

LOUIS VIERNE'S *PIÈCES DE FANTASIE POUR GRAND ORGUE*:
ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HISTORY OF ORGAN MUSIC

by

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Preface

Louis Victor Jules Vierne (1870–1937), the Organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris, was a virtuoso organist and a world-renowned performer. His organ music, especially his *Six Symphonies pour Grand Orgue*, is widely regarded as the pinnacle of the French Romantic organ repertoire. Having studied with Charles Marie Widor (1844–1937) and having been inspired by César Franck (1822–1890), Vierne studied, developed, and contributed to the renaissance of French organ music at the turn of the 20th century.

Between 1926 and 1927, Louis Vierne composed *Pièces de Fantaisie pour Grande Orgue*, displaying his most mature writing style. He performed *Pièces de Fantaisie pour Grande Orgue* and his *Six Symphonies pour Grand Orgue* frequently during his concert tours such as his tour of America in 1927. On June 2, 1937, the last set of *Pièces de Fantaisie* along with his recently published work, the *Triptyque*, was programmed for what ultimately became his final recital. Vierne passed away on the organ bench during this concert.

Even following his death, Vierne's *Pièces de Fantaisie* stands as a unique collection in organ literature, as it offers varied inspirations; some pieces derive from the French tradition of writing with musical titles that relate to the Baroque era, some pieces are poetic, and some pieces are visual. The general assumption is that “they are mostly impressionistic nature paintings.”¹ Hermann J. Busch and Martin Herchenroeder state that the “impressionistic spirit is clearly perceptible,” and “the nearly blind Vierne shows a frequent, striking affinity for visual

¹ Chris Woodstra, Gerald Brennan, and Allen Schrott, eds. *All Music guide to Classical Music*. (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2005), 1456.

impressions.”² These assumptions lead to many related questions. For instance, was Vierne an admirer of Claude Debussy (1862–1918)? Did Debussy directly influence Vierne? Were there other impressionistic composers who influenced Vierne? Were certain pieces from this collection intentionally written in an impressionist style, and if so, does that translate to the organ, an instrument that is not well known for this particular style? Are there any other composers who made an attempt using this unfamiliar, stylistic territory for the organ? Lastly, is the *Pièces de Fantaisie pour Grande Orgue* one of the most misunderstood sets of organ music of its quality and popularity due to such assumptions?

Debussy and Vierne were not dissimilar; they both trained at the Paris Conservatoire and were simultaneously active in the city. However, there is no evidence that Vierne intended to follow the musical language of Debussy or create impressionistic organ works. Vierne was undoubtedly the leading French organ composer of his time, at the height of the French Romantic era, and his music continued to pave the path for organ music’s presence in non-liturgical concert venues. *Pièces de Fantaisie* successfully captures descriptive images relating to secular topics, and it recalls musical titles from the Baroque era in a consistent manner. Although many notable examples of Vierne’s merit as a composer for the organ are recognized in organ symphonies, the *24 Pièces de Fantaisie* is an excellent collection of concert pieces that deals almost exclusively with secular topics.

The uniqueness of this collection has been historically overshadowed by comments describing the majority of the collection to be impressionistic in style. This thesis will discuss the impressionistic qualities in the collection, examine how impressionism was used in other organ literature, find other works that precede this collection to determine if Vierne was following a

² Hermann J. Busch and Martin Herchenroeder. *Twentieth Century Organ Music* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 146.

specific trend, investigate certain pieces from the collection in depth, highlight multiple consistent musical languages by Vierne that make this collection connected to impressionistic style, and distinguish qualities that appropriately fall under non-impressionism. The process of placing this collection in the history of organ literature rather than defining it in an assumption is imperative. The variety of influences shown in the whole collection makes *Pièces de Fantaisie* a strong representation of Vierne, who expressed multiple styles of music throughout.

Chapter 1 will discuss Vierne's life and work to investigate the artist's inspiration and musical training, with special attention given to the two major composers who have influenced him. Chapter 2 will discuss the definition of impressionism and necessary criteria for defining an organ piece as impressionistic. Chapter 3 will explore any possible connection between Vierne, impressionism, and other composers who are known to employ a strongly impressionistic style. Chapter 4 will discuss the work of Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877–1933), Vierne's contemporary, who has self-defined his pieces as having strong impressionistic characteristics. Chapter 5 will describe collections of works prior to *Pièces de Fantaisie*. Chapter 6 will discuss musical characteristics of individual pieces of the collection and explore the conclusion that the collection stands as an unusual, yet, successful collection of organ literature for its time.

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Chapter 1: LOUIS VIERNE: HIS LIFE AND WORK

Louis Victor Jules Vierne (1870–1937), one of the most prolific organists and composers of his generation, lived in France at the turn of the twentieth century during a time when the country was experiencing rich cultural and artistic shifts. From 1881, when he was a student, until his death in 1937, Vierne witnessed a mixture of exciting and tragic world events. Many societies were formed during these turbulent times to provide intellectual and cultural discussions that would generate new ideas. As the center of rich culture and civic pride, Paris provided a fertile breeding-ground for musicians, artists, and writers. Film, jazz, machines, advancement in modern technology, and everything associated with these advancements were all thriving.

The community of organists and organ builders also went through one of the most notable and monumental shifts during Vierne's life. César Franck emerged as virtuoso and composer while organ-building technology experienced a period of rapid development. Organ literature in itself had been an essential part of France's culture before the arrival of Franck. The idea of improvisation still dominated liturgical use of the organ, and with the emergence of the new technology came the new master organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll (1811–1899). A brilliant organ builder, Cavaillé-Coll defined the finest modern organs of his generation that advanced many aspects of the instrument. No longer were the organs of France only for liturgical use in the church a practice that limited organ pieces to be titled combination of organ registrations such as *Plein Jeu*, *Grand-Jeu*. Even though the terminology was still widely used, the definitions lacked the ability to cover new possibilities in registration or new types of

composition. As the advancement in organ building thrived, the growth of culture in the society created a demand for more organ music for concert settings. This led to some organ music developing without much substance; as a notable music scholar, François- Joseph Fétis (1784–1871) criticized the quality of organ works of its time: “Organists are weak, and what they produce is simply beneath criticism.”³

Organists such as Louis James Lefébure-Wély (1817–1869) created improvisations that pleased the crowds, but his rebellious style drew a fair amount of criticism for a less-than-stellar musical language used in improvisations even though this very style alone made him more popular and in demand than César Franck (1822–1890). Louis Vierne created his own unique style influenced by both César Franck and Charles-Marie Widor (1844–1937). Of the two, Widor exercised more influence during Vierne’s training and professional career, even though Vierne recalled Franck to be a musical inspiration at an early age.

César Franck’s importance can be measured by the significant role he played in French organ music in general. Born in 1822, Franck showed great promise as a pianist, organist, and composer. In 1872, he was appointed to teach organ at the Paris Conservatoire, a post for which he was recommended by notable musicians including Theodore Dubois (1837–1924). Vierne expressed Franck’s teaching on improvisation showing Franck’s great invention, rich polyphony in harmony, melody, and form.⁴ Towards the end of his career he devoted himself to composing, teaching at the Paris Conservatoire, and serving as organist of Sainte-Clotilde.

In 1868, Franck completed his *Six Pièces pour Grand Orgue* (Fantaisie in C Major Op.16, Grande Pièce Symphonique Op. 17, Prélude, Fugue, et Variation Op. 18, Pastorale

³ Michael Murray, *French Masters of the Organ* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998), 15.

⁴ Rollin Smith. *Louis Vierne: Organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 1999), 43.

Op.19, Prière Op. 20, and Final Op. 21). This is one of the most rare collections of compositions published during that period that are still widely performed. Since Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's (1809–1847) time no such organ works enjoyed such popularity and respect from critics as Franck's compositions. For the organ, they represented a significant leap in mainstream compositional trends. Franck's symphonic conception influenced an array of organists, generating a new approach to composition and gaining the respect of other composers. In the *Six Pièces pour Grand Orgue* he demonstrated many different types and styles of organ music. The piece "Prière" ("prayer"), with a highly condensed texture that focused on sonorous melodies, exemplifies the composer's style. Franck's "Grand Pièce Symphonique" is the most notable organ work in symphonic style; and it influenced Widor and Vierne as shown in their later organ symphonies, which are important contributions to French organ repertoire. Franck's cyclical structures bring cohesiveness to the whole work. Franck moved from organ improvisation to formal composition and opened impressive new avenues for composition. Because of this, he became a central source influence on organists such as the young Vierne.

Louis Vierne was born in 1870 in Poitiers, France, and was sickly and nearly blind, conditions he dealt with his entire life. He underwent frequent operations on his eyes. Early in his life Vierne discovered he was musically gifted. With the support of his father, Henri Vierne, and his uncle, Charles Colin, he studied Braille and entered the Institute for Blind Children. His first exposure to the organ was at Saint-Maurice in Lille, which made a deep impression on him and led to his studies in organ. His uncle, Charles Colin, supported him every step of the way, and Vierne expressed his gratitude to him in *Mes Souvenirs*. This early education at the Institute for Blind Children opened doors for the young Vierne to achieve his goal of entering the Paris Conservatoire to study with Franck. His uncles Charles shared music of Mozart, Beethoven, and

Schuman with young Vierne prior to the Institute for Blind Children, and they also helped young Vierne to be familiar with improvisation on the organ.⁵ At the Institute for Blind Children, Vierne was taught the basic school curriculum as well as violin, and he played in the orchestra. He then worked with different teachers, such as Victor Paul, Louis Lebel, Albert Mahaut, and Adolphe Marty, all who influenced Vierne in different areas of musical growth.

Franck's playing inspired Vierne's career. In his meeting with Franck in 1886, Vierne speaks of his memory of the master's performance: "It was too beautiful and I didn't want it ever to stop"⁶

Clearly encouraged by his encounter with Franck, he studied with diligence. In 1890, he began his musical training with Franck at the Paris Conservatoire. Vierne's dream was short-lived, as Franck passed away one month after he began studying under him. Charles Marie Widor, who had taken the post as the organist of the church of St. Sulpice, Paris and was known for his virtuosity, took over Franck's class. Vierne, along with his colleague Charles Tournemire (1870–1939), found both inspiration and challenges under the new guidance.⁷

Widor was born in Lyon, and his family was good friends with the organ builder Cavaillé-Coll. He received his organ training from Nicholas Lemmens (1823–1881) in Brussels and from him, he developed what was considered a phenomenal technique. Widor's background influenced his technique, which became an integral component of his teaching at the Paris Conservatoire. As a successor to Franck at the Conservatoire, Widor also showed his compositional prowess, especially through his monumental *10 Symphonies pour Grand Orgue*.

⁵ Smith, 9.

⁶ Smith, 22.

⁷ Smith, 61.

His use of the organ extended what Franck had begun and is now commonly known as the “revival” of French organ music—a role that Vierne inherited.

Widor, according to Vierne, was a very different teacher from Franck, not only in appearance and age, but also in overall character and approach. Franck represented a paternal figure, whereas Widor was described as much more strict and cold. Despite this, Widor’s playing and his approach to music soon inspired and motivated Vierne, who recalled Widor’s speech in his first class:

In France we have neglected performance much too much in favor of improvisation. This is not only wrong, it is nonsense. To improvise in the artistic sense of the word, one must have ideas, certainly; but that is not sufficient. In order not to be false to one’s thoughts, in order to translate them exactly with all the variety, complexity, and flexibility required for their development, the organist must possess an instrumental technique capable of playing any figuration at any tempo. Improvisation is spontaneous composition; it can be accomplished only with profound knowledge and assiduous practice of all the resources offered by the manuals and pedal board of the organ...⁸

This experience left a life-long impression on Vierne, as his music also followed this principle mentioned above. Vierne’s fellow-student at the time, Charles Tournemire, commented: “Vierne, particularly, thoroughly assimilated Lemmens’ pure technique transmitted by Widor; in addition, his gifts as an improviser and composer were not late in manifesting themselves in various already flamboyant works. In class, he was the absolute submissive vis-à-vis his maître, to whom he was extremely devoted. That explains [Widor’s] great influence on his early works.”⁹ Vierne also admits that Widor’s approach helped him improve his technique and approach music with a sense of direction. Vierne explains that Widor emphasized elements of technique such as posture, hand position, legato playing, staccato, and impeccable pedal technique that equals the ability of the fingers. Widor also focused on the stylistic aspect of

⁸ Smith, 55.

⁹ Smith, 68.

playing in his classes, emphasizing the study of music from earlier times, such as that of Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770–1827), Joseph Haydn (1732–1809), and J.S. Bach. Through these studies, Widor believed organists could improvise in a manner that would result in better structure and a more complete musical form, rather than having only musical ideas dominate and shadow the overall structure. Widor himself stated: “What! You’ve played the Beethoven sonatas and never had the curiosity to wonder how they were constructed? Why, that’s the mentality of a parrot, not of an artist. It must stop.”¹⁰

Both Franck and Widor clearly saw the Vierne’s potential at a young age, and they encouraged him to aim for greatness through hard work. Widor said, “You certainly have a great future as a virtuoso and musician if you continue to work with the same ardor.”¹¹

In *Mes Souvenir*, Vierne discussed Widor’s focus on the construction of the overall composition, as well as the development of thematic ideas, rhythmic variations of the theme, and thematic variations that could tie the whole piece together. Until 1907, Vierne always went to Widor for advice on compositions on which he was working, suggesting the heightened level of respect, friendship, and trust they shared. The pedagogical influence Widor had on Vierne is continually reflected in his own compositions.

When Widor accepted the role of head of the chair of composition at the Paris Conservatoire, he retired from teaching organ classes, and Félix Alexandre Guilmant (1837–1911) became his successor. Widor told Vierne that, should Guilmant succeed him, he would gain tremendous skill working as Guilmant’s assistant.¹² Because of Guilmant’s rigorous concert career and demanding schedule, Vierne actually spent a substantial amount of time teaching

¹⁰ Smith, 67.

¹¹ Smith, 85.

¹² Smith, 117.

Guilmant's classes. If the time spent with Widor was what gave Vierne the foundation of his compositional technique, the period of working for Guilmant as a teaching assistant gave him time to mature as a teacher. The two experienced a collegial relationship, while Vierne also enjoyed Guilmant's appreciation of diverse styles of musical language. Guilmant was active as an editor and a musicologist, and he performed works by old masters, J.S. Bach, and early French composers.¹³ He influenced organists of Vierne's generation by studying Renaissance and Baroque treatises and making these sources available. Vierne perceived Guilmant's own music as "constrained by outdated scholastic formulas."¹⁴ During this time, Vierne interacted with such musicians as Marcel Dupré, Joseph Bonnet, Maurice Duruflé, and Nadia Boulanger. One of the earliest instances of Vierne commenting on Debussy's work (in this case, *Pelleas et Melisande*) dates from this period. In his comments, Vierne does not discuss the word "impressionism" at all, even though he discussed the appreciation of diversity in Guilmant's style and how it has "baffled" the younger generation of students.¹⁵

Vierne refers to this time period in *Mes Souvenirs* with utmost fondness when he alludes to the students in Guilmant's class, in particular Joseph Bonnet, for whom Vierne expresses great admiration as an organist. Some of Bonnet's organ works also demonstrated similar compositional ideas to Vierne's compositional collections. His Op. 5 *12 Pièces*, which was published in 1909, before Vierne's *24 Pièces en style Libre*, and his Op. 5, Op.7, and Op. 12 are more technically demanding than Vierne's *Pièces en style Libre* since they were written for Grand-Orgue, and not possible to be performed on the harmonium as Vierne's *24 Pièces en style Libre* was. Bonnet's works, however, lack high regard by current organists and are thus seldom

¹³ Michael Murray. *French Masters of the Organ: Saint-Saëns, Franck, Widor, Vierne, Dupré, Langlais, Messiaen* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 130.

¹⁴ Smith, 119.

¹⁵ Smith, 119.

performed. *Variations de Concert*, Op. 1, one of the most famous works by Bonnet, was praised for being virtuosic-firework with passages that created rousing moments while demanding technical proficiency from the performer. His other organ works suffered from overuse of double-pedaling that added little value to the compositions with some unsophisticated counterpoint.¹⁶ Despite Bonnet's current lack of popularity, there is evidence that Vierne respected him as a musician and as a virtuoso organist. Bonnet's Op. 5 definitely is an earlier effort by an organist to create a collection of concert-style organ pieces.

In May 1900, Vierne began his formal post as the "Organist of the Chapter of the Metropolitan Basilica of Notre Dame de Paris."¹⁷ Vierne was reluctant to take on the position; because it was known that the church was not wealthy, the post would not pay well. Also, Vierne was assisting Widor at St. Sulpice at the moment, which was known for its massive organ, but Vierne commented on the beauty and power of the organ at Notre Dame: "...what nobility! What intensity! What freshness in the timbres of each stop; a marvel of regulation, of proportion, of distinction."¹⁸ Cavailly! Wh had rebuilt the instrument in 1868; his concept of the instrument changed from the original proposal and it increased to 86 stops on five manuals and the pedal, producing a wider dynamic range for the organ and making possible the dynamics later featured in Vierne's music, especially in *Pimusic*, *Fantaisie*.¹⁹ The inaugural concert featured three organists who influenced Vierne: Widor, Franck, and Guilmant. Eventually, Cavaillé-Coll was frustrated by Vierne's predecessor, Eugred Sergent (1829-1900), as he used lackluster stop

¹⁶ Harvey Gaul, "Bonnet—Bossi—Karg-Elert: Three Aperçus," *Musical Quarterly*, 4, no. 3 (July 1918): 357.

¹⁷ Murray, 132.

¹⁸ Smith, 217

¹⁹ Scott Cantrell, "Louis Vierne. His Life and Works," *The American Organist* (November 1980): 48.

combinations²⁰, and Widor recommended Vierne as the interim. Eventually, Vierne took on the post permanently, and he dedicated his time and resources to maintaining the organ.

Although his professional career seemed successful with his appointment to Notre Dame, Vierne's personal life was blighted by financial hardship and a succession of appalling personal tragedies. Vierne faced continuous health woes with his eyes, multiple surgeries, and even an accident that broke his leg and nearly ended his career. These difficulties, combined with a broken marriage were fueled by financial problems and the loss of his son and brother in World War I. He frequently had to leave his post for extended periods of time to go to Switzerland for eye surgeries. By the time he returned to Paris in 1920, Vierne was financially strained and in poor health, which lasted until his death in 1937 on the organ console of the Notre-Dame organ. Vierne's grave was placed in the cemetery close to several other notable French composers, including Franck, Guilmant, and Vincent d'Indy (1851–1931).

In regard to any impressionist influence, the important aspect of Vierne's training and career is that there is no evidence it was part of his educational system. The system did, however, highlight classically defined musical structures. His harmonic language developed over his career, and at its peak became highly chromatic. His approach to formal structure, as well as his compositional language, however, remained somewhat conservative compared to what other composers were experimenting with at the time. For example, Igor Stravinsky's (1882–1972) avant-garde *Rite of Spring* in 1913, premiered ten years before Vierne's 1st Suite from *24 Pièces*

²⁰ Cantrell, 45

de Fantaisie, and it is an example of how Stravinsky pushed the boundaries of musical language during early 20th century. Vierne, however, acknowledged the musical boundaries he had acquired, and he continued his development within the strong foundation of his musical training, writing for the aesthetics of the organ rather than challenging the ideas that were taught to him. The term “impressionism,” therefore, needs to be clearly defined in order to distinguish which pieces from the collection are indeed impressionistic in style, and which are not, in order to highlight nuances and reduce single classification.

Chapter 2: IMPRESSIONISM

The roots of the term “impressionism” can be traced to the late 19th-century French community of visual artists, notably the painter Claude Monet. His painting *Impression, Sunrise* (1873) is one of the first recognized impressionistic pieces of art. The definition of impressionism in art has been debated over the years, and one common definition suggests that it is more about the image that comes to the viewer’s mind, not a specific trait that can be defined by a theory or formula.²¹ In other words, the basic idea of impressionistic painting is to focus on an overall impact rather than fine attention to lines and clearly defined forms. This definition provides clarity and is readily understood more in the world of fine art world than in music.

Impressionism in music is often most closely associated with Claude Debussy, despite the discontent with the term by Debussy. Debussy used the word “*équisse*” (“sketches”) when he described his work *La Mer*. This term “sketches” creates an association with visual art and artists such as Claude Monet (1840–1926) and Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), who were well-known impressionist painters. However, Debussy criticized the term in itself: “I am trying to do something different from what the imbeciles call ‘impressionism,’ a term which is as poorly used as possible, particularly by the critics.”²² Debussy’s opinion exemplifies misunderstandings of the term impressionism at the time as well as the struggle to properly define the term with an emergence of new types of sounds.

²¹ Margaret Samu. "Impressionism: Art and Modernity," *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–); available from http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/imml/hd_imml.htm (October 2004); accessed September, 2011.

²² Simon Treszise, *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 102.

Debussy was criticized by the Academy of Fine Arts for his work *Printemps*, a suite for female voice and orchestra, for lacking clarity and design and favoring the color.²³ Many of the impressionistic musical traits that were received negatively by the musical community were not, however, Debussy's innovation. For example, the use of plagal cadences, melodic lines without a distinction of being major or minor, extended use of parallel chords, chromatic sequences, and sevenths and ninths in harmonic language (all things often found in Debussy's music) were not new elements of composition, but rather a culmination of usage by different composers. Franz Liszt (1811–1886) was known to use chromatic sequences in his organ music as well as unresolved dissonance and parallel chords in his piano work, *Nuages Gris*.²⁴ Also, Liszt was connected to program music, a genre of music that describes extra musical concepts without using sung words.²⁵ Program music is connected to narrative, a poetic and emotional aspect of music, and it can easily be confused with impressionism. Impressionism is rooted in visual arts and impressions aim to evoke a mood or an atmosphere.²⁶ Impressionistic composers inherited ever-developing musical languages to create those atmospheres. Unresolved dissonances, for example, mentioned above in his *Nuages Gris*, was a sign that suggested Liszt used harmonies that were pointed towards impressionism.²⁷ Debussy implemented ideas he was exposed to into his own musical language and they became representative characteristics of his music. Debussy, along with other composers of his generation, was searching for his own unique sound, and

²³ Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy. Impressionism & Symbolism* (London: Eulenburg Books, 1976), 11.

²⁴ Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music* (London: Norton & Company, 1980), 583.

²⁵ "Program Music," Grove Dictionary Online; available from:

http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/22394?q=program+music&search=quick&source=omo_gmo&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit; accessed September 30, 2016.

²⁶ Grout, 673.

²⁷ Grout, 583.

despite the heavy influence of Wagner in French music, he and Franck found a new way to expand their musical ideas.

César Franck and Claude Debussy

During his time at Paris Conservatoire, Debussy became impressed by his sight-reading teacher, Albert Lavignac (1846–1916). Most of the teachers were musically conservative, but Lavignac proved to be different. He was younger than the others and well known for his vigorous sight-reading instruction, which brought fame to a number of his Paris Conservatoire students.²⁸ Lavignac introduced Debussy to the music of Richard Wagner (1813–1883), whose approach to harmony excited the two so much that they spent many hours studying his works together. From 1887 to 1893, Wagner's operas were at the height of their fame in Paris and thus were performed regularly.

César Franck is the most likely figure who bridges the distance between Vierne and Debussy; Franck was a teacher of Debussy as well as Vierne. Franck influenced Debussy as he was exploring his own compositional identity. Debussy mentions Franck as a figure who showed great respect to French culture and its music. Debussy enjoyed a liberal approach to the rules of harmony and counterpoint, such as the use of consecutive fifths, while he studied under Franck, even though the Conservatoire would not approve. The other influence of Franck on Debussy is the use of cyclic structure, as seen in Debussy's *Printemps*, whereby the first theme in Movement I comes up again at the end of Movement II, connecting the two together. Such variations in theme are typical of Franck's compositional technique, as shown in his *Symphony*

²⁸ Erik Fredrick Jensen, *Debussy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press 2014), 12.

in D minor (1888), which is predominantly structured cyclically with heavy chromaticism.²⁹

Another of Debussy's works, *Fantasie for Piano and Orchestra*, has a single theme that is cyclic in nature; and the use of the piano is closely related to the orchestra part rather than standing on its own. Franck's 1885 *Variations Symphonique* is similar, whereby the piano part is closely related to the orchestra part, exhibiting a cyclic nature and lyrical motto theme.

Debussy was constantly challenging his professors and exploring his own unique compositional sound; in contrast, Vierne expressed more admiration than frustration with his teachers, as he states "I have never heard that could compare with Franck's improvisation from the point of view of purely musical invention."³⁰ If Debussy was a character who pushed the boundaries, Vierne could be described as one who worked within the boundaries and used his musical skills to improve his own music language within what he has been taught. During their time in the Paris Conservatoire, Vierne and Debussy took different paths to their development as composers. For Vierne, this time shaped a strong foundation of his compositional language. For Debussy, it was a time to explore his own sound, pushing the boundaries set by those who came before him. Debussy employed exotic harmonies such as whole tone and pentatonic scales, which resemble harmonic languages from Eastern Asia. He also used timbre and coloring of orchestra, as well as modes and dissonances that do not resolve. Impressionist technique features blurring of contours and the avoidance of sharp outlines.³¹

²⁹ "Franck Cyclical," Grove Online Dictionary, available from:
http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/27254pg2?q=franck+cyclical&search=quick&pos=10&_start=1

³⁰ Smith, 43.

³¹ Grove Dictionary Online "impressionism", accessed September 22, 2016

Impressionism and the Organ

Impressionism is defined as a musical style designed to create descriptive impressions by suggesting moods through rich and varied harmonies and timbres.³² The romantic organ has vast flexibility in its dynamic range, unlike any other classical instrument. It is naturally suited to create multiple lines where musical ideas can be overlapped, favoring texture and overall impact of sound over the clarity of musical ideas, similar to well-known impressionistic paintings which exhibit vague lines and blurred images. Generous acoustics, combined with high-quality instruments built by experts such as Cavaillé-Coll, have the potential to create certain moods aurally in a way that reinforces the impression given by titles. The performance of transcriptions of many orchestral works on large symphonic organs highlights the instrument's versatility and suitability for musical compositions that require a wide variety of colors. Sigfrid Karg-Elert, a contemporary of Vierne's, represents composers for organ from Germany. Organ works by Karg-Elert show a variety of compositional styles, though he claims some of his organ works are not performed often due to being impressionistic in style. In contrast Vierne rarely used the term as a description of his works.³³

If the general conception of the majority of Vierne's *Pièces de Fantaisie* suggests an impressionistic style, the collection needs to be discussed within the concept of visual art and

http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/50026?q=impressionism&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit

³² Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music*. (London, Norton & Company, 1980), 673

³³ Harvey Grace, "A Karg-Elert Festival; A Talk with the Composer," *The Musical Times*, 71, no. 1048 (June 1, 1930): 501-504

how it compares to organ music. It would be a hasty conclusion to decide that titles such as “Clair de lune” (“Moonlight”) or “Feux Follets” (“Will-o’-the-Wisp”) make the whole collection impressionistic without highlighting impressionistic musical elements. Vierne is successful in evoking an atmosphere throughout his music in this collection, but there are other elements that make this whole collection unique in organ literature.

In visual art, the definition³⁴ of impressionism includes following elements:

- immediate capture of a momentary scene;
- use of pure color;
- loose brush strokes;
- subject matter found in ordinary times;
- capturing of movement in time; and
- creating a visual impression of the subject matter more than finer details.

Musical elements shown below should be present in combination with elements from above if the piece is to be considered impressionistic in style:

- exotic scales such as whole tone scale, pentatonic or octatonic scale³⁵;
- extended use of parallel chords progression³⁶;
- non-resolved dissonant chords³⁷;

³⁴ Samu, Margaret. "Impressionism: Art and Modernity". In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/imml/hd_imml.htm (October 2004) Accessed September, 2011

³⁵ “Impressionism,” Grove Dictionary Online.

³⁶ “Impressionism,” Grove Dictionary Online.

³⁷ “Impressionism,” Grove Dictionary Online.

- use of modes;
- tonality without distinction of major or minor;
- chromatic sequences; and
- dynamic range specific to the wide range of dynamics and colors only an orchestra can create.

Some of these qualities are musical idioms that have developed from earlier periods and been carried over from program music. In order to fulfill the requirement of being an impressionistic piece, the work needs to evoke emotion or an atmosphere using the musical elements mentioned above. These qualities are necessary criteria in order to define the collection of *Pièces de Fantaisie* by Vierne. He uses a combination of these elements, but some works also exhibit a strong influence from earlier periods and program music in *Pièces de Fantaisie* while containing the musical elements mentioned above. The correct combination of these musical elements, along with how the work evokes emotion or atmosphere, will determine whether the work is impressionistic, programmatic, or from a different influence altogether.

Chapter 3: IMPRESSIONISM AND VIERNE

“Mr. Vierne’s Symphony is truly remarkable; it combines abundant musicianship with the cleverest use of the instrument’s special sonority. Old J.S. Bach, the father of us all, would have been pleased with Mr. Vierne.”³⁸ This particular praise from Debussy, which is his only documented comment on Vierne’s music and focuses on the latter’s *Symphonie pour Orgue No. 2* Op. 20, is not directed to his new and innovative musical language but to the musical integrity and understanding of the organ evident in Vierne’s work. At this point in his career, Vierne was fully immersed in the idea of symphonic form. However, he was also surrounded by the rich culture of Paris, not only in music, but arts and literature. Vierne played a major role in the musical arts through his work in the Paris Conservatoire and his work at Notre Dame Cathedral. Debussy’s comment shows that composers around the time of Vierne recognized Vierne as a fine composer. Likewise, Vierne was also aware of vastly more artistic influences than just organists and organ composers due to the rich culture of Paris and his connection with the Paris Conservatoire. Also, like every musical style, impressionism evolved over time. Post-Debussy composers, such as Albert Roussel (1869–1937), reconciled freedom of harmonies and timbre with more organized musical structure.³⁹ Roussel had a connection to another student of Franck’s from the Paris Conservatoire, Vincent d’Indy. These relationships and influences also reflect what Vierne was exposed to.

Different from other instruments, the organ was originally built for and mainly used in liturgical settings with specific expectations regarding musical language. Also, the building and

³⁸ Claude Debussy, “Musique,” *Gil Blas*, February 23, 1903, 2.

³⁹ “Impressionism,” Grove Dictionary Online.

maintaining of the instruments was susceptible to the economic disruptions brought on by circumstances, such as wars, since the associated costs far exceeded those of other musical instruments. The French Revolution, for example, affected the development of organ building; as many organ companies closed, and many instruments went unmaintained. Pipes were melted and used as bullets while others were vandalized. Since there was lack of work for organ builders, not many organs survived this period. This resulted in a clear break from earlier French organ style building. It was not until Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, who built major organs in St. Sulpice, Sainte-Clotilde and Notre Dame, Paris, that organs began to show strong signs of change from the older classical design. Cavaillé-Coll brought in key elements in construction, such as:

- increased wind-pressure for the upper register of reed pipes so it would balance with the lower register;
- a pedal board that had longer length notes, so it allowed legato playing;
- mechanics (“Barker-lever”) that enabled instrument to produce greater wind-pressure for louder sound without extra weight on the keys;
- more effective swell shutters for dynamic changes;
- expanded compass on manuals; and
- pipes such as Harmonic flute, which is double in length, and open flute, creating big sound.

All these contributions allowed composers to be more expressive, by making possible the use of *crescendo* and *decrescendo*, the addition of multiple stops at once, the ability to change stops in groups, and the use of the expanded dynamic range of the instrument.

Organ composers, who were also organists themselves, usually developed a strong musical language suitable for the instrument, which did not coincide with some radical trends of

musical compositions during the time. *Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky was premiered in 1913 with much controversy, 10 years before Vierne composed *Pièces de Fantaisie*. The lack of avant-garde organ compositions around this time reflects the fact that organ building was finally enabling the performance of an expressive romantic style. Composers were still exploring the romantic potential of these instruments, and this movement reaches its peak with composers such as Vierne. It was only with such figures as Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992), that more modern compositional styles were introduced.

Clair De Lune: A Symbolic Title in Impressionism

“Clair de Lune” is one of the better-known pieces in *24 Pièces de Fantaisie*. The title and the inspiration of the piece is possibly derived from a poem by Paul Verlaine (1844–1896) (table 1). Other composers were inspired by Verlaine’s poem as well; Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924), wrote *Songs*, Op. 46, for voice and piano (1887) before Debussy’s famous piano solo work (1890). Another parallel factor is that both “Clair de Lune” by Debussy and Vierne are in ABA structure. In Vierne’s “Clair de Lune,” the B section incorporates a more contrapuntal texture than the B section by Debussy. In the A section of the piece, Vierne uses undulating eighth or sixteenth notes continuously accompanying the melody, or melodies, and has forward movement at all times. This rhythmic feature gives a sense of phrasing and direction for the piece, whereas, in contrast, “Clair de Lune” by Debussy shows ambiguity of rhythm by moving from triple to duple time. Vierne does not break away from the steady rhythmic pattern throughout the entire piece.

Table 1. Clair de Lune (Moonlight) by Paul Verlaine, text and translation.

French	English
<i>Votre âme est un paysage choisi Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques.</i>	Your soul is a chosen landscape Where charming masqueraders and bergamaskers go Playing the lute and dancing and almost Sad beneath their fanciful disguises.
<i>Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune, Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,</i>	All sing in a minor key Of victorious love and the opportune life, They do not seem to believe in their happiness And their song mingles with the moonlight,
<i>Au calme clair de lune triste et beau, Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau, Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les marbres.</i>	With the still moonlight, sad and beautiful, That sets the birds dreaming in the trees And the fountains sobbing in ecstasy, The tall slender fountains among marble statues.

Example 1. Louis Vierne, Clair de Lune, mm. 1–4, steady rhythm in A section and melody in octatonic scale.



Example 2. Claude Debussy, Clair de Lune, mm. 1–3, variety of rhythm, prolonged chords.



Even though they share the same key signature, this factor is hardly significant, as Vierne uses highly chromatic passages—a common harmonic language shown in *Pièces de Fantaisie*. The melodic lines do not share many similarities either, given Vierne begins the melody with octatonic scale (example 1) combined with chromaticism throughout. There are similarities in both pieces despite the fact the “Clair de lune” by Vierne has more consistent rhythmic activity. Considering the fact that there is no sustaining pedal for the organ, there is a need to apply the

technique of “over-legato”, or “Tutti tenuti”, where the performer holds notes longer than written to mimic the effect of a sustaining pedal. Franz Liszt used this technique in his organ works, especially when a broken chord was used.⁴⁰⁴¹ The over-legato can be used on the melodic line of “Claire de lune” – this will be the case if there is not much natural reverberation in the performing space in the first place. The octatonic scale at the beginning is a clear element of the style, and the hint of whole tone scale in the B section is also an element of the impressionist style. Also, parallel chords are used at the end of the piece, and Vierne is consistent in use of these chords throughout the collection. There are chromatic sequences and non-resolved dissonances.

Example 3. Louis Vierne, Clair de Lune, mm 58–60 with imitative chromatic pedal line and 7th interval in the melody. (m. 59–60)

The musical score for Louis Vierne's *Clair de Lune*, measures 59–60, is presented in three staves. The top staff (Treble) features a melodic line with a 7th interval, marked with a slur and the instruction "G. P. R. G. Ch. Sr.". The middle staff (Bass) contains a chromatic pedal line, marked with a slur and the instruction "P. R. Ch. Sr.". The bottom staff (Pedal) also contains a chromatic pedal line, marked with a slur and the instruction "Ped. G. P. R. Ped. G. Ch. Sr.". The dynamic marking "sempre f" is placed above the middle staff. The score is written in G major, with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

⁴⁰ Laukvik, Jon. “Historical Performance Practice In Organ Playing: The Romantic Period, Part 2”. *Stuttgart: Carus Verlag*, 2010. 69

⁴¹ Laukvik, 69

The main melody maintains its characteristics with a less chromatic line that is built with big leaps followed by descending lines, while countermelodies maintain chromaticism throughout. “Clair de Lune” shows certain elements of impressionistic style, and it includes a variety of tone colors that are aurally pleasant, evoking of mood and emotion related to the title of the poem. This leads to a conclusion that it is impressionistic in style. There is a strong sense of atmosphere in this piece and Vierne succeeds in highlighting the strength of the organ through the undulating rhythmic idea and mixture of string and flute.

Chapter 4: IMPRESSIONISM AND SIGFRID KARG-ELERT

There is no significant organ composer who comments on the term “impressionism” as much as Vierne’s contemporary Sigfrid Karg-Elert. Although he is not French like Vierne, Karg-Elert speaks of his organ pieces as impressionistic in style.⁴² Organ music in impressionistic style composed by Karg-Elert gives a clear comparison to *Pièces de Fantaisie* by Vierne. Karg-Elert’s views and music help shed light on what elements of the impressionist style and aesthetics are shown in *Pièces de Fantaisie*. A composer known for variety in his organ works, Karg-Elert wrote chorale-based, religiously inspired organ works in a similar spirit to his German predecessors, as well as a number of impressionistic works. He also experimented in many different genres of music—songs, solo piano works, and choral works—unafraid to break boundaries by using daring and bold musical languages. Karg-Elert sought to express images evoked by nature through using constant shifts in texture and by extensive use of the organ for its registration and dynamic range. Also the lack of melodic lines in many movements in a way that stays true to comparison with visual impressionistic artists.

Before comparing “Clair de Lune” by Karg-Elert with those of Debussy and Vierne, it should be noted that as a performer, Karg-Elert did not have the same fame as a concert organist as Vierne. For both Vierne and Debussy, their “Clair de Lune” melody is dominant, with thinly textured accompaniment. Karg-Elert introduces his melody in the opening phrase as Debussy and Vierne did. However, when repeated it quickly changes its shape into sequences of 7th

⁴² Grace, 502.

chords without direction, and does not show its original phrase again throughout the whole piece and instead reappears in varied forms.

Example 4. Sigfrid Karg-Elert, from *Trois Impressions*, Op. 72 no. 2, *Clair de Lune*, mm. 1–4, opening melody on top line.



Karg-Elert follows the style of Debussy, with less rhythmic movement from the beginning of the piece, whereas Vierne uses undulating rhythmic ideas that offer more non-distinct, blurry effects as sound continues on the organ. Vierne also follows the same ABA form as Debussy. Karg-Elert, however, shows a freer approach to this work, where phrases are irregular and lead to non-resolved 7th and 9th chords. Karg-Elert also uses such running scales, as shown in example 4, that lead to blurry effects if the acoustic of the room is ideal. Compared with some of the movements from Karg-Elert's *Seven Pastels from Lake Constance*, his "Clair de Lune" is more organized and uniformly constructed, even though, when it is compared to music by Vierne, it shows a much higher level of intentional ambiguity. There are more impressionistic traits shown in his *Seven Pastels from Lake Constance*.

Seven Pastels from Lake Constance

The first basic element needed in impressionistic paintings is the topic; subjects seen in ordinary lives, some related to the landscape or nature, and/or capturing the immediate scene. By using the word “pastel,” borrowed from visual arts in his title, Karg-Elert highlights his intention to depict images through these pieces. Titles included in his collections are:

1. The Soul of the Lake;
2. Landscape in the Mist;
3. The Legend of the Mountain;
4. The Reed-Grown Waters;
5. The Sun’s Evensong;
6. The Mirrored Moon; and
7. Hymn to the Stars.

Unlike his Op. 72 no. 2, “Clair de Lune,” this collection explores the most daring colors by exploring unusual registrations on the organ, breaks from rhythmic definition with constant tempo changes, and shows even more extreme dynamic range than “Clair de Lune,” including more dissonant harmonic languages. Differences between Vierne’s *Pièces de Fantaisie* and the *Seven Pastels from Lake Constance* by Karg-Elert include the range of detailed tempo markings and the variety of coloring of sounds chosen by both composers. Karg-Elert’s score of the *Seven Pastels from Lake Constance* includes numerous tempo and registration markings, an effort by the composer to create the natural flow of music in order to achieve the idea of “painting the picture” through sound. In “The Reed-Grown Waters,” one can find such directions as *poco accel* and *piu mosso* almost every two or three measures at the beginning of the music.

Example 5. Sigfrid Karg-Elert, from Op. 96, The Reed-Grown Waters, mm 7–9, showing numerous markings and changes in registration.

The musical score for measures 7-9 of 'The Reed-Grown Waters' by Sigfrid Karg-Elert. The score is written for organ and features three staves. The top staff is for the Rohrflöte (Gt) and Solo Oboe. The middle staff is for the Solo Oboe. The bottom staff is for the Ch. (Chorus). The score includes various markings such as 'più mosso', 'tranquillo', 'mp gajo', 'p dolente', 'più p', and 'gajo'. The registration changes are indicated by the instrument names above the staves: 'Gt Rohrflöte s', 'Solo Oboe', 'Sw. Cor de Nuit', and 'Gt Rohrflöte'.

Changes of registration or manuals are frequently suggested by Karg-Elert; the score requires a performer not only to have a solid technique and understanding of the organ, but also to have ears and experience that will be a guide to the colorful registration that the composer desired using different instruments. The combination of some stops are dictated by the composer in detail, such as shown in “The Reed-Grown Waters,” where from measure 6 to 9 he instructs three different solo sounds, resembling the multiple colors in an orchestra.

Example 6. Sigfrid Karg-Elert, from Op. 96, The Reed-Grown Waters, mm. 30–34, combination of multiple stops in one chord. (mm.33-34)

The musical score for measures 30-34 of 'The Reed-Grown Waters' by Sigfrid Karg-Elert. The score is for piano and includes parts for voice and various instruments. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/8. The score shows a complex combination of multiple stops in one chord, with various dynamics and articulations. The score includes the following parts and markings:

- Piano (P):** The main melodic line, starting with a melody in measure 30, followed by a series of chords and a final chord in measure 34. The piano part includes markings for 'without 8'', 'Solo 16' (Contra Oboe or C.-Fagotto)', 'without 16', 8' pp alone', and 'PP (8' alone)'.
- Voix Cel. (Voice):** The vocal part, starting with a melody in measure 30, followed by a series of chords and a final chord in measure 34. The voice part includes markings for 'Liebl. Ged. 8' (Trem.)', 'Ch.', 'fixed', 'Voix Cel.', 'Sw.', and 'Solo (16')'.
- Other Instruments:** The score includes parts for 'Ch.' (Chorus), 'fixed', 'Voix Cel.', 'Sw.', and 'Solo (16')'.

“The Reed-Grown Waters” begins with a melody that also recurs at the end of the piece, giving it the illusion of being in the ABA structure. However, the lack of consistency in musical ideas can only define the returning of the melody as an echo to the beginning, not in use of any structural elements of the piece. This piece is filled with unresolved dissonances at the end of phrases, one of the musical elements of impressionistic style. In addition, some chords are of ambiguous mode (major or minor) (first chord of m. 22 in example 7). The melody begins on an F# minor chord; however, it is an E minor harmonic scale. The rhythmic ideas from measure 3–4 are more present throughout the piece than in the opening melody. There are hints of parallel chords, but these are not used extensively as in Vierne’s “Clair de Lune.” With unusual effects such as the right hand playing the same chord staccato while the left hand is playing legato on different manual, one can practically see the water dripping, as in example 5. The very last chord of the piece is an ambiguous dissonant that lacks resolve, combined with instruction on

registration to create a shimmering effect. This execution does not define the key of this piece aurally considering the combination of the registration suggested (example 6).

Example 7. Sigfrid Karg-Elert, from op. 96, The Reed-Grown Waters, mm. 21–22, open 5th on first chord of m. 22 for ambiguity of major or minor.



“The Sun’s Evensong” begins with a melodic idea that has more consistent repetition than “The Reed-Grown Waters” throughout the piece, and Karg-Elert begins with the sense of a steady rhythmic pattern. This piece evokes the powerful sun, especially in the middle section with its built-up dynamics. The opening melody is repeated more often than in “the Reed-Grown Waters,” and the movement is chromatic throughout. There is a clear lack of contrapuntal ideas and a constant change in tempo until *Fastoso* (“Stately”) as it successfully captures the image of the Sun before it sets. There are many chromatic sequences throughout, especially leading up to the *Fastoso* section, and Karg-Elert uses 7th and 9th chords throughout the piece.

Example 8. Sigfrid Karg-Elert, from Op. 96, The Sun's Evensong, mm. 33–35, climatic moment led by chromatic sequences.

fastoso

fff Full Organ

3

Karg-Elert then uses *presto decrescendo*, rarely seen in organ music even with its wider dynamic range at the time (example 11).

Example 9. Sigfrid Karg-Elert, from Op. 96, The Sun's Evensong, mm. 16–18, melody. (mm. 17-18)

G \sharp or Solo
Flute 8' & 4' (*mf*)

Solo or Ch. (*f*)
Strings

piu f

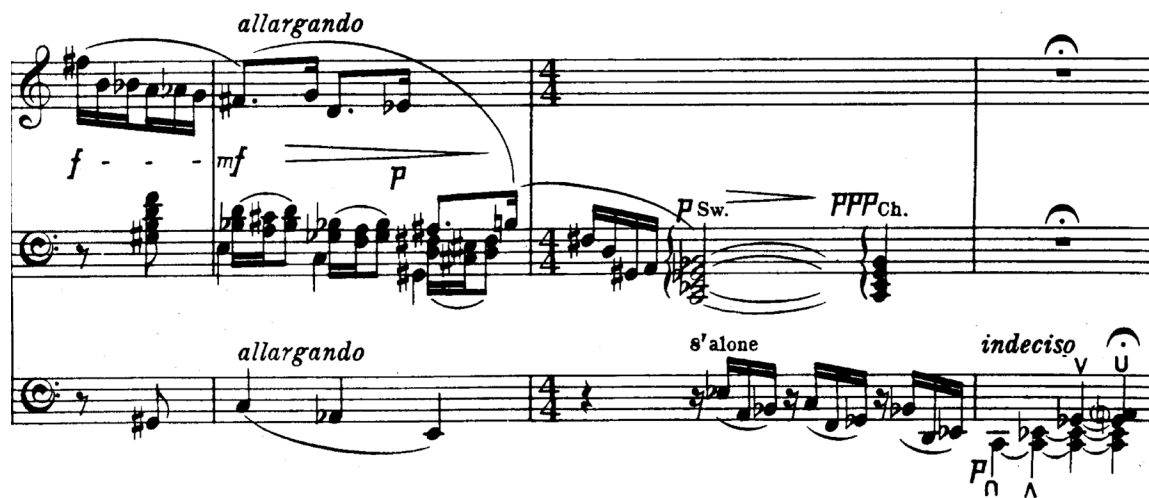
piu³ f

Example 10. Sigfrid Karg-Elert, from Op. 96, The Sun's Evensong, mm. 46–49, melody returning in different time signature for consistency. (mm.48-49)

The piece “In the Mirrored Moon” exhibits more extreme use of figures, such as a dense chord with glissando markings and staccatos. Karg-Elert was very specific about the effect he desired through articulation. He continues with his extreme directions and tempo markings, such as *quasi adagissimo* in 6/16 time signature and dense texture throughout the piece, until it ends with a very vague chord that has the clashing of G and A^b, consistent with non-resolved dissonance of the impressionistic style and similar to *Pièces de Fantaisie*.

In many ways, Karg-Elert uses impressionistic musical elements discussed in chapter 2. The titles express landscape images and they are matched with highly dense texture that blurs any sense of direction, while he uses non-resolved dissonances, chromatic sequences, extreme dynamics, tonality that is too difficult to distinguish from major to minor, and modes.

Example 11. Sigfrid Karg-Elert, from Op. 96, The Sun's Evensong, mm. 39–42, non-resolved dissonance with extreme dynamics. (mm.41-42)



The *Seven Pastels from Lake Constance* is a rare collection in which the composer openly uses the word impressionistic to describe his own organ works.

In contrast to this collection, Vierne chose a very limited number of stops in “Clair de Lune” despite shifting through different manuals. The manual changes are the only significant differentiation in color and combination, as he does not introduce much contrasting color throughout the piece. This same technique is true of many of the character pieces in *Pièces de Fantaisie*. Karg-Elert avoided complicated registration changes in his “Clair de Lune” while *Seven Pastels from Lake Constance* shows his extreme use of registration changes, unlike Vierne. Debussy’s “Clair de Lune” was written for piano, which does not have coloring options in a same manner as the organ. However, the atmosphere of the piece is constant, aside from the movement in the middle section, which is similar to Vierne's “Clair de lune”. Vierne takes much more subtle, but active, rhythmic movements in the accompaniment, where Debussy lets the resonance of the piano ring out with slower moving rhythmic ideas. This illustrates that these composers wrote to the strengths of their instruments—the use of sustaining pedal and natural

shifts in the resonance of the piano and an undulating accompaniment to create the forward motion for the organ.

While Karg-Elert succeeds in meeting many musical elements of impressionistic style in his organ works, his music did not enjoy the success of Vierne's *Pièces de Fantaisie*. Karg-Elert himself commented, "My organ works are very little played in Germany. The excuse made is that I write with English organs in view, so my music is not convenient for German instruments. But the real reason, I think, is that my style makes far less appeal to Germans ... too often impressionistic and in concert style."⁴³ As seen on *Seven pastels of Lake Constance*, his ideas for creating tone colors and atmosphere stretches the technical boundaries of the organ. He truly succeeds in creating the "blurry outlines of the painting"⁴⁴ throughout his music, whereas Vierne succeeds in finding structure within his impressionistic language. Also, Vierne was a respected organist who understood the range of technical possibilities of the organ, but the ideal effect and tone colors demanded by Karg-Elert were often more challenging in performance. The fact that Vierne understood the organ and its possibilities and technical challenges enables performers to interpret his works with a more authentic style to the composer's intentions. For organ works to be performed on various instruments, intention has to be clear, as not every organ has same registration options. Additionally, they all have individual characteristics that depend on the maker and the origin of the style in which the instrument is built. Vierne showed clear instructions with his intentions, even though not as detailed as Karg-Elert. *Pièces de Fantaisie* offers a variety of styles as well as adaptability to the performer, making it a more successfully performed collection that incorporates secular topics.

⁴³ Grace, 502.

⁴⁴ "Impressionism," Grove Online Dictionary.

Similar efforts are shown by composers such as Jehan Alain (1911–1940) exhibited in his works, such as *Le Jardin Suspendu* (“The Hanging Garden”), that reflect secular topics and also a musical style from the earlier period, in this case, Chaconne. However, there is no collection of pieces that has the variety of titles of *Pièces de Fantaisie* that includes impressionistic, programmatic, and strong ties to the earlier styles in one collection. The next chapter will discuss other concert pieces in collections by composers such as Joseph Bonnet, who wrote “Elfes” and “Clair de Lune,” mixed with pieces with more generic titles in *12 Pièces*, Op. 5, Op. 7, and Op. 10.

Chapter 5: CONCERT PIECES FOR ORGAN BEFORE *PIÈCES DE FANTASIE*

Joseph Bonnet (1884–1944) was respected by Vierne as a performer, which is evident in Vierne’s *Mes Souvenirs*. He considered Bonnet as one of the elite organists in France, employing great technique with mature musicianship in his playing. To Vierne, “he [Bonnet] is one who has preserved the purest Guilmant tradition.”⁴⁵

Bonnet was a son of an organist and quickly drew attention from fellow organists at the Paris Conservatoire. Although he was recognized for his performances, his organ works were popular for only a short time. His pieces were published before *Pièces de Fantaisie*, and considering their lack of technical difficulties (aside from some fast-tempo pieces and double pedal passages) they are more comparable to Vierne’s *24 Pièces en Style Libre* than to *Pièces de Fantaisie*. Bonnet wrote a “Clair de Lune” for the organ, which lacks both the impressionistic quality and the compositional interest of the pieces by Vierne and Debussy. “Clair de Lune” begins with D major, which remains throughout the piece as the tonal center. The music does not feature chromaticism, unresolved dissonances, use of modes, or extended parallel chords; moreover, it has strong rhythmic direction and clarity of structure. These elements weaken its relationship to impressionistic style. From his *12 Pièces*, Op. 7, “Elfes” outshines many others, as it successfully captures the mischievous character of elves in a scherzo-like piece. There are similarities to Vierne’s “Naiades” in rapid scales that effectively evoke the playful character of the title. Even though “Naiades” features more chromaticism and other impressionistic musical

⁴⁵ Smith, 149.

elements, they both also successfully avoid sharp contrasts or edges, thus creating more a blurred image close to the concept of visual arts in impressionistic style.

Vierne's 24 *Pièces en Style Libre*, Op. 31

Louis Vierne wrote *24 Pièces en Style Libre* in 1913, the same year Joseph Bonnet wrote his *Pièces* Op. 5 and Op. 7, which contained 12 pieces each with a mixture of titles. Vierne states that the collection is written for either harmonium or the organ, and they were calculated to be performed during ordinary duration of the Offertory.⁴⁶ They have only two staves instead of the three used commonly in organ scores. *24 Pièces en Style Libre* can be seen as the precursor to *Pièces de Fantaisie*. The collection was to be played not only on the organ, but also on the harmonium, following examples of some mid-19th Century French composers, including *L'Organiste* by César Franck. Contemporaries of Vierne wrote pieces with titles that used “style libre,” (“free style”), such as Charles Tournemire. According to Bernard Gavoty, Vierne succeeded through these in creating a musically satisfying collection.⁴⁷ Some of the works written in Vierne's *Pièces en Style Libre* foreshadow his *Pièces de Fantaisie*, even though the scale, technical difficulty, and lack of prominent pedal illustrate that this collection is not as historically important to organ literature as *Pièces de Fantaisie*.

The collection was written in 1913, followed by the second collection in 1914.

1. Préambule
2. Cortège
3. Complainte

⁴⁶ Louis Vierne, *24 Pièces en style libre* (Paris: Henry Lemoine).

⁴⁷ Smith, 531.

4. Épitaphe
5. Prélude
6. Canon
7. Méditation
8. Idylle Mélancolique
9. Madrigal
10. Rêverie
11. Divertissement
12. Canzona
13. Légende
14. Scherzetto
15. Arabesque
16. Choral
17. Lied
18. Marche Funèbre
19. Berceuse
20. Pastorale
21. Carillon sur la Sonnerie du Carillon de la Chapelle du Château de Longpont (Aisne)
22. Élégie
23. Épithalame (Wedding Poem)
24. Postlude

As Vierne stated, the lengths were carefully considered in order to accommodate use in a worship service as a part of the liturgy, showing that Vierne was interested in a pragmatic approach to the liturgical context contrasting that of *Pièces de Fantaisie*.

The fact that Vierne showed interest in the sound of bells is shown by one of his best-known works, “Carillon on Westminster” from *Pièces de Fantaisie*, and also “Carillon sur la Sonnerie du Carillon de la Chapelle du Château de Longpont (Aisne)” from *Pièces en Style Libre*. There is a precedent of using bells as inspiration to the composition was shown by French composers as early as the 17th Century, such as “Les Cloches” by Nicholas Bégue (1630–1702), who was a teacher of the renowned French organ composer Nicholas DeGrigny (1671–1703). “Les Cloches” is included in *An Anthology of Early French Organ Music* collected by Joseph Bonnet,⁴⁸ which shows an interest the composers exhibit in studying the music of the past. Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) commemorated the greatness of early French composers such as François Couperin with pieces such as *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, an example of composers searching for connections from earlier composers. François Couperin made extensive use of extra musical ideas in composing as he notes in his preface to *Pièces de Clavecin*⁴⁹, he had subjects in mind when he was composing these pieces.

In *Pièces de Clavecin* there are some other titles that carry vague imageries, such as “Les Barricades Mistérieuses” (The Mysterious Barricades). Couperin goes on to write titles such as “Les Chérubins, ou l’Aimable Lazure” (The Cherubim or the Friendly Lazure) and “Le Rossignol-en-Amour” (The Nightingale in Love).

⁴⁸ Joseph Bonnet, *An Anthology of Early French Organ Music* (New York: H.W Gray Co., 1942).

⁴⁹ François Couperin, *Pièces de Clavecin*, book 1 (London: Augener Ltd., 1888).

Vierne wrote collections of piano works that display an array of interesting titles as well. This is an indication that Vierne was fully aware of many different inspirations that surrounded him. His 3 *Nocturnes*, Op. 34, have these titles “La nuit avait envahi la nef de la cathédrale” (The night had invaded the nave of the cathedral), “Au splendide mois de mai lorsque les bourgeons rompaient l'écorce” (The splendid month of May when the buds broke bark), and “La lumière rayonnait des astres de la nuit, le rossignol chantait” (The light radiated from the stars of the night, the nightingale sang). These piano works that were written prior to *Pièces de Fantaisie* display full use of the piano compass, the maximum use of tonal quality of the piano, and yet maintain similar chromaticism shown in his organ works. Vierne’s extensive use of titles clearly reflects a long-standing tradition in French music, not only for the keyboard but also for the flute and other instruments. In addition it shows his preference for evoking highly suggestive imagery with a propensity toward impressionistic elements.

During the Baroque era in France (17th Century), the keyboard instrument was frequently used for suites. With the exception of “Clair de lune”, as discussed earlier in Debussy’s *Suite Bergamasque*, three of the four pieces indicate more Baroque and classically associated titles. Ravel employs more classical structure for its firm structure and distinct rhythms reflected in his works such as *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1917) and *Menuet antique* (1895).⁵⁰ Couperin used the term “Ordre” for works larger than a suite, and his harpsichord book shows his interests in suites,

⁵⁰ Grout, Donald. *A History of Western Music, Third Edition*, (W.W. Norton Company, Inc, 1980) 678

more dance-like pieces. This later leads to more character based pieces as mentioned above⁵¹.

There is a clear transition in *Pièces de Fantaisie* whereby Vierne moves from more classically inspired titles into more imaginative titles.

⁵¹ Grove Online Dictionary “Ordre”

http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/20418?q=Ordre&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit

Chapter 6:

PIÈCES DE FANTASIE AND ITS MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Pièces de Fantaisie is structured as a collection of four suites that each contain six pieces. Some have obvious image-inspired titles, such as “Clair de Lune” and “Sur le Rhin” but there are also pieces with simpler musical titles, such as “Prelude” and “Toccata.” These are common titles seen often in other organ works:

1. Titles based on general musical terms from the earlier musical periods: Prélude, Intermezzo, Toccata, Andantino, Impromptu, Sicilienne, Caprice, Aubade,
2. Titles that are inspired by specific texts: Requiem Aeternam, Clair de Lune, Fantômes
3. Titles that are inspired by images: Marche Nuptiale, Hymne au Soleil, Feux Follets, Étoile du Soir, Sur le Rhin, Cathédrales, Naïades, Gargouilles et Chimères
4. Exceptions: Carillon de Westminster and Les Cloches de Hinckley (based on pre-existing tunes), Résignation (based on an emotion), Dédicace (Dedication), Marche Nuptiale

Vierne organized the whole collection into four suites. The First Suite, Op 51, was written in 1926, while Vierne was in Paris. The second Suite, Op. 53, was copyrighted in 1927, the same year as the third Suite, Op. 54, and the fourth suite, Op. 55. The first and second suites were written at a time when Vierne was involved with tours to America, as two of the works from the second suite are dedicated to those who worked for the American organ company, Skinner Organ Company.⁵² The third and fourth suites were composed in Luchon, and Vierne’s connection to England is shown in these suites, such as his concert in Hinckley, UK, in 1925.

⁵² Smith, 553.

First Suite (Op. 51), 1926

The first suite refers back to a suite from the Baroque era with titles that lack characters or images. A suite is considered to be a selection of pieces meant to be presented in a single performance, and the four times Vierne that performed it, he played it as a complete set.⁵³

Prélude

The whole collection begins with a “Prélude.” It is in C major, like Bach’s first Prelude from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and it is the only piece in the collection that begins in the tonic. This piece begins with an almost minimalist figure, but quickly Vierne inserts a melody in the pedal. The main figure that begins the piece is in a cluster of 7th chords, combined with a hint of whole tone scale—both characteristics often seen in impressionistic pieces. The 16th-note figurations rarely stop offering a blurry effect; they are held together with the pedal melody. The registration begins with warm tones; a mixture of two flute stops, and the solo on the pedal with a string stop combined with the sound of an oboe. The 16th-note figures combined with the 7th chords offer a hint of whole tone scale. The title “Prelude” can be interpreted as in “free-style” writing; however, the term was also used to form a first movement of a suite.⁵⁴

⁵³ Smith, 554.

⁵⁴ “Prelude,” Grove Dictionary Online; available from: http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e81118?q=Prelude&search=quick&pos=3&_start=1#firsthit; accessed January 23, 2017

Example 12. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 51, mm. 1–3, alternating chords figure.



Andantino

“Andantino” shows a departure from the series of 7th chords of the “Prelude” and more variety of harmonic language heavily centered on chromaticism. “Andantino,” a well-known tempo marking, is used as a title of musical pieces as “Prelude” has been in the past. There is no strong indication of being a character piece. “Prelude,” “Andantino,” and the next piece, “Caprice,” are all musical titles without any specific visual or literary links.

Unresolved dissonance is used along with a strong sense of chromaticism throughout the piece. The registrations are soft as in “Prelude,” and parallel chords are used extensively. There are no extreme dynamics shown in this piece, and the title suggests a traditional musical title based on a musical tempo. Vierne shows hints of impressionistic musical languages: chromaticism, parallel chords, or non-resolved dissonances in this piece.

Caprice

The term “Caprice,” or in music “Capriccio,” was used for centuries related to madrigals and other keyboard works.⁵⁵ Capriccio pieces are usually lively, and the triple rhythm in this piece gives a more lively atmosphere than the previous two pieces. A melody is clearly stated and the music shows variations of the melody. There is a hint of parallel chords at the beginning, but Vierne opts for complex chromatic lines after introducing the melody. The piece has a less impressionistic musical language, but with Vierne’s mature chromaticism the piece contains harmonic ambiguity. So far, there is a strong sense of classical influence with titles that lack in character throughout the collection and a stronger connection to the classical genre.

Intermezzo

The term “intermezzo” was used to describe works performed in between acts of larger works, another example of a more classical title that lacks character. “Intermezzo” is also used in the *Symphonie pour Orgue III*, Op. 28, written in 1911. There Vierne uses a whole tone scale, and the rhythm in the Intermezzo from the *Symphonie* features triplets but both remain in ABA form. Vierne still shows the hint of impressionistic style through non-resolved dissonances and the use of parallel chords. The first four pieces in the collection, however, show a combined influence of classical ideas, not visual and character-based topics.

Requiem Aeternam

⁵⁵ “Capriccio,” Grove Dictionary Online; available from http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e1159?q=capriccio&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit; accessed on September 30, 2016

The title of the piece is based on a liturgical text, and considering it is dedicated to his deceased brother René Vierne (1878-1918), the source of inspiration for Vierne is clear. There is no presence of Gregorian chant in this piece, which suggests that it is not for liturgical use, despite the title. As the organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral, Vierne knew the text and the chant of the Requiem used in the liturgical setting. The fact he did not use the chant as the source of melody and only presented the title, nor any other texts of the mass setting, means Vierne was inspired by the text and the tragedy of losing his brother during World War I. There is a sense of ostinato at the beginning, and there is a hint of parallel motion in the chords. The form is not rounded as seen with “Prelude” and “Andantino,” but it is the first step away from titles being expressed in more classical musical terms. Instead, it is created to evoke a sense of atmosphere throughout the piece related to them. The melody from the beginning on the pedal part comes back towards the end, which reflects the text, where it repeats its first two lines.

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.
A hymn becomes you, O God, in Zion,
and to you shall a vow be repaid in Jerusalem.
Hear my prayer;
to you shall all flesh come.
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

Marche Nuptiale

This wedding march is in ABA form with a majestic character, utilizing 7th chords and displaying parallel harmonies as seen in earlier pieces in the collection. It contrasts the previous piece in terms of mood and the variety of registrations. There is a hint of mixolydian, which is difficult to define as a mode given the abundant chromaticism in the line. In addition the piece presents non-resolved dissonances.

Second Suite, Op. 53, 1927

Vierne continues to use titles that are associated with earlier periods in music, but there are also more image-based titles in this Suite as the number of character pieces in Orders by Couperin also grew. Vierne's preference for classical musical structure is evident here, as all six pieces are either in ABA or ABABA form. The harmonic language shows more chromaticism than the first suite.

Lamento

As we have seen in "Caprice," we see another title that has a relationship to earlier musical genres. "Lamento" was associated with a descending tetrachord bass that is accompanied with mournful text mainly used in the Baroque era and opera genre.⁵⁶ This piece begins with a single melody that gives the idea it will be in F minor. However, chromaticism is present throughout the piece. The uncertainty of its tonality is present with constant use of

⁵⁶ "Lamento," Grove Dictionary Online; available from: http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/15904?q=Lamento&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit; accessed September 15, 2016

dissonant chords and non-resolved dissonances. The melodic idea, which is introduced at the beginning, is present throughout the piece and unifies it.

Example 13. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 53, Lamento, mm. 12–16, melodic line inverted shown in the pedal line. (mm. 15-16)

The image shows a musical score for three staves: Treble, Bass, and Pedal. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is common time (C). The Treble staff contains the main melody with a 'dim.' marking in measure 14. The Bass staff contains the inverted melodic line. The Pedal staff contains the original melodic line. Pedal markings 'P. R.' and 'Ch. Sw.' are present in measures 14 and 15. The Pedal staff has markings 'Ped. R.' and 'Ped. Sw.' in measures 15 and 16.

Section B begins with a more recitative-like line that has a strong 7th interval in the melody. His original melody does contain combined elements of a 7th and chromaticism. Vierne reorganized them, and with a different rhythmical structure, he created a sense of cohesiveness. With a glimpse of its original melody mixed together with flowing rhythmic ideas, section B offers different characteristics that are never far from section A. This piece ends in C major, and Vierne uses chromaticism and repetition of his melodic idea to reach the end. Despite the use of chromaticism, the hint of parallel chords, which was seen often in the first collection, is not seen in this piece.

Sicilienne

“Sicilienne” is also another musical term from the Baroque era, and it is described as an aria type.⁵⁷ This piece is in the 6/8 time signature and has a nature of variations, where the theme is used with varied accompaniments. It is not difficult to find parallels between this and “Sicilienne” by Maurice Duruflé from his *Suite*, Op. 5, which was completed in 1933. *Suite*, Op. 5, by Duruflé is seen as one of the most well-known organ works. The three movements, use of the title “Suite,” and the titles of movements “Prelude,” “Sicilienne,” and “Toccata” show similarity to Vierne’s *Pièces de Fantaisie*, and thus the association to the Baroque era. Duruflé’s “Sicilienne” has multiple sections with less chromaticism than Vierne’s “Sicilienne,” which fits the subjective distinction of impressionistic style on expressing a “pleasing variety of tone colors.” The general texture of Vierne’s “Sicilienne” is less dense than “Sicilienne” by Duruflé, and the latter contains more impressionistic idioms.

Maurice Duruflé, a student of Vierne, described him: “... he had much more classic mind, more rational: thus, the study of fugue with him took on a rigorous form. ...Free improvisation had to be equally disciplined both in the exposition of the themes and in the management and length of the developments.”⁵⁸ Considering Vierne’s description of Duruflé’s music and how Vierne’s music contrasted Duruflé’s, Vierne obviously had more of a classically minded approach to his music. Vierne said of Duruflé’s music; “His (Duruflé) music attracts attention by its absolute freedom, by its complete rejection of any system displayed arbitrarily for its own sake, by its great depth of thought and by a solid

⁵⁷ “Sicilienne,” Grove Dictionary Online; available from http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/25701?q=Sicilienne&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit; accessed September 25, 2016

⁵⁸ James E. Frazier, *Maurice Duruflé, The Man and His Music* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 32.

construction that in no way hampers its emotional expansion nor its attention to detail. This reveals intense inner life expressed in the most adequate means with rare sensitivity. His sometimes-daring modernism is fully justified by the nature of the emotions he means to translate. That is infinitely rare.”⁵⁹

Contrasting to “Lamento,” which carries a more recitative character, Vierne’s “Sicilienne” exhibits structured phrasings. Both pieces begin with a distinctive introduction of the melody and both pieces have the melody return at the end with more complexity. In addition, an active accompaniment is another similarity. However, Duruflé shows more complex variations of texture and form than Vierne.

Example 14. Maurice Duruflé, from Op. 5, Sicilienne, mm. 18–25, extensive bridge section showing more fragments of the melody.

⁵⁹ Smith, 195.

Tempo

II

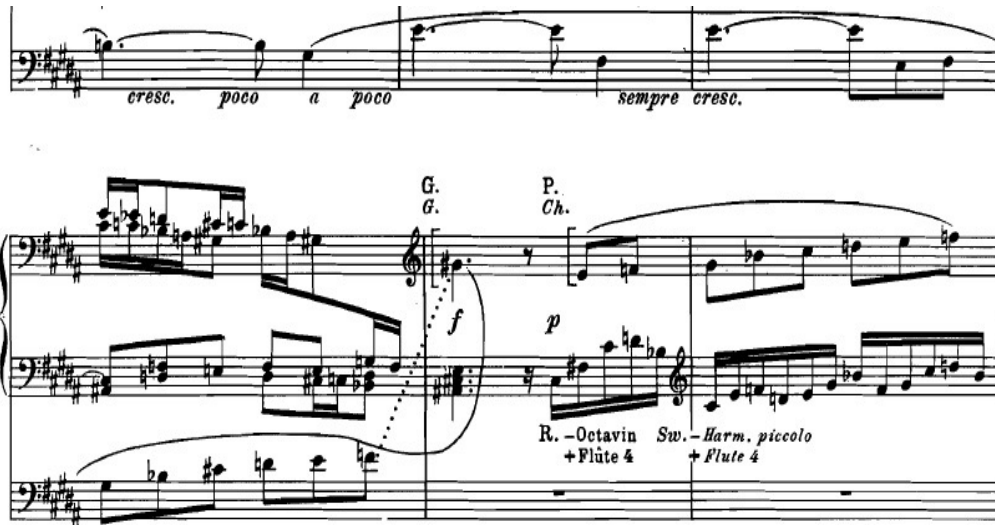
P.
Ch.

R. R. Voix céleste et Gambe soli
Sw. Sw. Vox angelica and Gamba soli

G.
G.

P.
Ch.

Example 15. Maurice Duruflé, from Op. 5, Sicilienne, mm 72–77, hint of whole tone in the pedal.



Duruflé's hint of a whole tone scale on the pedal line (example 15) and the whole harmonic language is much less chromatic than Vierne's "Sicilienne" and Duruflé uses frequent pauses (example 16) that stall its rhythmic momentum.

Example 16. Maurice Duruflé, from Op. 5, Sicilienne, mm. 93–97.

16

, Tempo 1^o Rit. court short

P. Bourdons 8-4
Ch. Bourdons 8-4

R. Sw.

Tempo 1^o ♩ = 132

R. Hautbois 8, Cor de nuit 8
Sw. Oboe 8, Gedeckt 8

Péd. Bourdons 16-8
Ped. Bourdons 16-8

R.

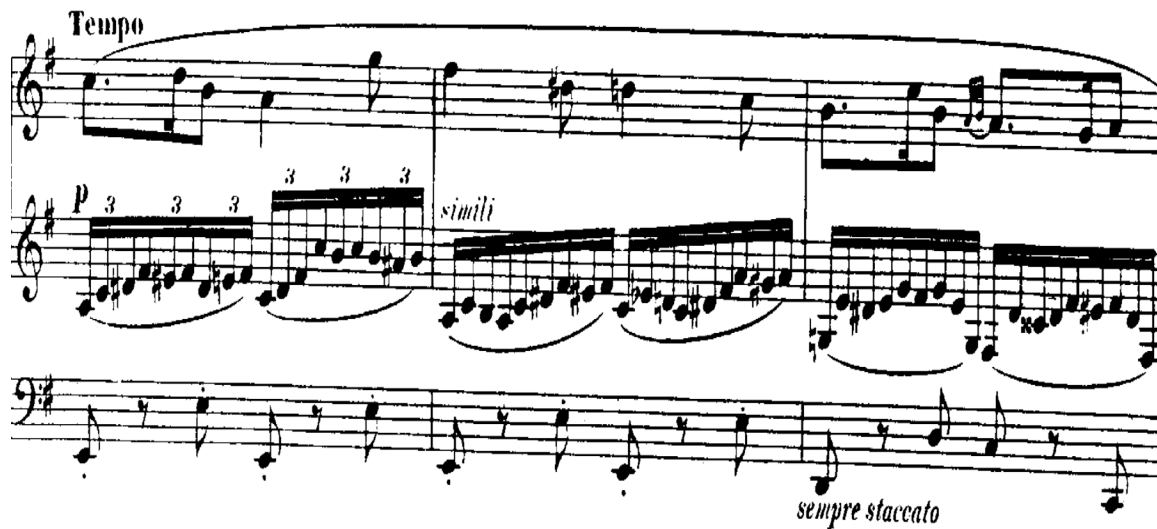
The hint of a whole tone scale is accompanied by non-resolved dissonances, phrases that are difficult to distinguish whether they are in major or minor. Vierne introduces his melody at the beginning of the piece, and it recurs in complete form three times with different accompaniment as shown in examples 17, 18, and 19.

Example 17. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 53, *Sicilienne*, mm. 1–3.



Example 18. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 53, *Sicilienne*, mm. 24–26.

Example 19. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 53, *Sicilienne*, mm. 51–53.



Even though both pieces can be described as ABA form, Duruflé shows more fragments of sections that are filled with harmonic ambiguity, non-resolved dissonances, and hints of exotic scales such as whole tone to display a stronger impressionistic style. Vierne displays a more classical form of “Sicilienne” with a defined ABA structure than Duruflé. There are less hints of impressionistic style, such as non-resolved dissonances and parallel chords, as shown in his earlier collection.

Hymne au Soleil (Hymn to the Sun)

This piece is first piece in Suite no. 2, inspired through a poem by Casimir Delavigne (1793–1843) (table 2). Many other composers have also used “Hymn to the Sun.” Lili Boulanger (1893–1913), for example, set this text for a soloist and choir with the piano.

The poem captures an ordinary scene of sunrise, which expresses impressionistic elements in visual arts. Vierne begins the piece with *fortississimo* to depict the power of the sun. *Fortississimo* creates great contrasts to his *subito piano* instructions throughout the piece, one of the signs of impressionistic style that is rarely seen until this point in the collection. Along with extreme dynamics, Vierne shows a hint of parallel chords, which was absent in the prior two pieces of the collection. Before retuning to the A section, the alternating chords figuration seen in “Prelude” returns (example 12) and a rhythm creates constant dissonances leading to tonal ambiguity. Vierne does not show many non-resolved dissonances. There are moments, however, where a single note in unison halts the rhythmic activity of the piece, creating a similar effect of non-resolution, and anticipation of the next phrase.

Table 2. Hymne au Soleil (Hymn to the Sun) by Casimir Delavigne, text and translation.

French	English
<i>Du soleil qui renaît bénissons la puissance.</i>	Let us bless the power of the reborn sun.
<i>Avec tout l'univers célébrons son retour.</i>	With all the universe let us celebrate its return.
<i>Couronné de splendeur, il se lève, il s'élance.</i>	Crowned with splendor, it rises, it soars.
<i>Le réveil de la terre est un hymne d'amour.</i>	The waking of the earth is a hymn of love.
<i>Sept coursiers qu'en partant le Dieu contient à peine,</i>	Seven rushing steeds that the God scarcely holds back
<i>Enflamment l'horizon de leur brûlante haleine.</i>	Ignite the horizon with their scorching breath.
 <i>O soleil fécond, tu parais!</i>	 Oh, vivid sun, you appear!
<i>Avec ses champs en fleurs, ses monts, ses bois épais</i>	With its fields in bloom, its mountains, its thick forests,
<i>La vaste mer de tes feux embrasée,</i>	The vast sea set ablaze by your fires,

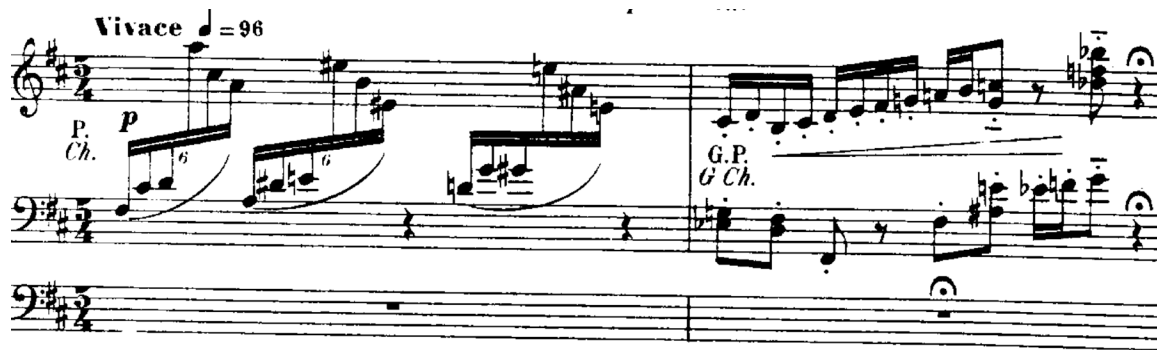
*L'univers plus jeune et plus frais,
Des vapeurs de matin sont brillants de
rosée.*

The universe, younger and fresher,
With morning vapors are glistening
with dew.

Feux Follets (Will-o'-the-Wisp)

The title “Will-o'-the-Wisp” can easily be seen as the most descriptive in the collection so far, as its inspiration stems from a natural phenomenon. There are folk stories surrounding it in Europe, often associated with spirits of the dead or mischievous fairies. Will-o'-the-wisp, a light shown floating over the marshes during the night, known as “*ignis fatuus*” in Latin, is part of the folklore of cultures all over the world. In Europe, it was generally understood that these lights were spirits that would lure travelers to their doom. It is also an expression of a person who is difficult to find, or an object that is difficult to catch.

Example 20. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 53, Feux Follet, mm. 1–3, non-resolved chord and a pause.



The structure is in ABABA form, and Vierne shows more freedom in rhythmic gestures with pauses that are filled with non-resolved dissonances (example 20). Through this he captures the atmosphere of uncertainty one would expect on lights that flicker from a distance. The musical pauses after the key signature indicates a B minor at the end of the piece, but there is no way for the listener to get a sense of its strong tonal center throughout section A. The transition from section A to section B is built with only short pedal notes followed by silence, depicting the image of spotty lights in a haze and silence is the darkness that appears where the light recedes. Section B begins with a melody accompanied by the triplet rhythm and short pedal notes on off-beats, symbolizing flickering lights in a haze. Throughout the whole A section, there is strong ambiguity in tonality with the constant use of dissonances combined with extreme chromatic sequences. Vierne brings a strong image of the title in his clear description using the elements of impressionistic musical idioms.

Clair de Lune

The piece has been extensively discussed on page 21.

Toccata

The term toccata is also used earlier in the musical periods, mainly on keyboard instruments to show the virtuosity of the performer.⁶⁰ The term would be one of the most familiar for Vierne, as an organist, and it shows his deep understanding of various musical styles from the Baroque era. This was a common idea for French composers, as Maurice Ravel made use of movements from the Baroque era as well. After three pieces in the collection use strong Nature-based titles, Vierne brings back the pattern of using earlier musical ideas for the title. It is in ABA form, and it shows the dexterity and skill of the performer for being written in an awkward B^b minor. There are hints of non-resolved dissonances and strong chromatic sequences; but these are not used as impressionistic idioms but as showcase of harmonic progressions by Vierne.

Third Suite, Op. 54, 1927

After including three nature-based titles in the previous collection, Vierne chose titles of the Third Suite that are more varied in their topics, with one of the most peculiar pieces of all four suites, “Fantômes,” which has a spoken narrative.

⁶⁰ “Toccata,” Grove Dictionary Online; available from: http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/search_results?q=toccata&button_search.x=0&button_search.y=0&button_search=search&search=quick; accessed September, 17, 2016

Dédicace

This piece uses Vierne's chromatic writing as a foundation of the harmonic language. It begins with a chromatic line in the melody, and the whole piece brims with complex harmonic language within its ABABA structure. It was dedicated to Rodman Wanamaker, the son of the owner of the department store in Philadelphia, as he was known to be a great patron of music. This piece contains hints of impressionistic idioms as we have seen in earlier pieces in the First Suite. It has sudden changes in dynamics, some non-resolved dissonances, and extreme chromatic sequences. However, in contrast to other works with more imaginative titles, this piece does not evoke strong emotions or strong images to the listener as seen in "Prelude" and "Toccata."

Impromptu

This is one of the most well-known and often-played pieces from the whole collection, along with "Carillon de Westminster." "Impromptu" epitomizes the title with its improvisatory character, and also goes back to Vierne's pattern by using musical ideas from earlier periods as a title. "Impromptu," loosely meaning "improvised," begins with quick 16th-note figurations that do not give a sense of a tonic key, and this lack of tonal center lasts throughout most of the piece. Hence the style creates a very spontaneous atmosphere. The quick 16th notes shown in the left hand presents a strong sense of non-resolved dissonances, adding to the spontaneity of the piece (example 21). It is in ABABA form, where the B section has a contrasting texture of homophonic writing moving above the pedal note figures in half steps creating an ostinato effect that contrasts the left hand of section A (example 22).

Example 21. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, Impromptu, mm. 1–4 (left hand).

Example 22. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, Impromptu, mm. 57–63 (ostinato pedal).

The last section can be translated as a return of the A section in F Major with a short coda. Vierne is consistent in his use of tierce de picardi throughout the collection. This creates a sense of relief at the end of these pieces after the use of chromatic sequences that are strongly present within. This piece depicts the sense of improvisation, and even with abundant hints of non-resolved dissonances, it has more qualities of a scherzo movement of a symphony.

Étoile du Soir (Evening Star)

The title of the piece depicts the image of stars in the evening, associated with the romantic planet Venus, a common source of the romantic image. “Harmonies du Soir” by Karg-Elert, which also evokes evening imagery, features colorful orchestra-based registrations and sections filled with many manual changes to accommodate those different colors. There are hints of whole tone scales, and the whole piece carries an ambiguous atmosphere. Vierne begins his piece with gradual *diminuendo* and sequenced fragments of a melody. The musical figures of 16th notes move in parallel motion and present non-resolved dissonances. Vierne delays his use of chromatic sequences until a later part of the piece, and there is a sense of melody in section B. His canonic idea between the melody and the pedal resembles the B section in “Clair de Lune.” There is an extensive use of parallel chords, chromaticism, non-resolved dissonances, and also a weak distinction of tonality throughout the piece, especially in section A. The presence of impressionistic idioms is strong in this piece.

Example 23. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, *Étoile du Soir*, mm. 7–10, repetitive figures and lack of melody.



Example 24. Louis Vierne, from *Pièces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, *Étoile du Soir*, mm. 11–14, non-resolved dissonance followed by a pause. (mm.13-14)



Fantômes

Fantômes is not only a unique piece in the whole *Pièces de Fantaisie pour Grande Orgue*, but arguably it is one of the most unique organ works in all of organ literature. By having the option of inviting narrators to speak the following texts and assigning them to musical ideas, it becomes a musical theater of sorts. Vierne gives numbers to different characters, and these are shown in the score. They are consistent with the musical ideas they represent each time they appear:

1. The Evoker: "Who then prepares the future ...?"

Example 25. Louis Vierne, from *Pièces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, *Fantômes*, mm. 1–2.

Grave $\text{♩} = 60$ ① R. Sw.

p

R. Sw.

Ped. R.
Ped. Sw.

2. The young esthete: "It's me ... I'm free!"

Example 26. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, *Fantômes*, mm. 7–8.



3. The old pedant: "It's me ... I keep the tradition!"

Example 27. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, *Fantômes*, mm. 9–10.



4. The “Le Nègre”: "The future is the dancer."⁶¹

Example 28. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, *Fantômes*, mm. 25–27.

⁶¹ The term is of course no longer used in modern times due to being offensive, but it was a common term during the time of Vierne.

④ **Allegro più mosso** ♩ = 104

G.R.
G.Sw.

R. *dim.*
Sw.

p *simili*

G. Flûte 8, Bourdon 8, Velle 8, Prestent 4 et Quinte
G. Flute 8, Stop. dup. 8, Cello 8, Octave 4, and Quinte

Sw.
Ped. Sans 32
Ped. Without 32
Ped. R.

simili

5. The monkey: "The future is fantasy ..." (syncopated rhythm with pseudo grace note melody)

Example 29. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, *Fantômes*, m. 64-66.

⑤ h.
Sw.

p *cresc.*

G.R.
G.Sw.

6. The beggar, who plays the barrel organ: "It is the misery ... 'Solo Mio'"

Example 30. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, *Fantômes*, mm. 60–63.



7. Fate: "He is nowhere and everywhere."⁶²

Example 31. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, *Fantômes*, mm. 81–86.

⁶² Louis Vierne, *24 Pièces de Fantaisie* (Paris: Henri Lemoine, 1927).



Amazing aspects of this piece are not only the theatrical elements, but the use of extreme chromaticism that evokes a harmonic language so advanced that it sounds close to the language of the much later composer, Olivier Messiaen. In number 2, unison figurations related to the young esthete are combined with a complex rhythm that shows resemblances to the bird call figures we see in earlier pieces by Messiaen. Despite these similarities, much more falls in the realm of traditional tonality with extreme chromaticism.

Vierne successfully captures the images of different ghosts in this piece, and the changes in time signature reflect those images. The systematic approach of giving numbers to each character makes this a very effective and yet very advanced piece for the organ repertoire of the time. By having texts that draw a vivid image combined with assigned musical figures, this piece is different from all other pieces in the collection. There are musical signs of impressionism, such as non-resolved dissonances, sudden dynamic changes, and strong chromaticism. However, this work uses written text that was designed to be available to the listener. This is not consistent with the idea of impressionism, which evokes atmosphere rather than directly telling the audience what their characters represent. As unique as this work is, it follows closer to the idea

of symbolism: musical elements that are connected to specific non-musical elements,⁶³ in this case, the text. A strong characterization with musical ideas assigned to them gives clarity to the whole piece, telling a story, rather than evoking an atmosphere. “Fantômes,” as the most daring work from the whole collection, pushes the boundaries of any organ work composed by Vierne. The characters assigned are depicted literally through musical idioms set by Vierne, as seen in the character The Beggar. Character no. 6 copies the sound of the barrel organ (example 30), and because of the strict use of these characters and no transition within the music to connect them, it lacks a traditional musical form as seen in the whole collection such as ABA or ABABA. However, the appearance of the characters seems intentional, especially how “Fate” only appears once and makes a definite statement concluding the whole piece. Vierne effectively pairs “the monkey” and “the beggar” characters. The piece represents the word “fantaisie” in the title of the whole collection, *Pièces de Fantaisie*, while Vierne shows how he economically organizes these unique characters. There are other pieces composed by organists a generation later who connect specific texts to musical ideas, such as Olivier Messiaen. However, there is no organ work daring enough to depict secular texts and titles such as “ghosts.”

Sur le Rhin (On the Rhine)

Named after the Rhine River, “Sur le Rhin” reflects the tone and timber of the many historical events on the river that date back as far as Roman times. “Sur le Rhin” is built in ABA form where section A is built on powerful chords. Interestingly, Vierne used octave parallel figures, which create very thick harmonies. This registration, he suggests, covers from 32’ pedals

⁶³ “Symbolism,” Grove Dictionary Online; available from: http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e6586?q=symbolism&search=q uick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit; accessed September 30, 2016

to 4' on the manual. The slowly paced half-note chords pick up its movement, with quarter notes illustrating the river's different speed of flow, and Vierne was consistent with his parallel chords in section A. Section B begins with more movement and Vierne contrasts by not using parallel motions. The transition from section B to section A is done in pulsating repeated notes and chords juxtaposed with parallel figures, while section A returns with mighty reed stops from the Notre-Dame Cathedral Cavaillé-Coll organ. The texture is very simple. The idea of parallel harmony, as used by Debussy, is enhanced by octave doubling of pedals and full chords until the end of the music. This creates one of the loudest moments of the whole *Pièces de Fantaisie*. Combined with parallel chords, extreme dynamics, and non-resolved dissonances, this piece is indeed impressionistic in style. In contrast to "Fantômes," the use of chromaticism and dissonances are not as frequent, and the musical ideas are connected and organized in a more traditional sense. This shows the variety of musical methods Vierne uses to capture the scene or the image of the subject at hand.

Example 32. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 54, Sur le Rhin, mm. 113–118, use of parallel chords.



Carillon de Westminster

Arguably the most famous piece from the whole collection, “Carillon de Westminster” is an interesting piece with a well-known melodic source. It is not, however, exactly accurate to “Westminster Quarters,” the well-known tune related to “Big Ben” in London. Henry Willis III, the famous organ builder from England, said that through long-distance phone calls, he whistled him the tune incorrectly or Vierne heard it inaccurately.

“Carillon de Westminster” and “Les Cloches de Hinckley” are two pieces that are inspired by a pre-existing melody from this collection. The opening material of an 8th note, two 16th notes, and an 8th note figuration has become a well-known rhythmic figure through this piece along with its famous melody. As seen in some other pieces in the collection, Vierne does not stop the continuation of the rhythm but maintains the movement of the music throughout the whole piece. The harmonic language is not as chromatic as other pieces in the collection. The strong imagery associated with the chime of “Big Ben” depicts the image of one of the most iconic sights in London; however, this piece lacks other impressionistic idioms. Its harmonic language and development are more traditional than other pieces in the same collection such as “Feux Follets,” “Fantômes,” or “Étoile du Soir.” Even during the development section, the

tonality of the piece is easy to distinguish; however it does not fall under the musical idioms of impressionistic style. It successfully connects the piece to the image through its famous tune; this piece is closer to the concept of Program Music since it represents the tune and the image of “Big Ben.”

Fourth Suite, Op. 55, 1927

This suite contains more imaginative titles instead of traditional titles, which contrasts with the First Suite. As Vierne embarks on this last suite, the titles become more descriptive of emotional states or specific musical examples or incidents.

Aubade

In previous discussions, Vierne was discussed as showing evidence of his interest in poems and literature, and “Aubade” also shows a similar link. “Aubade” is described as a “song in the morning daybreak for lovers.” It shows strong ties to the Renaissance era as it was a common theme for poetry. Vierne depicts the sweetness of the daybreak or the lovers in a 3/8 time signature. The main musical figure sequence rises consistently with staccato pedal point, and it leads the audience to a tonic in E^b major (key signature is always vague, which is one of idioms in impressionistic style), and then to section B, where a more lyrical single melody is accompanied with mixture of chromatic lines. When the music returns to the A section, it is almost identical to the beginning with the pedal point. The ending feels quite natural in settling at E^b major, even though the tonality is vague throughout the piece. There are hints of parallel chords, chromaticism, and vague tonality within the ABA form. The softer dynamics, dolce at the beginning of the piece, and the gentle triple rhythm associate the piece with a love song.

Résignation

The meaning of Resignation is unwillingness to accept something inevitable. Vierne's personal hardship throughout his life could mean this piece is rather personal. This piece was built with beautiful harmonies that remind listeners of more "choral" movements we hear in organ symphonies. Vierne combines the main theme with an accompaniment that develops into a more chromatic scheme as the theme is repeated. He contrasts those repetitions with section B in the F major tonality. Vierne does not let go of his structural principal even in this emotionally charged piece, as the piece is clearly in ABA form with hints of parallel chords, non-resolved dissonances, and chromatic sequences.

Cathédrales

"Cathédrales" is often compared to "La Cathédrale Engloutie" (The Sunken Cathedral) by Debussy just as "Clair de Lune" by Vierne is often compared to the same titled work by Debussy. The opening has a very close relationship Debussy's work: the repeated notes on the piano, which are held on the organ and the use of parallel motions are obvious similarities. Parallel chords are used throughout the piece. The use of modes is one of the musical idioms in impressionistic style that has not been strongly present in this collection but in contrast to his highly chromatic writing, there are hints of modes in the piece.

Debussy uses the wide spectrum of the compass of the piano to build the climactic moment that brings forth an image of a "sunken" or "engulfed" Cathedral with descending

figures leading to the loudest portion of the piece in C major. Vierne specifies the use of 32' on the pedal, along with his visits to low C on the pedal, the lowest note possibly played.

Example 33. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 55, *Cathédrales*, mm. 89–91, wide range of sounds with the use of the pedal.

The musical score for Example 33 consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in alto clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The key signature is C major. The score includes several annotations: 'a Tempo' above the top staff, 'G. Anches' and 'G. Reeds' above the top staff, 'P. Anches' and 'Ch. Reeds' above the middle staff, 'rit.' above the middle staff, 'ff' above the middle staff, and 'Ped. Anches' and 'Ped. Reeds' below the bottom staff. The music features a wide range of sounds with the use of the pedal, including frequent octave doublings and chromaticism.

The form itself is difficult to distinguish in this piece at first; unlike most of his pieces, which are clearly defined with a form, Vierne uses a more developed version of rondo form. Vierne also uses rather unusual frequent octave doublings in this piece shown only with a strong presence in “Sur le Rhin.” The use of doubling expresses a similarity to Debussy’s piece. Interestingly, Vierne has the advantage of an organ with a larger dynamic range and bigger compass of the sound by using the 16’ and 32’ on the pedal, and he utilizes the extreme dynamics in this piece. Also, towards the end of the piece by Debussy, we see repetitive 8th note figures (example 34). Vierne does a similar figuration on the organ, except he uses his harmonic language of chromaticism and 8th note figurations to build up to the piece’s climactic moment.

Example 34. Claude Debussy, *La Cathédral Engloutie*, mm. 72–73.

au mouvement

pp Comme un echo de la phrase entendue précédemment

Flottant et sourd

Example 35. Louis Vierne, from *Pieces de Fantaisie*, Op. 55, *Cathédraux*, mm. 82–84.

a Tempo

G. P. R.
G. Ch. Sw.

G. P. R.
G. Ch. Sw.

Ped. G. P. R.
Ped. G. Ch. Sw.

Debussy wrote his preludes more than a decade before Vierne's work on the suite began, and this piece is a great example of how Vierne used Debussy's musical idioms for the organ and successfully captures the image and the title.

Naïades

One of the well-known pieces from the collection, "Naïades" or "water nymph" derives from Greek mythology. Here Vierne connects to the mythology, and this raises the question of how much Vierne found mythology interesting. Ample evidence of his interests in poems and literature exists, but there is not much evidence of his interest in paintings. This would have a more direct relationship to impressionism even though nymphs were a common theme for many paintings. "Naïades" is thought to be a female mythical being known through local cults, which is seen as a pattern through titles such as "Will-o'-the-Wisp". "Naïades" is mostly well-known as a nymph affiliated with running water. There are many different types of Nymphs, but they usually represent beauty, jealousy, and the protector of running water. Vierne chose to depict running water through unceasing scale figures. While this displays Vierne's ability to portray the characteristics of the nymphs and the scene, it also requires virtuosic technique.

It begins with chords that suggest water drops or mischievous gestures of the nymph accompanied by virtuosic scales that depict running water. This pattern completes section A. In section B, Vierne does not change the scale figure except that the staccato chords in section A becomes more lyrical with smooth figures that depict a warmer character of the nymph. This whole piece is in ABABA form; however, it is rather different in a sense that Vierne is not making much effort to insert contrapuntal ideas as seen in his "Toccata," "Gargouilles et

Chimères,” or “Feux Follet.” In these examples, imitative ideas are consistent in his writing. The left hand and the pedal figurations are dissonances that do not show resolution, but constantly lead to the next phrase. Chromaticism is dispersed in between phrases that show a strong tonality throughout the piece. There is no use of modes and no extreme dynamics. However, Vierne does display an extended use of parallel figures in the last section, and successfully depicts the title through some impressionistic idioms.

Gargouilles et Chimères

Another piece based on Greek mythology, “Gargouilles et Chimères” is written to express creatures of hideous figures, contrasting with “Naïades.” Notre-Dame Cathedral, with which Vierne had a long association, was well-known for its gargoyles statues. These statues were said to allegedly protect against negative forces, but Vierne, who worked at Notre-Dame, knew that these structures were created to divert rain from the roof. Chimeras, also statues at Notre-Dame, were mythological creatures that are hybrid of animals; they are known for breathing fire. They did not have a specific function in the building unlike gargoyles. Both types of statues share the idea of protecting the church, and they also share the fact that their images are associated with the grotesque. The opening figures create an almost theatrical atmosphere to depict the hideous figures found on the Notre-Dame Cathedral. The registration suggested by Vierne, the clarinet and Quintaton (a narrow stopped flue (type of an organ stop with the twelfth being prominent in harmonics), the use of fermatas, the contrasting textures in different sections, and the sudden endings within these sections depict the title well. The use of chromaticism is prominent throughout the piece, and its mixture with non-resolved dissonances adds to the

depiction of the title. Vierne uses a variation form, incorporating different sections of the music, and the use of many fermatas and changes of musical idioms helps to depict the hideousness of the well-known statues of Notre-Dame effectively.

Les Cloches de Hinckley

The last piece of the collection is written with the theme from the less well-known carillon at St. Mary's in Hinckley, England. Vierne supposedly was kept up by the ringing of the carillon every three hours. The piece begins with *pianissimo* that leads to unusual triple forte in dynamics showing an extreme range in dynamics. The whole piece begins with the effect of the sound coming from a distance, or it is meant to be the musical depiction of the composer faintly hearing the bells during sleep but more prominently as it awakes him. As seen in "Carillon de Westminster," the piece moves continuously without a pause in sound after the first four measures, and the whole piece is more tonal than any other collections except earlier pieces from the first suite. There is an obvious lack of chromaticism and the canonic writing between the pedal and the manual on in the development section shows planning and structure that is designed to build the piece with a direction. There is strong lack of impressionistic musical idioms in this piece, even more so than in "Carillon de Westminster."

Common Musical Elements in the Collection

There are patterns seen throughout the whole collection. As defined earlier, the titles are in different categories: 1) traditional musical titles from the earlier musical era, mainly Baroque;

2) based on texts; 3) based on images; and 4) based on tunes or emotions. The impressionistic musical idioms that are more present in the whole collection are 1) non-resolved dissonances; 2) chromaticism; 3) use of parallel chords; and 4) difficulty in distinguishing tonality of the key. There are extreme dynamics, lack of clear-cut formal structure, and a variety of tonal colors related to registration and dynamics that are used depending on the titles. The extreme dynamics are more present in pieces with titles that feature strong and majestic characters, and there are pieces such as “Fantômes” that show complete reliance on the appearance of characters for its structure. Every piece in the collection ends on a complete major or minor chord, mostly held for a significant duration of time, regardless of whether the characteristics of the piece featured long held major or minor chords. In the case of “Carillon de Westminster,” Vierne succeeded in depicting an image to those who have a strong connection to “Big Ben” and the tune, but the most performed piece of the collection does not qualify as an impressionistic piece.

Chapter 7: CONCLUSION

Vierne was a prolific organ composer of the 20th Century, following such notables as Franck and Widor. His main contribution to the literature is *Six Symphonies pour Orgue*, but his *24 Pièces de Fantaisie* has not been considered as holding the same importance as the *Six Symphonies pour Orgue*. As Vierne's music gains more recognition and popularity, the unique traits of *24 Pièces de Fantaisie* contribute to its current status as authentic concert pieces. There is no evidence that he showed much interest in the impressionistic movement, but Vierne left a remarkable set of concert pieces that are varied in subject matter and yet unified in musical aesthetics. This feat should be recognized as a notable accomplishment as there is no other collection with the same qualities from this period.

Vierne's life and musical training was discussed in order to highlight how Vierne was influenced by his teachers. Vierne struggled with his eyesight from the time of his birth, which makes his appreciation of visual subjects and relationship to the term impressionism with its strong visual ties intriguing. He has demonstrated a thoughtful attitude within his work, resulting in a structure and mature musical language shown in these compositions. The impressionistic style in music was also discussed in the context of organ literature, as it is not a major style in organ literature. Many of the well-known titles of impressionism were used, such as "Clair de Lune," to draw comparisons and contrasts between Debussy and Vierne. The chapter that focuses on Karg-Elert shows how an organ composer could combine impressionistic elements in his own style in contrast to Vierne and his *Pièces de Fantaisie*.

“Naiades” and “Feux Follets” are concert pieces that capture listeners’ attention by evoking the mood or atmosphere of the subject, which also contributed to the assumption shown in the introduction. The pleasing variety of the tone and the ability to evoke mood and atmosphere are all subjective criteria in an impressionistic style of music. The uniqueness of the collection lies in how successfully Vierne combines musical criteria and subjective criteria within one collection. Vierne stayed with his harmonic language with the same sense of structure and form throughout most of his *24 Pièces de Fantaisie*. The majority of the pieces have strong formal structures, and Vierne’s intention of organization is expressed by having six pieces per suite.

Pièces de Fantaisie stands as one of the most complex and musically fulfilling collections of organ works from all French organ repertoire, especially as it was written for secular concert settings combined with secular subjects in many pieces in the collection. There is consistency in impressionistic musical elements presented in his pieces, but even in a piece that lacks those musical elements, such as “Carillon de Westminster,” there is a strong connection to the sight of London for those who are aware of the tune and “Big Ben.” The *Pièces de Fantaisie* is economically built, while honoring the musical titles from the earlier periods as well as programmatic and symbolic musical styles. Other impressionistic writing by composers such as Karg-Elert, who had a clear intention of creating music in impressionistic style, incorporated some impressionistic elements by purely creating a collection of impressionistic pieces; however works by Karg-Elert lacks the variety of style Vierne is able to display. Other composers, such as Joseph Bonnet, show the use of musical styles from the Baroque period in collections by using titles such as “Prelude”, “Lamento”, and “Toccata”, as seen in *Pièces de Fantaisie*. These pieces

fail to make a whole collection as diverse in its topics and daring in musical language as Vierne has done.

Impressionistic musical elements in Vierne's *Pièces de Fantaisie* consist of the strong presence of parallel chords, non-resolved dissonances, chromatic sequences, variety in tone colors, and in some, appropriate to the subject, extreme dynamics. These elements together effectively bring atmosphere and evoke emotions. Vierne achieved this without compromising the harmonic direction and the sense of rhythm. There are no other organ collections from this era with secular titles mixed with musical styles from the previous musical periods, or imaginative titles that are visual as well as have the power to evoke atmosphere as *Pièces de Fantaisie*. The consistency shown in his musical language, employed in a variety of musical styles, created this unique and successful collection within the repertory of organ literature.

Appendix: Organization (Suites and Movements) of *24 Pièces de Fantaisie*.

24 Pièces de Fantaisie: Première Suite, Opus 51, 1926

1. Prélude (C major, *Moderato*, Form: Monothematic)
2. Andantino (A minor, *Adagio*, Form: Monothematic)
3. Caprice (D minor, *Allegretto*, Form: ABA)
4. Intermezzo (F major, *All^o ma non troppo vivo*, Form: ABA)
5. Requiem aeternam (G minor, tierce de Picardie; G Major, *Lento ma non troppo*, Form: Monothematic)
6. Marche nuptiale (“Wedding March,” B^b major, *All^o maestoso e marcato*, Form: ABA)

24 Pièces de Fantaisie: Deuxième Suite, Opus 53, 1926

1. Lamento (C minor, *Adagio quasi larghetto*, Form: ABA)
2. Sicilienne (E minor, tierce de Picardie, E major, *Allegretto moderato*, Form: ABA)
3. Hymne au soleil (“Hymn to the Sun,” G major, *Maestoso*, Form: ABA)
4. Feux follets (“Will-o’-the-wisp,” B minor, *Vivace*, Form: ABABA)
5. Clair de lune (“Moonlight,” D^b major, *Adagio molto espressivo*, Form: ABA)
6. Toccata (B^b minor, *Allegro risoluto*, Form: ABA)

24 Pièces de Fantaisie: Troisième Suite, Opus 54, 1927

1. Dédicace (A^b major, *Andantino espressivo*, Form: ABACA)
2. Impromptu (F minor, tierce de Picardie, F major, *Vivace*, Form: ABABA)
3. Étoile du soir (“Evening star,” G[#] minor, *Moderato non troppo lento*, Form: ABA)
4. Fantômes (“Ghosts,” C[#] minor, *Grave*, Form: unclear)
5. Sur le Rhin (“on the Rhine,” E^b minor, tierce de Picardie, E^b major, *Molto maestoso*, Form: ABA)
6. Carillon de Westminster (D major, *Andante con moto*, Form: ABA)

24 Pièces de Fantaisie: Quatrième Suite, Opus 55, 1927

1. Aubade (“dawn song,” E^b major, *Allegretto*, Form: ABA)

2. Résignation (F[#] major, *Adagio molto sostenuto*, Form: ABA)
3. Cathédrales (A major, *Largo molto sostenuto*, Form: unclear)
4. Naïades (“water nymphs,” B major, *Allegretto non troppo vivo*, Form: ABABA)
5. Gargouilles et Chimères (“Gargoyles and Chimera,” F[#] minor, *Poco lento*, Form: unclear)
6. Les Cloches de Hinckley (E major, *Andante con moto, quasi allegro*, Form: ABA)

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