one such as Widor, Guilmant, and Dupré who carry this German influence.\footnote{Murray, “Pure Tradition,” 6.} Guilmant, Widor and Dupré give some rules about how to play the polyphonic works or Bach’s organ works. However, their French rules, such as strict legato, repeated notes values, and tying of common notes are not to be found in the German organ literature leading up to and including Adolph Hesse (nor, for that matter, are they found in German methods written by contemporaries of Widor, Vierne, or Dupré).\footnote{Kooiman, “Jaques Lemmens,” 63.} Hesse wrote a “Kleine Pedalschule (Little pedal method)” in the first part of his Nützliche Gabe für Orgelspieler (Useful gifts for organists), and some coordination exercises in the second part, but no rules in the French sense of the word are found.\footnote{Ibid., 62.} Johann Christian Heinrich Rinck (1770–1846), who taught Hesse, wrote a number of pedagogical works for the organ, but nothing like the French rules are found.\footnote{Ibid.} Rinck had studied with Johann Christian Kittel (1732–1809), a pupil of J. S. Bach. Kittel left behind no instructions supporting the French claims at all.\footnote{Ibid.} Also, the North German School, who profoundly influenced Bach’s style, did not play with such strict legato.\footnote{Murray, “Pure Tradition,” 4.} Rather, they articulated subjects or motives, creating rhythmically various figures. According to Kooiman, it is possible that Lemmens, whom various knowledgeable authors report to have been a rationally inclined person, devised them in large part himself, building on what he had picked up in
Germany, and Lemmens himself never said in writing that they stemmed from the
German tradition or came directly from Bach.\textsuperscript{18}

Nineteenth century French organ music written in symphonic style developed
alongside the orchestral organs of Cavaillé-Coll. César Franck (1822–1890) was organist
at Ste. Clotilde in Paris from 1859 until his death, and its organ was also built by
Cavaillé-Coll. And it was he who wrote the first distinctive French romantic organ work
in the symphonic style for the Cavaillé-Coll organ. John Near says:

At the time opus 13 appeared, César Franck had already introduced a
symphonic concept to organ music with his largest organ composition, the
\textit{Grande pièce symphonique}, opus 17, completed in 1863 and later
published as one of the \textit{Six pièces}. But Franck never developed the multi-
movement symphonic genre of organ music any further. Widor’s
symphonies constituted the first real body of French organ repertoire that
seemed destined for the concert hall; yet there were no concert hall organs
in France in 1872.\textsuperscript{19}

Alexandre Guilmant wrote his organ sonatas between 1874 and 1907, twice
giving them the subtitle “symphonie.” The \textit{Première Sonate} in D minor is subtitled
\textit{Symphonie pour l’orgue}, and the final \textit{Huitième sonate} is subtitled \textit{Deuxième
symphonie}.\textsuperscript{20} Louis Vierne (1870–1937), who studied with Franck and Widor, wrote six
symphonies in more contemporary harmony and employing chromaticism. Marcel Dupré
studied with Widor, Vierne, and Guilmant. He assisted Widor at St. Sulpice and Vierne
at Notre Dame de Paris, eventually succeeding Widor. Dupré wrote \textit{Symphonie-passion}
and \textit{Deuxième symphonie pour orgue}.

Among these French symphonists, Charles Marie Widor is regarded as the
greatest contributor to the French organ symphony, having written ten symphonies for

\textsuperscript{18} Kooiman, “Jacques Lemmens,” 63.
\textsuperscript{19} Widor, \textit{Works}, Vol. 11, ix.
\textsuperscript{20} Paul Lindsley Thomas, “Gregorian Chant in the Organ Symphonies of Widor and Dupré”
(DMA document, North Texas State University, 1979), 9.
solo organ. The term “organ symphony” was applied by Widor to a large work with several movements for solo organ, just as a standard symphony is a multi-movement work for orchestra. The organ symphony is different from the form of an orchestral symphony with its typical Sonata-Allegro movement, slow movement, Minuet, and Rondo movement.  

“The symphonies were designed and created as ‘ensemble’ works for an ‘ensemble’ instrument. In fact the background is symphonic, being based upon the orchestral treatment of instrumental groups rather than a solo-display treatment.”

Widor’s concept of the organ symphony was inspired by the tonal possibilities of Cavaillé-Coll organs.

In the preface to the 1887 edition of his organ symphonies Opp. 13 and 42, Widor outlines his concept:

Old instruments had almost no reed stops: two colors, white and black, foundation stops and mixture stops—that was their entire palette; moreover, each transition between this white and black was abrupt and rough; the means of graduating the body of sound did not exist. Consequently, Bach and his contemporaries deemed it pointless to indicate registrations for their works—the mixture stops traditionally remaining appropriate to rapid movements, and the foundation stops to pieces of a more solemn pace….

It was necessary to wait until 1839 for the solution to the problem. The honor for it redounds to French industry and the glory to Mr. A. Cavaillé-Coll. It is he who conceived the diverse wind pressures, the divided windchests, the pedal systems and the combination registers, he who applied for the first time Barker’s pneumatic motors, created the family of harmonic stops, reformed and perfected the mechanics to such a point that each pipe—low or high, loud or soft—instantly obeys the touch of the finger, the keys becoming as light as those of a piano—the resistances being suppressed, rendering the combination of [all] the forces of the instrument practical. From this result: the possibility of confining an entire division in a sonorous prison—opened or closed at will—the freedom of mixing timbres, the means of intensifying them or gradually

22 Albert Riemenschneider, “Program Notes on the Widor Symphonies,” American Organist 8, no. 7 (July 1925): 263.
tempering them, the freedom of tempos, the sureness of attack, the balance of contrasts, and, finally, a whole blossoming of wonderful colors—a rich palette of the most diverse shades: harmonic flutes, gambas, bassoons, English horns, trumpets, celestas, flue stops and reed stops of a quality and variety unknown before.

The modern organ is essentially symphonic. The new instrument requires a new language, an ideal other than scholastic polyphony. It is no longer Bach of the fugue whom we invoke but the heartrending melodist, the preeminently expressive master of the Preludes, the Magnificat, the B-minor Mass, the cantatas, and the St. Matthew Passion.23

In this *Avant propos*, Widor explains many innovations of the Cavaillé-Coll organ.

In particular, the *Récit* division was greatly enlarged with a swell box permitting gradual crescendo and diminuendo; as Widor describes, “the possibility of confining an entire division in a sonorous prison.” Widor’s organ symphonies are focused more on orchestral timbres and sonorities than on the formal procedure of scholastic polyphony. Although his early symphonies contain many contrapuntal movements, displaying the influence of J. S. Bach, Widor’s organ symphonies exploit the expressive possibilities of the Cavaillé-Coll organ.

Even though this instrument was not the same as a real orchestra, it was expressive enough to produce the timbres, dynamics, and sonorities reminiscent of the orchestra.

But this “expressiveness” of the new instrument can only be subjective; it arises from mechanical means and cannot have spontaneity. While the stringed and wind instruments of the orchestra, the piano, and voices reign only by naturalness of accent and unexpectedness of attack, the organ, clothed in its primordial majesty, speaks as a philosopher…. It is clear that their use requires tact and discernment. It is also clear to what extent the organ symphony differs from the orchestral symphony. No confusion is to be feared. One will never write indiscriminately for the orchestra or for the organ, but henceforth one will have to exercise the same care with

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the combination of timbres in an organ composition as in an orchestral work.\textsuperscript{24}

Symphonie I consists of seven movements, Symphonies III, V, VI of five movements. Symphonie III contained six movements in the original edition, but the Fugue movement was deleted from the 1901 revision.\textsuperscript{25} Symphonies II, IV, VII, and VIII contain six movements. Symphonie VIII contained seven movements in the original edition, but the \textit{Prélude} movement was deleted from the 1901 revision\textsuperscript{26}; the last two symphonies, four movements each.

Many movements of Widor’s organ symphonies are in three-part form (ABA).\textsuperscript{27} The A part presents thematic material in the main key. The B part contrasts with the first A part, and often develops the thematic material from the A part, modulating extensively. The last A part always returns to the main key and repeats the main theme.\textsuperscript{28} Late nineteenth-century sonata form was frequently cast as an ABA form, without repetition of the exposition, an expanded development, and comparable recapitulation. As Andrew Thomson notes, Symphonies VII and VIII are more quasi-orchestral in character, remarkable for their massive scale, breadth, and Beethovenian sonata-form structures.\textsuperscript{29} Widor’s variation-form movements are good examples of his ingenuity and virtuosity, and he develops and expands the thematic material in various innovative ways in his variations.

Widor organized his organ symphonies in ascending key order: c, D, e, f (Op. 13),

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., xxxii.
\textsuperscript{25} Ben van Oosten, \textit{Charles-Marie Widor: Vater der Orgelsymphonie} (Paderborn: Peter Ewers, 1997), 301.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 309.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
f, g, a, B (Op. 42), c (Op. 70), D (Op. 73). Widor’s tonal relationships include the tonic itself, and dominant, subdominant, mediant, or submediant keys, as well as its parallel keys. The last movement of a symphony returns to the main key with which its first movement symphony began: C minor for Symphonie I, D major for Symphonie II, E minor for Symphonie III, and D major in the romane. A symphony that starts in a minor key sometimes employs the parallel major for the last movement: F minor and F major in Symphonies IV and V, G minor and G major in Symphonie VI, and C minor and C major in the gothique, and this may represent Beethoven’s influence, as evidenced by his Symphony No. 5 (C minor for the first movement and C major for the last movement) and No. 9 (D minor for the first movement and D major for the last movement); the reverse is found in Symphonie VIII, in which the first movement is in B major and the Finale begins in B minor.

As in Bach’s organ works, the pairing of two successive movements in the Baroque form is found in some of Widor’s organ symphonies: the first two movements from Symphonie IV are reminiscent of a Baroque Toccata and Fugue; in the 1887 edition, the Variations movement from Symphonie VIII is introduced in the Passacaglia form by a short Prélude movement with the same theme.

Widor favored pedal points at the conclusion of a section or movement. An authentic cadence usually closes sections or a movement, and sometimes a plagal cadence closes the entire movement.

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30 Van Oosten, Charles-Marie Widor, 294.
31 Ibid., 308.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 310.
35 Ibid., 308.
Widor revised his organ symphonies several times after he had published them, in a number of ways: he omitted an entire movement and replaced it with a new one\(^\text{36}\) (e.g., in the 1901 revision, he omitted the *Scherzo* movement from Symphonie II, replacing it with the *Salve Regina* movement,\(^\text{37}\) and this revision made the symphony’s unity decrease by adding a movement written in his late compositional style); he left the basic character intact and modified certain passages\(^\text{38}\); and he supplied interpretive details and performance instructions such as dynamics, tempo markings, articulations, phrasings, and registrations.\(^\text{39}\) Further emendations by Widor and his pupils remain unpublished.\(^\text{40}\)

Most research about Widor’s organ symphonies has consisted of analyses of a particular symphony or a general overview. Widor’s ten organ symphonies may be divided into three groups: early symphonies, Op. 13 set (Symphonies I–IV); mature ones, Op. 42 set (Symphonies V–VIII); and later ones, *Symphonie gothique*, Op. 70 and *Symphonie romane*, Op. 73. The early symphonies exhibit simple and conservative tendencies; the mature ones, a more complicated structure with a variety of contrasts within a single movement. The last two symphonies create a religious atmosphere by using chant themes. This document will discuss the characteristics of the symphonies in each period. It will also observe how Widor’s compositional style developed by analyzing a movement of a symphony from each period. For the analysis of the pieces, the A-R editions by John Near, considered a critical edition for Widor’s organ symphonies, will be used.

\(^\text{36}\) Ibid., 302.  
\(^\text{37}\) Ibid., 301.  
\(^\text{38}\) Ibid., 302.  
\(^\text{39}\) Ibid.  
Chapter 2

Analysis of an Early Symphony from Op. 13

Widor’s Op. 13 contains four symphonies (I–IV). As seen in the titles of the movements, these early symphonies mostly include Baroque forms such as Prelude, Fugue, and Toccata, character pieces typical of the nineteenth century such as Intermezzo and Pastorale, and dance movements such as Minuetto and Scherzo. The arrangement of the movements in a symphony from Op. 13 set suggests a Baroque suite. Thus, they seem to be collections of individual movements rather than unified works. As John Near says: “When compared [with] his later opus 42, 70, and 73 [s]ymphonies, the opus 13 [s]ymphonies do give the impression of being suites of pieces, not unlike the numerous organ suites which appeared throughout the French Baroque period.”¹ Also, Ben van Oosten says that “Widor’s first organ symphony with its seven movements is more like a suite than a symphony.”²

These early symphonies, with contrapuntal and imitative development in many movements, reflect Widor’s intensive study of Bach’s works with Lemmens and fugue study with Fétis in Brussels. Near says:

In sum, when one considers, first, that Widor favored preserving older pieces in one form or another and, second, that he composed at least a few organ solos for his concerts during the 1860s, the likelihood seems great that opus 13 includes, in addition to movements born of his Sunday improvisations at Saint Sulpice, works conceived well before his appointment there. Some may even derive from Widor’s fugue-writing

² Van Oosten, Charles-Marie Widor, 409.
student days with Fétis: the first edition of opus 13 contains three formal fugues as well as other contrapuntally oriented movements.\(^3\)

Widor’s revision process is seen most clearly in his early organ symphonies, becoming less so in his later organ works. As Near comments:

Widor’s life-long practice of revision affected these early organ works most noticeably, undoubtedly due to the fact that the vast majority of them were either born of his Sunday improvisations at Saint Sulpice or of a much earlier conception. Only in his later organ works does the revisionary process become less active.\(^4\)

These symphonies served as church service music as well as for concert use: he brought concert music into the church, just as he brought liturgical organ music into the concert hall.


This symphony contains more movements than any organ symphony by Widor. This characteristic, along with the others mentioned above, also makes the work more like a suite than a symphony. The Op. 13 set was first published by J. Maho in Paris in 1872, and the first major revision, together with the first complete issue of Op. 42 symphonies, by Hamelle in Paris in 1887.\(^6\) Widor originally conceived the five movements for this symphony as *Prélude, Allegretto, Intermezzo, Andante, Finale* in the

\(^3\) Widor, Works, Vol. 11, xi.
\(^5\) In Near’s A-R edition, this second movement has no title.
However, in the 1887 edition he added two new movements, *Marche pontificale* and *Méditation*. According to Van Oosten:

In addition, the *Allegretto* movement appeared as *Allegro* in the new version and the *Andante* movement as a new title, *Adagio*. The following new set was found: *Prélude*, *Allegro* (previously: *Allegretto*), *Intermezzo*, *Adagio* (previously: *Andante*), *Marche pontificale*, *Méditation*, *Finale*. The later editions contain the second movement again in revised form, and finally back to its original title, *Allegretto*. Two other movements have been revised: the *Intermezzo* only slightly, the *Finale* more. …… Widor also added in later editions details of tempo (metronome markings), dynamics, articulations, and manual indications.

In Symphonie I, Widor gave the *Méditation* movement, added in the 1887 issue, the same theme as the existing *Intermezzo* movement, and in the Coda of the *Finale* movement, he used the main theme of the *Prélude* movement. Consequently, these revisions on Symphonie I increased the unity of the symphony, which was originally built from independent movements.

The first movement, *Prélude*, along with the last movement, *Finale*, of Symphonie I are good examples of Widor’s contrapuntal writing. The *Prélude* is fugal, presenting two contrasting themes developed imitatively. The principal theme dominates the movement, making use of fragments and sequences. Figure 1 shows the formal structure of the piece.

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 301–2.
11 Ibid., 302.
Figure 1. Formal diagram of Widor’s Symphonie I, 1st movement

A (mm. 1–38)

m. 1 subject (pedal) 4 answer (alto) 7 subject (pedal) 10 answer (soprano) 13 episode

C minor

m. 21 subject (sop.) 23 answer (tenor) 25 subject (pedal) 27 answer (sop.)

E♭ major

m. 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38

[2nd theme (sop.)----][2nd theme (sop.)-- ][2nd theme (sop.)][2nd theme (sop.)]

[main theme (alto)][main theme (alto)]

[main theme (ped.)----][main theme (ped.)][main theme (ped.)]

[Double counterpoint (2nd theme accompanied by motives of the main theme)-----]

F minor

B (mm. 38–69)

m. 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 53 55 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69

F minor   Db minor   Bb minor   d   B   g   c
A’ (mm. 70–97)

Coda

m. 70 subject (ped.) 73 answer (R.H.) 76 bridge 80 subject (ten.) 84

[main theme]

m. 93 subject (ped.) 96 97

[main theme]

Adagio

The piece begins with the main theme in eighth notes in pedal solo. This theme in the pedal has articulations: legato for two ascending notes and staccato for two stepwise descending notes. These articulations represent the Neo-Baroque style. Throughout the piece, this articulation pattern continues in the pedal; but when the main theme is stated in the manuals, Widor always omits the first note of the main theme and does not articulate the main theme. (See Ex. 1.)
Example 1. Widor, Symphonie I, 1st movement, mm. 1–7, from the edition ed. John R. Near, Recent Researches in the Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, vol. 11 (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1991); used with permission; all rights reserved.

Widor’s pedal part-writing in this opening theme shows that he treats the pedal as equals to the manuals in virtuosity and independence, in contrast with the works of his French predecessors. In m. 4, the alto answers the subject at the octave. Again, the pedal plays the subject in m. 7, and the soprano answers in m. 10. There are counter-subjects to the main theme in mm. 5–6, 8–9, and 11–12. (See Ex. 2.)
Example 2. Widor, Symphonie I, 1st movement, mm. 1–13, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
A bridge/episode begins in m. 13, and Widor modulates from C minor to E-flat major, the relative major. In this bridge/episode (mm. 13–21), the motives of the main theme develop by fragmentation and sequence. The first cadence occurs in E-flat major on the first beat of m. 21. (See Ex. 3.)

Example 3. Widor, Symphonie I, 1st movement, mm 13–21, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved

In m. 21, the lyrical, major-mode second theme begins, in contrast to the more angular, stately main theme, and the tenor answers in m. 23. The pedal plays the subject at octave in m. 25, and the soprano answers in m. 27. The second theme develops imitatively, being accompanied by a counter-subject derived from the main theme. The first half of this counter-subject is taken from the third measure of the main theme, and a lyrical ascending melodic line makes up the second half. (See Ex. 4.)
Example 4. Widor, Symphonie I, 1st movement, mm. 18–29, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved

In mm. 29–34, the second theme (soprano) and its counter-subjects (motives derived from the main theme in the alto and pedal) present double counterpoint, developing sequentially. In mm. 35–38, the tenor plays the main theme once through.

The exposition closes with an authentic cadence in F minor in m. 38. Here Widor
closes the exposition with the subdominant, rather than dominant or relative major. (See Ex. 5.)

Example 5. Widor, Symphonie I, 1st movement, mm. 26–38, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 5, continued

With the main theme in the pedal in m. 38, the B section (development) starts. This section (mm. 38–69) is dominated by motives derived from the main theme with a few appearances of the second theme (tenor in mm. 61–63; soprano in mm. 63–67). As labeled on the score in Ex. 6, Widor develops this section using nearly every contrapuntal device available: fragmentation of the themes (soprano in mm. 41–42, alto in m. 43, pedal in mm. 45–46, 49–50, and 51–52, etc.), sequences (mm. 49–52, mm. 53–54, and mm. 58–61), melodic inversion (mm. 42–43 and 46–47), and many modulations (Db major [m. 41]—Bb minor [m. 49]—D minor [m. 53]—B major [m. 55]—G minor [m. 61]—C minor [m. 70]). Widor even modulates to a far distant key, B major, in m. 55, before returning to the original key, C minor. Measures 67–69 play the role of bridge to the recapitulation in m. 70. (See Ex. 6.)
Example 6. Widor, Symphonie I, 1\textsuperscript{st} movement, mm. 38-69, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 6, continued
In m. 70, the main theme returns in the pedal in the original key, C minor, and the right hand answers at the octave in m. 73. But unlike in the exposition, the subject is no longer presented after the main theme is presented twice in m. 70 and m. 73, and the second theme never reappears in this section. Whereas the main theme was presented as a pedal solo at the beginning, in the recapitulation it is accompanied by the manuals. Also, in the original appearance, the main theme started on the tonic note C, but now it begins on the dominant G. This gives the recapitulation an unsettled character. Using fragments of the main theme in mm. 76–79, this section connects to the Coda with an authentic cadence in C minor in m. 80. (See Ex. 7.)

Example 7. Widor, Symphonie I, 1st movement, mm. 70–80, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 7, continued

The Coda (mm. 80–97) begins with a long tonic pedal point. While the pedal plays the tonic pedal point, the tenor presents the main theme in m. 80, and a crescendo ensues. The motives derived from the main theme continually develop in fragmentation, sequence, and melodic inversion throughout the Coda. The main theme is heard once last time in the pedal with a diminuendo in m. 93, and the piece ends with an Adagio final cadence. (See Ex. 8.)

Example 8. Widor, Symphonie I, 1st movement, mm. 78–97, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 8, continued
The following registration is indicated in the score at the beginning: 8’ foundation stops on the Grand-orgue and Positif; flutes 8’, 4’ on the Récit; basses 16’, 8’, 4’ on the Pédale. A GPR\textsuperscript{12} is indicated in the pedal for the opening theme; and in a softer dynamic GP in m. 4, the manuals answer the subject. For the lyric second theme in m. 21, Widor indicates a softer dynamic by playing on the Positif only. The two themes are contrasted in dynamics by using manual changes. When the two themes are combined in double counterpoint in m. 29, GP, a louder dynamic than in m. 21, is indicated. For the development section, Widor indicates GPR in m. 38, and the dynamic decreases through PR in mm. 57–58 and R in m. 61, and then makes a crescendo to the recapitulation.

According to Near,

In the first edition of op. 13, Widor was not clear in his directions for manuals and pedal couplings. Instead of GPR, PR, and R, the directives Clav. 1, 2, and 3 were indicated; and for the Pédale a dynamic marking was all that was given. By the 1887 collected edition of all eight symphonies, Widor had worked out a precise and detailed system for couplers. He was, however, not always consistent in their application in the score. Sometimes after the initial appearance of a manual directive such as GPR, he abbreviated it with G, or after PR only P may appear. This sometimes causes ambiguity and has been the source of confusion.\textsuperscript{13}

Whereas a GP is indicated for the main theme in the manuals in m. 4 taking over the pedal solo on GPR at the beginning, a GPR is indicated for the main theme in the manuals in m. 73 in the recapitulation. It is ambiguous whether this GP is Widor’s abbreviation of GPR or he intended to give the softer dynamic GP to the manual main theme at the beginning. This GP is illogical because the pedal solo starts on GPR. And

\textsuperscript{12} GPR means to play on the Grand-orgue with the Positif and Récit coupled to it.

the manual main theme should take over the main theme on the same coupler, GPR.

There is a clue to the solution of this coupler question in other movement of this symphony: in the Marche pontificale movement of this symphonie I, Widor gives a GPR for the manual main theme at the beginning of the piece; and when the main theme returns at the end (m. 190), the theme is played on the same coupler, GPR for the manuals as at the beginning. From this movement, the GP at the beginning of the Prélude movement might be assumed to be a mistake for GPR.

Only at the end of this movement does Widor indicate a specific stop change: when the Coda begins in m. 80, the Anches 16’, 8’, 4’ are added to the Récit. (See Ex. 8 above.)

The tempo marking on the score is Moderato (quarter note = 76), and there is no tempo change except for ritardando toward Adagio at the end.

As shown in the registration and manual indications in this piece, most dynamic changes happen by manual changes rather than stop changes in this early symphony.

As shown above, this piece is dominated by contrapuntal, imitative development of the subjects, and presents an example of Widor’s fugal writing in his early symphonies.

As Van Oosten comments that Widor follows the traditional rules in the polyphonic movement (Fugue), the Baroque influence can be observed in this piece through contrapuntal development by imitation, fragmentation, sequence, and inversion, obligatory pedal, articulation of the main theme in the pedal, and dynamic nuance by manual changes. This places Symphonie I more in the Germanic tradition influenced by Bach than in the French tradition of Franck and Saint-Saëns.

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14 Van Oosten, Charles-Marie Widor, 310.
Chapter 3

Analysis of a Mature Symphony from Op. 42

Widor’s Op. 42 set contains four symphonies (V–VIII). These mature symphonies have a more complicated structure, with a variety of contrasts in tempo, texture, dynamics, color, rhythm, and mood within a movement. Virtuosic and rhapsodic display as well as greater flamboyance is especially present in the outer movements of these mature symphonies. Thus the influence of German Romantic composers such as Schumann and Wagner as well as Bach may be observed in the mature symphonies. Andrew Thomson says:

… he [Widor] displayed a greater flair for keyboard writing, skillfully adapting the romantic piano idioms of Mendelssohn and Schumann to the first two (Nos. 5 and 6) of the op. 42 set of organ symphonies.… The remaining two symphonies (Nos. 7 and 8) are less obviously pianistic and more quasi-orchestral in character, remarkable for their massive scale and breadth and Beethovenian sonata-form structures.¹

The first movement (variations) of Symphonie V and the third movement (Intermezzo) of Symphonie VI have a pianistic character with light, fast-moving touches. Specifically, as Thomson puts it,

Schumann’s spirit and influence are particularly apparent in the superb lyricism and propulsive dotted rhythms of No. 5’s opening variations, and in the moto perpetuo figurations of the final toccata. Widor was no doubt conversant with the Variations Symphoniques op. 13 and the Toccata op. 7 by the German Romantic master.²

² Ibid., 137.
In contrast to the Op. 13 symphonies, which contain many movements written in a Baroque contrapuntal texture, the Op. 42 symphonies include several variation movements, and these movements as well as other movements in the Op. 42 set display a more distinct internal contrast and variety in texture, tempo, color, and rhythm. These symphonies are integral works, living up more to Widor’s concept of the organ symphony discussed in the Chapter 1.

According to Near, the two symphonies, V and VI were first published in 1879 by J. Hamelle, and the first complete issue of the Op. 42 set eight years later by the same publisher. 3 “Actually composed before Symphonie V in F minor, Symphonie VI in G minor was premiered (with the title “5me Symphonie”) by Widor in the series of inaugural concerts for the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Trocadéro on August 24, 1878.”4 “These first two opus 42 symphonies show the composer to be in full control of his craft, and thus provide a place to mark the beginning of a new compositional period.”5 In August 1876, Widor traveled to Bayreuth for the premiere of Wagner’s operatic cycle, Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung), which left an indelible impression on his subsequent compositions, beginning with Symphonie VI.6

I will analyze the first movement from Symphonie VI in G minor as an example of the mature symphonies, the Op. 42 set. This movement is well known and frequently performed by organists today. Symphonie VI consists of five movements: 1. No title (Allegro), 2. No title (Adagio), 3. Intermezzo, 4. No title (Cantabile), 5. Finale. The first movement is in variation form, a little different from the standard theme and variation

4 Ibid., ix.
6 Widor, Works, Vol. 11, x–xi.
form. The difference is that after a long and dramatic transition, the final variation restates the main theme in a similar texture to the exposition, serving as a recapitulation. Given the length of the “theme” and the fact that it actually contains two smaller themes, one can make a connection between this movement and the sonata-form movement that normally comes first in a symphony. Measures 1–56 introduce the themes of the movement. At the upbeat to m. 33, the second theme is stated, but the key is still G minor. At the upbeat to m. 99, in which the key changes to B-flat major, the character of the theme is more lyric and legato, which is a traditional contrast to the main theme. With the view of this second key area, the Variation 1 may be considered as continuation of the exposition; Variation 2 as a development, and Variation 3, which brings back the main theme in the tonic, as a recapitulation. The overall formal structure of the piece is shown in Fig. 2.

Figure 2. Formal diagram of Widor’s Symphonie VI, 1st movement

Exposition (mm. 1–151)

Theme (mm. 1–56)

[main theme______________________________] [2nd theme][motive of main theme]

m.1________8________16_______24________32________45________56

a                     b                a                b’

---antecedent---------V----consequent--------i

G minor

i/g
Var. 1/continuation of exposition (mm. 57–143)

m. 57 (derived from the 2nd theme) 80 (based on main theme) 99 _____ 112
g g g Bb major

---- two themes combined ----------------

m.113 __________ 117 __________ 125 __________ 132 Large 144
Bb minor Eb minor Bb minor Eb minor g

----------two themes combined-----------------

m. 144__________148__________151
g first half of phrase a from the main theme

Var. 2/ development (mm.152–209)

m. 152__________164______168 __________ 186 _______200 ___209
F# minor F# minor C# minor d f C pedal c

[main theme--------][two themes combined----------][transition to recap----]

Var. 3/ recapitulation (mm. 210–55)

m. 210 __________ 225 __________ 232 Agitato 247 Coda 255
g [main theme--------][2nd theme--------][main theme][2nd theme] G
[two themes combined]

The long “theme” of the movement contains two contrasting ideas: a homophonic
main theme and a recitative-like, linear second theme. (See Ex. 9).
Example 9. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, a) mm. 1–4; b) mm. 30–36, from the edition ed. John R. Near, Recent Researches in the Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, vol. 16 (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1994); used with permission; all rights reserved

a) mm. 1–4 (homophonic idea)

\[
\text{Allegro (} \frac{4}{4} \text{)}
\]

b) mm. 30–36 (recitative-like, linear idea [mm. 33–36])

\[
\text{quasi recitativo, a piacere ma agitato}
\]
The two contrasting themes are contrapuntally combined in various ways throughout the piece. The recapitulation restates the main “theme” in the original key in a similar texture to the exposition, but unlike the exposition, in the recapitulation the second theme does not have a recitative-like character which was given up by m. 56. Rather, both themes create a sense of majesty, making the ending of the piece grander.

Theme (mm. 1–56)

Measures 1–56 present the long “theme” of this piece, containing the main theme in mm. 1–32 and the recitative-like second theme in mm. 33–44. (See Ex. 10) This main “theme” with thick full chords over a legato pedal line should be played detached. It is divided into four eight-measure phrases in abab’ form, and this theme has a long antecedent-consequent parallel period. The ensuing quasi recitativo, a piacere ma agitato passage in mm. 33–44 is presented as a contrasting second theme. This linear solo line with occasional chords is developed in a rapid, free manner. In mm. 45–56, the first four-measure head motive of the main theme concludes this section, with a repetition of the head motive in mm. 49–52. The second half of the head motive is then repeated in mm. 53–54, and finally as an echo on a different manual (R) in mm. 55–56 with an Adagio closing. Here the repetition of this short motive toward the cadence creates a bit of a premature cadence, compared with the final ending of the piece. The repetitions correspond with the checkmarks placed on the score in Ex. 10.

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7 Widor, Works, Vol. 16, x.
Example 10. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 1–56, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Widor indicates **GPR** for the manuals and pedal with the dynamic **fff** at the beginning of the piece. The player should use the full organ (foundations and chorus reeds 16’, 8’, 4’ with mutations and mixtures), all manuals and pedal coupled together. In the Adagio in m. 55, a manual change occurs to the *Récit* for a softer dynamic, and the swell box should be closed to make a decrescendo as marked in the score. The tempo marking for the beginning is quarter note =120.
Variation 1/continuation of exposition (mm. 57–143)

This variation has a pianistic character, a fantasia-like style with consistent rapid triplets deriving from the second theme, and a dramatic Large section at its conclusion. The first half (mm. 57–112) of Variation 1 has a more linear texture, and the main theme is presented as a lyrical solo line against the pianistic figuration rather than in the majestic homophonic texture. The second half (mm. 113–43) of this variation does not present the full melodies of the themes. Rather, fragments of the themes with rhythmic variants drive it in dramatic fashion, especially in the Large.

The following registration is indicated in m. 57 on the score: G Fonds 16′, 8′, 4′, P Fonds 8′, 4′, R [fonds 16′, 8′, 4′] Anches 16′, 8′, 4′, pianissimo, and Péd. Fonds [16′, 8′, 4′]. The variation starts with the swell box closed. The tempo marking is quarter note = 132.

Measures 57–79 derive from the second theme in mm. 33–44. They are played in unison in both hands, but staccato in the right hand and legato in the left hand are indicated, unusually, to create a clearer sound in the right hand. Measures 68–75 play echoes between the two manuals, GPR and R. Measures 69 and 73 are rhythmic variants derived from the first two measures of the main theme. (See Ex. 11).
Example 11. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 54–79, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved.
Example 11, continued
Measures 80–83 have the first half of phrase \( a \) from the main theme in the left hand in G minor, and then the right hand takes over the same motive at the upbeat to m. 84, where \textbf{Péd. GPR} is indicated. In mm. 87–89, the phrase is extended by repetition of the last two notes of the head motive. In mm. 80–89, the two themes are combined: while one hand plays the head motive of the main theme, the other hand plays the second theme. In mm. 89–90, a short passage derived from the second theme makes a link to the next phrase, the second half of phrase \( a \). Measures 95–98 are derived from phrase \( b' \), and this lyrical phrase expands until m. 110. At the upbeat to m. 99, the key changes to B-flat major as the traditional relative major in the second key area to the original key, G minor. Here the character of the theme is more relaxed, lyric, and legato, suggesting a traditional contrast to the main theme, even though the melody is still from the main theme. This is particularly driven by key area rather than the theme: the main theme is the theme of the movement, whereas the second theme is simply an accompanimental figure given an exposition before being combined with the main theme. A rapid ascending passage in mm. 110–12 links to the next section in B-flat minor. The swell box remains closed until the crescendo in m. 111. (See Ex. 12.)

Example 12. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 80–112, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 12, continued
Without presenting the full melodies of the theme, the second half (mm. 113–43) of this variation develops fragments of the themes with rhythmic variants in dramatic fashion, especially in the Large. Tonicizations of B-flat minor and E-flat minor are frequent.

In mm. 113–14, a syncopated head motive of the main theme in the right hand is combined with the second theme in the left hand in B-flat minor, repeated in mm. 115–16.
For these two contrasting themes combined, Widor indicates different registration for each theme: the main theme on R and the second theme on GPR. Measures 117–18 are derived from mm. 3–4, presented in arpeggio figuration in E-flat minor on PR, repeated in mm. 119–20. In m. 123, a manual change occurs to GPR. In mm. 125–26, the syncopated head motive of the main theme in the left hand is combined with the second theme in the right hand in an inversion of the texture from mm. 113–14. In mm. 127–29, the second half of m. 126 develops in sequence, reaching a V7 chord on the first beat of m. 130 in B-flat minor. Right after the V7 chord in m. 130, mm. 130–31 link to the next Large section in contrary stepwise motion in the outer voices. (See Ex. 13.)

Example 13. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 113–32, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 13, continued
Example 13, continued

The Large section presents rhythmic variants of the two themes: in mm. 132–38, the pedal presents the second theme in rhythmic variant, accompanied by alternating i and V7 chords of E-flat minor. In mm. 139–40, the pedal and left-hand parts present the head motive of the main theme in rhythmic variant, and all parts are in unison in mm. 141–42. The pedal solo in m. 143 links to the next section, and through a passing tone A-natural in m. 143 Widor modulates back to G minor. Composers of the Classical orchestral symphony typically modulated from one section to the next by repeating, varying, and expanding thematic material, or inserting new material. But Widor’s abrupt modulation through a single-note transition marks him as a composer in the Romantic tradition. (See Ex. 14.)

Widor indicates sforzandos (sf) on the first chords of mm. 139–41, similar to accent marks. Because organ pipes are inflexible, the sf effect “can only be obtained on the organ by taking breath, delaying the attack and/or prolonging the duration.”

Tenutos along with these sforzandos are indicated at the same time on the first chords of each of the three measures. The tenuto has an effect similar to the détaché of the violin,

played with the whole length of the bow.\footnote{Ibid., 461.} To produce the sforzando and tenuto effects on the organ, each chord should have a full eighth note and space between the eighth and the syncopated quarter in these measures. (See Ex. 14.)

Example 14. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 131–45, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
In mm. 144–47, the first half of phrase a from the main theme is presented in the original key, G minor, in ff on the *Récit*, and Widor changes the dynamic to *mf* for the repetition of the motive in mm. 148–51. To produce *mf* dynamic, the swell box should be half way closed, and finally fully closed for the next variation. (See Ex. 15.)

Example 15. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 141–51, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved

![Example 15](image)

**Variation 2/development (mm. 152–209)**

This variation is characterized by polyrhythms over an eighth-note staccato pedal and a long dramatic transition to the recapitulation. Particularly, the polyrhythms passage over a staccato pedal and the echo effect in the transition show Neo-Baroque influence.
The variation starts in F-sharp minor. A registration change is indicated in the score: G Fonds 16’, 8’, 4’; P Fonds 8’, 4’; and Péd Fonds 16’, 8’, 4’ [solo]. (The “solo” means uncoupled.) In mm. 152–63, phrases a and a briefly transformed b from the main theme are presented in a homophonic texture on the Récit, supported by staccato pedal. The staccato pedal accompaniment should produce the effect of pizzicato orchestral cellos and basses. (See Ex. 16.)

Example 16. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 152–63, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
The difficult polyrhythms created by the triplet recitative theme over the eighth-note pedal accompaniment starting in m. 164 require great virtuosity of the player. The texture of this passage suggests a trio sonata by J. S. Bach. (See Ex. 17.) In mm. 168–71, the left hand takes over in C-sharp minor the first half of phrase \( a \) from the main theme presented in mm. 164–67, switching both hands with each other. For these two contrasting themes in mm. 164–71, the main theme is played on the \( \text{Récit} \) and the second theme on \( \text{PR} \). (See Ex. 17.)

Example 17. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1\textsuperscript{st} movement, mm. 164–71, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 17, continued

Measures 171–74 are derived from the second theme and act as a bridge to the next phrase. In mm. 175–80, the two contrasting themes are combined again: in m. 175–76, a rhythmic variant of the main theme is played in the left hand on GPR and the second theme in the right hand on PR. In m. 177, the rhythmic variant of the main theme is moved to the right hand, accompanied by the second theme in the left hand; in m. 181, the pedal takes over the rhythmic variant of the main theme. A short ascending chromatic line on the Récit in m. 180 links to the C-sharp in the right hand in m. 181, in which a deceptive cadence occurs. (See Ex. 18.)

Example 18. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 170–81, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
In m. 186, a long transition to the final variation begins. This transition features ascending half-step motion everywhere, based on the first two notes of the piece. This comes from the main theme which contains the ascending stepwise motion in the upbeat to mm. 5–7. As Widor already altered the main theme by syncopation towards the end of the exposition, this syncopated ascending motion of the two notes is further development
of the same material. In fact, one could argue that Widor is following Beethoven’s “melodic development through elimination”\textsuperscript{12} in Messiaen’s term, where he gradually removes notes of a theme to reveal a kernel motive. Measures 188–89 and 192–93 have an echo between two manuals, GPR and PR, and these repetitions through manual change with echo effect also represent Bach’s style. In mm. 186–93, every two measures have the same pattern as a sequence. (See Ex. 19.) Measures 196–99 present the rhythmic variant of the head motive from the main theme. As indicated in the score, Péd. GPR is suggested in m. 188, but the swell box remains closed. (See Ex. 19.)

Example 19. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1\textsuperscript{st} movement, mm. 179–209, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved

Example 19, continued
Example 19, continued

Measures 200–7 have a C pedal point with sixteenth-note running figuration in both hands. Widor’s pedal points are commonly found in the transition to the recapitulation, at the conclusion of a section, or the ending of the piece. When a crescendo leads to a fff, the reeds, mutations, and mixtures of each division are to be brought into play successively on strong beats: first those of the Récit (perhaps already

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on), then those of the Positif, and finally those of the Grand-orgue and Pédale on the fff. To make a cresc. poco a poco toward fff in m. 210, along with opening the swell box, the reeds could be added to the Positif in m. 204 (reeds on the Récit are already on) and to the Pedale in m. 208 for fff, full pedal and to the Grand-orgue for fff, full organ in m. 210. In this passage the pedal reeds are added before those of the Grand-orgue are added, because the pedal has a fff in m. 208. The harmonic progression of this transition passage (mm. 186–209) is: D minor (m. 186) — F minor (m. 188) — C pedal point (m. 200) — C major (m. 204) — C minor (iv of G minor, m. 208). (See Ex. 19.)

Variation 3/recapitulation (mm. 210–55)

The main theme returns in the original key, G minor, in m. 210, and notably this Romantic work arrives at the recapitulation by a plagal motion, not from the dominant. This recapitulation is grander than the exposition, presenting the main theme in both left hand and pedal, the second theme majestically rather than recitative-like, and a more exciting atmosphere in the Agitato in m. 232.

The main theme in the left hand and pedal should be detached to contrast with the second theme played legato in the right hand. In mm. 210–25, the two themes are combined: in mm. 210–13, the head motive of the main theme is played in the double pedal, then the melody is continued in the right hand at the upbeat to m. 214. (See Ex. 20.)

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13 **Widor, Works, Vol. 11, xxiv.**
Example 20. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 210–25, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved.
In contrast to the exposition, both hands and pedal all play the second theme in unison in mm. 225–27, a passage that demonstrates Widor’s active pedal part-writing, equal to the manuals. In this recapitulation, the second theme is given a more thrilling character than the recitative-like treatment in which it was first presented. (See Ex. 21.)

Example 21. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 224–35, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 21, continued

Measures 232–47 present the main theme in a more exciting atmosphere with the Agitato. Unlike the exposition, phrase a of the main theme is presented with an embellished pedal line in mm. 232–39, and phrase b' with frequent double pedal in mm. 239–47. (See Ex. 22.)

Example 22. Widor, Symphonie VI, 1st movement, mm. 231–47, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 22, continued

In the Coda (mm. 247–55), Widor raises the manual chords one octave from its original register at the beginning of the movement. Undoubtedly Widor would have used the Octaves graves for this octave-higher passage to make a fuller sound.\(^{14}\) (See Ex. 23.) The Coda presents a rhythmic variant of the second theme in the pedal in mm. 247–48, in the right hand in mm. 249,\(^{15}\) and finally in both hands in m. 250–53. While both hands play the rhythmic variant of the second theme, the tonic of G major and subdominant of G minor alternate several times, and the whole piece ends with a final plagal cadence. (See Ex. 23.) Unlike the ending of the exposition in which the repetition of the head motive of the main theme leads to a cadence with a softer dynamic, the rhythmic variant of the second theme with octave higher makes this final ending grander.

\(^{15}\) Van Oosten, Charles-Marie Widor, 498.
As observed in the above analysis, each variation frequently has a different texture, a different accompaniment figuration, a different registration, and a different tempo. All these factors are contrasted within the movement, unlike the earlier Op. 13 symphonies. A more homophonic texture, greater harmonic freedom, and development of the piece at greater length are basic differences from the earlier symphonies. Furthermore, this mature symphony displays more graduated dynamics, a long dramatic crescendo toward fff, and more performance directives such as accent, sforzando, tenuto, a piacere, largamente, and agitato for expressive playing.

When the two contrasting themes are contrapuntally combined, Widor indicates different registrations to enable each theme to be heard clearly: R for the main theme and GPR for the second theme in mm. 113–16; R for the main theme and PR for the second
theme in mm. 164–71; and **GPR** for the main theme and **PR** for the second theme in mm. 175–79.

Widor indicates quarter note = 120 for the starting tempo for this piece, and changes to quarter note = 132 at m. 57. After that, he does not change it except via performance directives such as Large or Agitato.
Chapter 4

Analysis of the Last Symphony, *Symphonie romane*, Op. 73

Whereas Widor’s earlier eight symphonies have no special titles, his last two have such titles: *gothique*, Op. 70, and *romane*, Op. 73. Together they demonstrate a new style of organ symphony with a number of significant features. Whereas Widor’s earlier organ symphonies have between five and seven movements, his last two symphonies have a four-movement format. Unlike the earlier symphonies, these two show religious expression by using chant themes, and the works are unified by the cyclic treatment of these themes. The Christmas Introit, *Puer natus est* (A child is born) appears in the third and fourth movements of the *gothique*. The Easter Gradual *Haec dies* (This is the day) is used in the first, second, and fourth movements of the *romane*, and the Sequence *Victimae paschali laudes* (Let us praise the Easter lamb) in that symphony’s third movement. The *Salve Regina* movement of Symphonie II, added to the symphony in the 1901 revision as a replacement for the *Scherzo* movement, is also based on a chant theme.  

Moreover, these two last symphonies have architectural inspiration, and a dedication to a church: the *gothique*, the Gothic church Saint Ouen in Rouen; the *romane*, the Romanesque Basilica Saint Sernin of Toulouse. Both churches possess large Cavaillé-Coll organs. The *gothique*, whose musical style is said to reflect the pointed

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1 Van Oosten, *Charles-Marie Widor*, 301, 308.
3 Ibid.
architectural character of Saint Ouen, is highly contrapuntal.\textsuperscript{4} In contrast, the \textit{romane} is said to reflect the rounded arches of Saint Sernin, with a more fluid and improvisational musical style.\textsuperscript{5} Van Oosten comments: “These symphonies stand out because of the appearance of a new aesthetic ideal, characterized by the use of Gregorian themes and a more introverted style of writing with great spiritual depth.”\textsuperscript{6} Lawrence Archbold notes:

The \textit{Symphonie romane} is, however, in many ways the most sophisticated, surely the most unified both stylistically and thematically, and more than the \textit{Symphonie gothique}, shows its composer to be meaningfully engaged not only in the search for a more spiritual musical style, but also to be more clearly aware of up-to-date compositional techniques as well as current conceptions of chant. Of all Widor’s organ symphonies, the \textit{Symphonie romane} is in some ways the most orchestral in its treatment of the organ…\textsuperscript{7}

In the \textit{Symphonie gothique}, Widor set the plainsong melody \textit{Puer natus est} as a cantus firmus in long notes, but his task in the \textit{Symphonie romane} was how to incorporate the free melismatic plainsong \textit{Haec dies} into a stricter modern rhythmic setting.\textsuperscript{8} Widor explains in his \textit{Avant-propos} to the work:

… the “Puer natus est,” of very pure lines and solid construction, lends itself—it couldn’t be better—to polyphonic development; it’s an excellent subject to treat.

Quite another is the “Haec dies,” an elegant arabesque adorning a text of a few words—about ten notes per syllable—a vocalization as elusive as a bird’s song, a kind of pedal point conceived for a virtuoso free of limitation….

The rhythmic independence of Gregorian chant conforms badly to the absolutism of our metronomic measure. Is there anything more delicate than to transcribe in modern notation the vocalizations of a gradual or an

\textsuperscript{4} Widor, \textit{Works}, Vol. 20, viii.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{6} Van Oosten, “Charles-Marie Widor,” 332.
\textsuperscript{8} Near, “Life and Work,” 212.
Alleluia? So one turns to spoken explanations and commentaries for it: *Quasi recitative, rubato, espressivo, a piacere*, etc.

Perhaps it would even be opportune, in this case, to propose several versions of a same theme to better make known the inexpressible suppleness of it, and even the free character.⁹

Widor points out that the solution to the problem of setting the free melismatic plainsong is to repeat it constantly in varied rhythmic treatments, coupled, as he says, with expressive directives. In his *Avant-propos* Widor notes: “In order to impose so fluid a theme on the attention of the listener, there is only one means: to repeat it ceaselessly.”¹⁰

And he gives three rhythmically different examples of the plainsong melody. (See Ex. 24.)

Example 24. Widor, examples from *Symphonie romane, Avant-propos*¹¹; taken from the edition ed. John R. Near, Recent Researches in the Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, vol. 20 (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1997); used with permission; all rights reserved.

The *romane* was composed in 1899 and published the following year by J. Hamelle.¹² In contrast with the numerous revisions of the earlier symphonies, the *romane* has only minor alterations, and the first movement remains unrevised in all the editions¹³;

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¹⁰ Ibid.
¹¹ Ibid.
¹² Ibid., ix
¹³ Ibid., xiii.
after the first edition (1900), small changes in the second and fourth movements were made in two editions (1920 and 1929).  

*Symphonie romane* consists of four movements: 1. No title (*Moderato*); 2. *Choral*; 3. *Cantilène*; 4. *Final*. I will analyze the first movement, *Moderato*. Whereas this movement develops the chant theme in a free, improvisatory manner, in the second movement the chant theme begins in four-part harmonization like a chorale, and the last movement presents it in more brilliant and rhapsodic fashion with several *fff* climaxes. The *romane* specifically displays Wagner’s influence. John Near says in his edition: in the first movement (mm. 75–76) of this symphony, Widor quoted the Isolde motive from Wagner’s opera, *Tristan und Isolde* and in the second movement, *Choral*, the famous Tristan chord (m. 54, second half of the third beat) as well as the Isolde motive (mm. 57–59) from the opera.  

But it might be argued that the melody used is more related to Tristan’s motive, “hero” than Isolde motive, since it uses the descending accented dissonance at the end. (See Exx. 25 and 35.)

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Example 25. Comparison of a) Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* (top)\(^{16}\) and Widor’s *Symphonie romane, Choral*, m. 54 (bottom), from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved

\[\text{Isolde motive}\]
\[\text{tristan chord}\]

\[\text{poco riesa.}\]
\[\text{rit.}\]

b) Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, Tristan’s motive, hero\(^{17}\)

\[\text{\textit{Tristan und Isolde Motives}, available from} \ \text{http://www.utexas.edu/courses/tristan/motives.php; Internet; accessed 9 August 2012.}\]

\[\text{\textit{Ibid.}}\]
Example 25, continued

c) Widor, *Symphonie romane, Choral*, mm. 57–59, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved

As mentioned above, this movement is based on a chant theme, *Haec dies*. Widor used only the beginning two phrases: “haec dies” and “quam fecit.” The version of the *Haec dies* Widor used is from *Paroissien romain noté en plain-chant* published in Paris in 1874, and it is slightly different from the *Liber Usualis* version.¹⁸ (See Ex. 26.)

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¹⁸ Widor, Works, Vol. 20, xii.
Example 26. Comparison of the beginning phrase of “Haec dies” in the *Paroissien romain noté en plain-chant* used by Widor (top) and the *Liber Usualis* (bottom), \( ^{19} \) from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved

Both the *Paroissien romane* and the *Liber Usualis* versions classify the *Haec dies* chant as second mode, but the French chant authority Dom Joseph Pothier claimed that its true mode, without ending on its final, is the fifth.\( ^{20} \) This chant theme is transposed up a fifth in the second mode and transposed up a third in the fifth mode, beginning and ending on A. The chant theme beginning on A suggests F major, reflecting the fifth mode, but the ending on A via a neighbor tone—B-natural in the *Paroissien romane* version that Widor used—implies A minor, the mediant of F major, reflecting the second mode. Many other examples of tonal ambiguity are found in the symphony setting, as shown in the analysis below. These tonal ambiguities with mediant relationships are probably related to the modal ambiguity of the chant tune itself. Widor frequently uses key signatures that do not reflect the actual tonality of a given passage, but rather, have extra sharps, causing tonal ambiguity with the mediant of the tonality indicated by the key signature.

\( ^{19} \) Ibid.

\( ^{20} \) Archbold, “Widor’s *Symphonie romane*,” 253–54.
Based on recurrence of the chant themes, this movement may be viewed in a few different ways. When one considers the introduction of the chant themes in the first section, the dramatic shape of the climax in the middle section, and the resolution of the climax in the third section, the piece may be viewed as a three-part form, AA′B: A (mm. 1–30), A′ (mm. 30–64), B (mm. 65–74), and Coda (mm. 75–84). In the third section in m. 65, the tonic returns, but the main theme “haec” no longer reappears. Rather, the third section (mm. 65–74) is dominated by the “dies” theme, resolving at length the climax that was dramatically shaped in the middle section.

Another possibility is a two-part form, AA′: A (mm. 1–30), A′ (mm. 30–74), and Coda (mm. 75–84). The recurrence of the chant themes in the A section is similar to that in the A′ section, and at the end of the A′ section the “dies” theme is considerably extended by repetition of the phrases, gradually relaxing the climax toward the end of the piece. This view of the form does not show enough of the character of this piece.

The most important element to be considered is the dramatic shape of this piece. Widor introduces the chant theme in a rather mystical, static manner in a sparse texture in the high range. This specific texture is presented three times (mm. 1–11; 17–22; 30–37) with pedal-point accompaniment, and each of these presentations is contrasted with the succeeding statement (mm. 12–16 and mm. 23–30) of the chant themes with improvisatory accompaniment figuration. In the middle section from m. 38, the music becomes more vigorous, reaching a full climax in C major in m. 47. The third section is a slow relaxation of tension, returning to the original key. Thus, Widor creates an arch form, using dynamic, registrational, and harmonic means to shape the piece. Looking at the ways in which the chant melody is used in the piece, this movement may be viewed
as a monothematic, through-composed form, with various sections, creating an arch form through its dramatic shape. The recurrence of the chant theme is shown in Fig. 3.

Figure 3. Formal diagram of Widor’s *Symphonie romane*, 1st movement

Monothematically, through-composed form

First section (mm. 1–37)

m. 1 Intro. 2 haec dies (L.H.) 5 quam fecit (L.H.) 10 extens. 12 haec (ped.) 14 extens.
D major (tonal ambiguity between D major and F# minor)

∥ Themes in the high range with pedal point accompaniment ∥ Theme with improvisatory accompaniment ∥

m. 17 haec dies (L.H.) 20 haec dies (L.H) 23 dies (ten.) 25 extens.

V₇ C# major (tonal ambiguity between C# and c#)

∥ with pedal point accompaniment------------∥ with improvisatory accompaniment ∥

basso ostinato in the pedal

m. 30 haec dies (sop.) 32 quam fecit (alto) 35 extens.
A major (tonal ambiguity between A and c#)

∥ with pedal point accompaniment----------------∥

Second section (mm. 38–64)

m. 38 41 haec (L.H.) 43 extens.
D major G/b (tonal ambiguity between G and b)
m. 47 haec dies (ped.) 51. _______55_______57____59____60 basso ostinato on F#
C/e Climax (fff) ------------------- resolution of climax (No theme)-------------------
(tonal ambiguity between C and e)

Third section (mm. 65–74)
“dies” theme---------------------------------------------------------------

m. 65 dies (L.H.) 67 extens. 69 dies (R.H.) 71 dies (R.H.) 73 dies (R.H.)
basso ostinato on D----------------------------------------------------------
D major
G
D

Coda (mm. 75–84)

m. 75____76__________81________84
basso ostinato..............
D major

After an introduction with an ascending running passage of only one measure
(m.1) toward F-sharp“, which seems to depict the arches of the Romanesque church, the
first phrase (“haec dies”) of the chant theme is introduced in the left hand in m. 2,
accompanied by an F-sharp pedal point, the first inversion of the D-major chord, in the
right hand. Widor inserts the directives “Quasi recitative, espressivo, a piacere” for the
chant theme in this improvisatory introduction. A GPR is indicated for the chant theme
and R for the accompaniment. (See Ex. 27.)

The original chant version begins on A; Widor transposed it down a minor third to
F-sharp; however, the G-sharps, which contradict the G naturals in D major, imply F-sharp minor, as does the F-sharp pedal point. This opening section thus shows tonal ambiguity between D major and its mediant, F-sharp minor. (See Ex. 27.)

The registration instruction is indicated at the beginning on the score: Fonds 8', 4', 2', Mixtures on Grand-orgue, Positif, and Récit; Fonds 16', 8', 4' on Pédale. Compared with the first movements from all the other solo organ symphonies by Widor, the inclusion of the Mixtures on the manuals in this movement is unusual. They are mostly played on foundations without mixtures. In the opening measures, Widor uses simultaneously two different time signatures: 12/8 for the right hand and pedal, and 4/4 for left hand. (See Ex. 27.)

Example 27. Widor, *Symphonie romane*, 1st movement, mm. 1–4, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved

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**Symphonie romane**

*Ad Memoriam Sancti Saturnini Tolosensis*

I

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21 Archbold, “Widor’s *Symphonie romane*,” 254, 257.
The same figuration as m. 1 is repeated with a slight melodic alteration in the right hand in m. 4, and then the second phrase (“quam fecit”) of the chant theme is stated in the left hand in m. 5, accompanied by the F-sharp pedal point again. The fragments of this second phrase are repeated with slight melodic alterations in m. 9, and the phrase is extended until m. 12, alternating contrapuntally in both hands fragments derived from the free improvisatory passage on m. 1 (See Ex. 28.)

Example 28. Widor, *Symphonie romane*, 1st movement, mm. 3–11, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 28, continued

In m. 12, the time signature of the left hand is changed to 12/8, the same as that of the right hand and pedal. In mm. 12–13, the first motive (“haec”) of the chant theme is presented in the pedal on GPR, and unlike the chant themes previously presented in the manuals, the pedal part presents it in augmented rhythmic values in the time signature 12/8, accompanied by improvisatory figurations derived from the beginning rather than a
pedal point. Along with a diminuendo hairpin on the fourth beat of m. 11, the swell box should be closed, and a registration change (GP fonds) is indicated. In m. 12, the registrations of the right hand and the pedal change to GPR; along with a crescendo hairpin from the fourth beat of m. 15, the swell box should be opened. Alternating G with F-sharp in the pedal, the phrase is extended and ends on a D major chord in m. 16. (See Ex. 29.)

Example 29, Widor, *Symphonie romane*, 1st movement, mm. 11–16, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Accompanied by a double pedal point on D and F-sharp in the right hand, the first phrase (“haec dies”) of the chant theme is stated in the left hand from the upbeat to m. 17. This double pedal point helps establish more firmly the tonality of D major from the previously presented tonal ambiguity between D major and F-sharp minor. Mixtures are added for this theme. It is repeated as an echo on the Récit from the upbeat to m. 20. In the left hand in m. 22, Widor uses a dominant-seventh chord, exploiting the enharmonic ambiguity with a German sixth-chord. This might be viewed as further Wagnerian influence (just as Wagner re-interpreted his Tristan chord in so many different ways throughout Tristan und Isolde). The dominant-seventh chord in the left hand in m. 22 is respelled as a German augmented sixth-chord on the fourth beat of that measure, resolving it to a C-sharp major chord in m. 23. This enharmonic reinterpretation between the dominant seventh and the German-sixth chords functions as a modulatory device.

(See Ex. 30.)

Example 30. Widor, Symphonie romane, 1st movement, mm. 15–23, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 30, continued

Over a *basso ostinato* beginning in the upbeat to m. 23, the “dies” theme is presented in the tenor on GPR, and the phrase is expanded until the second beat of m. 30. In mm. 28–29, the pedal takes over the theme played by the left hand in mm. 23–24. For the C-sharp major key in m. 23, Widor indicates a key signature with only four sharps, using accidentals for the others as required,\(^2\) thus causing harmonic ambiguity with C-sharp minor. This section ends with a C-sharp major chord in m. 30. (See Ex. 31.)

Accompanied by a C-sharp pedal point in the left hand in mm. 30–37, the two phrases ("haec dies" and "quam fecit") of the chant theme are presented in the right hand on R: the first phrase in the soprano in mm. 30–32; the second phrase in the alto from the upbeat to mm. 33–35 accompanied by right-hand high C-sharp pedal as well as by a left-
hand low C-sharp pedal. The second half of “quam fecit” is repeated from the upbeat to 35. In a similar way to the tonal ambiguity of D major and F-sharp minor at the beginning, because of the presence of D-sharps which contradict D natural in A major, there is a similar tonal ambiguity between A major and C-sharp minor in this section, beginning in m. 30. In m. 37, the “b” in the pedal goes to F-sharp, V/vi in D in m. 38, settling on G through half-step resolution. (See Ex. 32.)

Example 32. Widor, *Symphonie romane*, 1st movement, mm. 28–38, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved

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23 Archbold, “Widor’s Symphonie romane,” 258.
Example 32, continued

The middle section starts in m. 38, preparing the climax with an improvisatory sixteenth-note accompaniment. In mm. 41–42, the first motive (“haec”) of the chant theme is presented in the left hand on GPR. A key signature with one sharp is indicated in m. 41, suggesting G major, but C-sharps and A-sharps in the accompaniment imply B minor.\(^{24}\) (See Ex. 33.) The running sixteenth-note-passage with a crescendo beginning in m. 44 leads to a fff climax of the piece in which the first phrase (“haec dies”) of the chant theme is stated in the pedal in octaves. The transition passages linking the appearance of the chant themes include fragments from the improvisatory opening and from the chant theme itself.\(^{25}\) (See mm. 38, 39, and 45 in Ex. 33.) The registration

\(^{24}\) Archbold, “Widor’s *Symphonie romane*,” 258.

instructions are indicated in m. 38: R fonds et Anches 16', 8', 4', and the manual couplers change several times in the right hand in mm. 38–44: PR in m. 38; GPR in m. 39; PR and then R in m. 40; GPR in m. 44. (See Ex. 33.)

Example 33. Widor, Symphonie romane, 1st movement, mm. 38–51, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 33, continued
While the chant theme is presented in the pedal octaves, a sustained G pedal point in the top part increases the climactic atmosphere of this passage, and rhythmic patterns of stress change on the fourth beat of m. 48 and in m. 49, as the left hand plays groups of three while the pedal uses duple subdivisions. This climactic passage suggests a kind of symphonic orchestra in which the brass part plays the chant theme, accompanied by the strings. In this climax, the chant theme transposed down a second from its original appearance on F-sharp suggests C major, but the conclusion of the chant theme in m. 50 via F-sharp in m. 49 implies E minor, thus creating further harmonic ambiguity. (See Ex. 33 above.)

Without an occurrence of the chant theme, the dramatically shaped climax subsides gradually, dominated by the running sixteenth-note figurations with their improvisational spinning mood. In m. 55, registration instruction is indicated: GP Fonds and Pé Fonds. In mm. 55–56, two chords alternate, F-sharp and D, in a third-relationship, the predominant key relationship in this piece. Measures 57–60 present the descending stepwise motion and descending chromatic line in the top voice against ascending chromatic motion in the left hand. (See Ex. 34.)

27 Archbold, "Widor’s Symphonie romane," 258.
28 Ibid.
Example 34. Widor, *Symphonie romane*, 1st movement, mm. 54–60, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 34, continued

This harmonic juxtaposition is continued in the pedal until the end of the piece: in mm. 57–59 the pedal plays an F-sharp pedal point (See Ex. 34.); a basso ostinato on F-sharp is featured in mm. 60–63; through a passing tone, E, the pedal arrives at D in m. 65, then has the basso ostinato on D in mm. 65–75; the basso ostinato recurs on F-sharp in mm. 76–78; and through a passing tone, E, in mm. 79–80, the music finally arrives at the tonic, D, in m. 81 (See Ex. 35.). In Wagner’s “Magic Fire Music” from Die Walküre, the woodwinds play ostinato figuration continuously until the piece closes, gradually subsiding the dramatically shaped climax. This passage of Widor’s Symphonie romane also features a Wagnerian climax and its resolution with basso ostinato. During the relaxation of the dramatically shaped climax, there are many crescendo and diminuendo markings, and for these dynamics the swell box should be operated in accordance with them. (See Ex. 35.)

In m. 65, the original key, D major, returns, but the first theme (“haec”) no longer appears in the piece, and the “dies” theme dominates the remainder, considerably extended by its repetition: the “dies” theme is presented in the left hand on GPR from the upbeat to m. 65 and, repeating a melodically altered motive, the phrase is extended until m. 69. At the upbeat to m. 69, the right hand takes over the phrase, repeating it in G
major from the upbeat to 71. From the upbeat to m. 73, the phrase is repeated again in D major in a soft dynamic, \( p \), on \textbf{PR}. While this theme is repeatedly presented in D major, G major, then back to D major in mm. 65–74, these phrases are accompanied by undulating sixteenth-note figurations in the manual over a basso ostinato pedal; and after the chant theme ends in m. 74, these figurations and pedal are continued until the piece closes. (See Ex. 35.)

Example 35, Widor, \textit{Symphonie romane}, 1\textsuperscript{st} movement, mm. 60–84, from the Near ed.; used with permission; all rights reserved
Example 35, continued
Example 35, continued
As mentioned above, in the first section the chant themes are introduced in a rather mystical, static manner in a sparse texture in the high range three times (mm. 1–11; 17–22; 30–37) with pedal-point accompaniment, and each of these presentations of the themes is contrasted with the succeeding statement (mm. 12–16 and mm. 23–30) of the chant themes with an improvisatory sixteenth-note accompaniment. Thus these opening mini-sections avoid a linear connection until m. 38, creating mystery by the lack of linear
direction and connectivity. However, Widor does not pause the running sixteenth-note motion until the subtle rhythmic ritard at the end of m. 80, which hints at the opening measure in the left-hand figuration, thereby rounding the movement off.

As observed in the above analysis, the chant theme is usually presented on GPR, with some exceptions: on the Récit in mm. 30–36, and as an echo from the upbeat to mm. 20–21 and on PR in the upbeat to mm. 73–34.

This symphony is characterized by the dramatic shape of its climax and extensive resolution, harmonic and tonal ambiguity, unexpected modulation, and chromaticism. These features display Wagner’s influence on Widor.

In addition, the frequent changes in meter and tempo, simultaneous use of different meters, variety of rhythmic treatments, impressionistic undulating and spinning figurations, and extensive use of basso ostinatos connect the symphony to even more modern practices than Wagner.

Considering the cyclical treatment of the recurring chant melodies like the idée fixe, the architectural character of the romanesque church, and the mood created by accompaniment figurations whenever the chant melodies recur, programmatic elements may also be identified in this symphony.

Throughout the work, there are constant changes of time signatures in mm. 12, 17, 38, 45, 48, 60, 65, 69, 79, and 80.²⁹ Widor’s frequent change of time signatures contributes to the intended variety of rhythmic treatments of the chant theme.

The pedal-point accompaniment for the theme helps produce the fluid character of the melismatic chant theme: “a vocalization as elusive as a bird’s song,” as Widor

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²⁹ T. Carl Whitmer, “Widor’s Organ Symphonies,” *American Organist* 17, no. 5 (August 1934): 363 (Whitmer includes m. 81, but in Near’s A-R edition, m. 81 has no change of time signature).
wrote in the preface to the *romane*. Whereas the chant themes are often accompanied by pedal points in the first section (mm. 1–37), in the rest of the piece the improvisatory accompaniment figurations derived from the beginning are predominant. As Widor said in the preface to this symphony:

It isn’t at all necessary to add that, when this theme is taken up in the symphonic network and becomes an integral part of the polyphony, one must execute it strictly in time without attenuation of any kind, with calm and grandeur. Then it’s no longer free.\(^{30}\)

Unlike the previous two sections, the third section (mm. 65–74) is dominated by the “dies” theme without reappearance of the main theme, “haec.” In this third section, the climax of the piece, dramatically shaped in the middle section, is extensively resolved by the repetition of the phrases of the “dies” theme.

Reflecting the monothematic, through-composed form, the movement is dominated by the reiteration of the chant theme, *Haec dies*, in various rhythmic treatments, as Widor said in the preface: “In order to impose so fluid a theme on the attention of the listener, there is only one means: to repeat it ceaselessly.” The absence of a clear or typical form in this piece may be considered a contributing factor to the novelty of Widor’s compositional style. The *Symphonie romane* is one of the most remarkable works of Widor’s output, featuring a Romanticism typical of Wagner’s orchestral works and operas in the late nineteenth century.

\(^{30}\) Widor, Works, Vol. 20, xxiii.
Conclusion

In his organ symphonies, Widor employed a harmonic idiom that was basically conservative, compared with his contemporaries such as Satie or Schoenberg. In particular, mediant and submediant relationships are frequent in his harmonic progressions, and his modulations often use common tones to achieve such third-relationships. He sometimes employed unusual keys, as observed in the analyses of the previous chapters. For example, in the prélude movement of Symphonie I, Widor closes the exposition in F minor, the subdominant, not in the dominant or relative major. Also, the first movement of Symphonie VI arrives at the recapitulation by plagal motion. In his final symphony, the romane, Widor’s compositional style changed remarkably: the harmony is more chromatic, with tonal ambiguities, enharmonic reinterpretation between dominant seventh and German augmented-sixth chords, and modulation through half-step resolution. In this work he also used modal melodies, and undulating and spinning accompaniment figurations, which produce an impressionistic mood. Widor achieved a liturgical connection by using chant themes, and the cyclical treatment of the chant theme made his symphonies more unified works.

Widor’s organ symphonies are divided into three groups, and the characteristics of each period clearly display his compositional evolution. The early symphonies in the Op. 13 set demonstrate simple and conservative tendencies, giving the impression of a Baroque suite. Changes in tempo, texture, color, and mood rarely occur within a movement, as observed in the analysis of Chapter 2. These early symphonies reflect Bach’s influence with contrapuntal development in the traditional way.
The mature symphonies in the Op. 42 set display a more complicated structure, with a variety of contrasts in tempo, dynamics, color, rhythm, and mood within a movement. Widor’s advanced concept of the organ symphony is displayed to the full in these mature symphonies. In addition to the basis of Bach’s Germanic tradition, the influence of German Romantic composers such as Schumann and Wagner pervades these symphonies through their virtuosity, rhapsodic display, and pianistic idioms.

The last symphony, *romane*, displays a new idiom for the organ symphony, with a sacred spirit and architectural inspiration, developed in an improvisational, impressionistic, and programmatic manner with religious expression. Whereas his eight symphonies in Opp. 13 and 42 emphasize the expressive possibilities of individual orchestral timbres on the Cavaillé-Coll organ, the last symphony, *romane*, attains a new conception of the organ symphony, late Romantic in spirit and style. In particular, this symphony features a Romanticism typical of Wagner’s orchestral works and operas in the late nineteenth century. Widor’s organ symphonies intensified the organ repertoire for concert as well as for church service: even though Widor performed complete symphonies at organ inaugurals, they served equally well as sacred music destined for the church service.¹ Some critics complained that such secular music was not appropriate for the church service, but Widor played his organ symphonies for the church service at St. Sulpice, and from this point of view, he can be credited with ushering in a new style of church music while at the same time establishing a concert repertoire for the organ.² He therefore made a great contribution to the organ literature with his organ symphonies.

² Ibid., 85–86.
Widor’s symphonic ideal influenced later composers: Louis Vierne composed six organ symphonies in a more dissonant and chromatic idiom. Marcel Dupré further developed the symphonic ideal with a programmatic manner in his Symphonie-passion and Deuxième symphonie pour orgue. Charles Tournemire (1870–1939) wrote symphonic works such as Fantasie symphonique pour orgue and Symphonie sacrée pour orgue, and in his remarkable work, L’orgue mystique, applied the symphonic ideal to a free treatment of plainsong melodies.\(^3\) Jean Langlais (1907–1991) wrote three organ symphonies. Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992) applied the symphonic ideal to his many suites in a newer harmony and style. In Germany, the symphonic ideal may be found in the chorale preludes of Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877–1933), and particularly in his Symphonische Kanzonen.\(^4\) In the United States, Leo Sowerby (1895–1968) wrote a large scale, three-movement work, Symphony in G major in 1930.

Performers should understand the stylistic characteristics of Widor’s compositional periods in order to play his works with appropriate musical expression. For the earlier works, more conservative and classical playing would be appropriate, and for his mature and later works, the performer should make full use of his virtuosity and expressive Romanticism, using the organ’s mechanical devices for expressive playing. These mature works require more use of swell pedal, more stop changes, and more expressive devices such as rubato.

“Drawing inspiration not only from Bach but from Beethoven and other masters of the symphony, [Widor] set his standard of musical excellence poles apart from the

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\(^4\) Ibid., 36–37.
majority of his organist predecessors.” With respect to the performance style of instrumental technique and idiomatic writing style, Widor did for the organ what Chopin and Liszt did for the piano and Paganini for the violin. Each of these composers elevated the instrument to new heights and employed its full expressive capability, in ways that had never been done before.

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5 Widor, Works, Vol. 11, x.
6 Van Oosten, Charles-Marie Widor, 296, 298.
Bibliography


