

César Franck

1822 - 1890

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César Franck Complete Works for Organ

*Wolfgang Rübsam
Aristide Cavallé-Coll*

Organ

*Cathédrale Sainte-Croix
d'Orléans, France*



Biography

César Franck was born in Liège, [Belgium](#). His father had ambitions for him to become a concert pianist, and he studied at the conservatoire in Liège before going to the Conservatoire de Paris, in 1837. Upon leaving in 1842, he briefly returned to Belgium, but went back to Paris in 1844, and remained there for the rest of his life. His decision to give up a career as a virtuoso led to strained relations with his father during this time.

During his first years in [Paris](#), Franck made his living by teaching, both privately and institutionally. He also held various posts as an organist: From 1847-1851, he was the organist at Notre Dame de Lorette, and from 1851-1858, he was the organist at St. Jean-St. Francois. During this time he became familiar with the work of the famous French organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll, and he also worked on developing his technique as an organist and improviser.

In 1858, he became the organist at the recently-consecrated Basilica of Sainte-Clotilde, where he remained until his death, 32 years later. Here he began to attract attention for his skill as an improviser. His first set of organ compositions, however, was not published until 1868, when he was 46 years old, though it contains one of his finest organ pieces, the *Grande piece Symphonique*. From 1872, he was professor of Organ at the Conservatoire de Paris. He held that position, in addition to his post at the basilica, for the rest of his life. His pupils included Vincent d'Indy, Ernest Chausson, Louis Vierne, and Henri Duparc. As an organist he was particularly noted for his skill in musical improvisation, and it is on the basis of only twelve major organ works that Franck is by many considered the greatest organ composer after [Johann Sebastian Bach](#). His works were some of the finest organ pieces to come from France in over a century, and laid the groundwork for the French symphonic organ style. In particular, his *Grande Piece Symphonique*, a 25 minute work, paved the way for the organ symphonies of Widor, Louis Vierne, and Marcel Dupré.

Many of Franck's works employ a "cyclic form," a method of achieving unity among several movements in which all of the principal themes of the work are generated from a germinal motif. The main melodic subjects, thus interrelated, are then recapitulated in the final movement. His music is often contrapuntally complex, using a harmonic language that is prototypically late Romantic, showing a great deal of influence from [Franz Liszt](#) and [Richard Wagner](#). In his compositions, Franck showed a talent and a penchant for frequent, graceful modulations to different keys. Often these modulation sequences, achieved through a pivot chord or through inflection of a melodic phrase, arrive at harmonically remote keys. Indeed, Franck's students reported that his most frequent admonition was to always "modulate, modulate." Franck's modulatory style and his idiomatic method of inflecting melodic phrases are among his most recognizable traits. The key to his music may be found in his personality. His friends recall that he was a man of utmost humility, simplicity, reverence and industry. Much of Franck's music is deeply serious and reverential in mood, often joyful, passionate, or mysterious, but almost never light-hearted or humorous.

Unusual for a composer of such importance and reputation, Franck's fame rests largely on a small number of compositions written in his later years, particularly his *Symphony in D minor* (1886-88), the *Symphonic Variations* for piano and orchestra (1885), the *Prelude, Choral and Fugue* for piano solo (1884), the *Sonata for Violin and Piano in A major* (1886), and the *Piano Quintet in F sharp minor*. The Symphony was especially admired and influential among the younger generation of French composers and was highly responsible for reinvigorating the French symphonic tradition after years of decline. One of his best known shorter works is the motet setting entitled, *Panis Angelicus*, which was originally written for tenor solo, but is more often heard in the soprano register these days.

In 1890, Franck was involved in a serious motor vehicle traffic accident. It was after this accident that he wrote three masterful Chorals for organ. Franck died as a result of complications from the accident very shortly after finishing the Chorals. He was interred in the Cimetière du Montparnasse in Paris.

Composition sonore / *Stop List*
Orgue de tribune / *Gallery Organ*

II. Grand-Orgue		I. Positif	
² Montre	16'	² Montre	8'
Bourdon	16'	Salicional	8'
² Montre	8'	Bourdon	8'
Bourdon	8'	Unda Maris	8'
Salicional	8'	² Prestant	4'
Viole de gambe	8'	Flûte douce	4'
Flûte harmonique	8'	¹ Quinte	2 2/3'
² Prestant	4'	Doublette	2'
Flûte douce	4'	Plein-Jeu	V
² Fourniture	V	¹ Trompette	8'
² Cymbale	IV	¹ Clarinette	8'
¹ Grand Cornet	V	Clairon	4'
² Bombarde	16'		
² Trompette	8'		
Basson	8'		
² Clairon	4'		

III. Bombarde		IV. Récit (expressif / <i>enclosed</i>)	
Grand Cornet (GO)	V	Bourdon	16'
Fourniture(GO)	V	Principal	8'
Cymbale (GO)	IV	Viole de gambe	8'
Bombarde (GO)	1 6'	Bourdon	8'
Trompette (GO)	8'	Flûte	8'
Basson (GO)	8'	Voix céleste	8'
Clairon (GO)	4'	Flûte octaviante	4'
		Octavin	2'
		Cornet	V
		Bombarde	16'
		Trompette	8'
		Basson-Hautbois	8'
		² Voix humaine	8'
		Clairon	4'

Pédale	
Soubasse	32'
Soubasse	16'
Grosse Flûte	16'
² Violonbasse	16'
² Violoncelle	8'
Flûte	8'
² Flûte	4'
¹ Contre-bombarde	32'
¹ Bombarde	16'
Tuba Magna	16'
² Trompette	8'
² Clairon	4'

Légende / Legend

- 1 Tuyauterie (en partie) du XVIIIe siècle / *18th-century pipework (part)*
- 2 Tuyauterie (en partie) de Callinet, le reste par Cavallé-Coll / *Callinet pipework (part), other by Cavallé-Coll*

Autres caractéristiques / Other details

- Étendue des claviers / *Manual compass: 56 notes (C-g³)*
- Étendue du pédalier / *Pedal compass: 30 notes (C-f¹)*
- Traction des claviers / *Key action:*

mécanique / *mechanical: POS*

pneumatique avec machine Barker / *pneumatic with Barker machine: GO, REC, BOM*

pneumatique / *pneumatic: PED*

- Accouplements / *Couplers:*

POS/GO, BOM/GO, REC/GO, REC/BOM

GO/PED, BOM/PED

GO 16, BOM 16, REC 16

- Tremolo: Récit
- Appels d'anches / *Reeds ON: PED, GO, BOM, REC*
- Pédale d'expression / *Expression pedal: Récit*



Wolfgang Rübsam, Organist

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolfgang_R%C3%BCbsam



The Gallery Organ

A contract signed on May 3, 1523 between the members of the Chapter of Orleans and organ builder Alexandre des Oliviers gives evidence for the first time for the presence of an organ in St. Croix cathedral. Repaired in 1556 by Claude Delagrange, the instrument was destroyed in 1568, then the cathedral was destroyed by the Huguenots during the Religion war. In 1657, Burgundian organ builder Noël Grantin, installed a new instrument. In 1707, the instrument was completed by Jean Brocard. In 1757, works are commissioned to Jean-Baptiste Isnard, Jean-Esprit's nephew, and newly arrived in Orleans.

On May 8, 1806, architect Benoist Lebrun, a parishioner of St. Croix, gave to Bishop Étienne-Alexandre Jean-Baptiste-Marie Bernier, bishop of Orleans, the Fleury organ installed in [St. Benoît-sur-Loire abbey](#), which he purchased in 1796 during the sale of national assets. This instrument had been built in 1631 and transformed in 1705. Its 17th and 18th century organ case is in a very classic style with its five turrets in the main case, the highest being at the extremities, and three others in the positif case. The instrument did not leave St. Benoît-sur-Loire until 1821, in spite of the population's opposition, and reached Orleans by boats on the Loire. Unused since the monks' departure, the instrument was in very bad condition. Parisian organ builder, Louis Callinet, is responsible for its reassembly in 1822 on a specially built gallery in the south transept of the cathedral because the present gallery and the last bays of the nave were not yet built. The instrument has 45 stops, including

the 12 reed stops, over 4 manuals and «à la française» pedal board with extension to lower F. The instrument develops from a Classic structure to a more Romantic aesthetics.

The original organ case is enlarged and deeply revised even though as a whole it retains an aesthetics typical to the 17th and 18th centuries. Actual sculptures on the turrets, the atlantes and the cherub head on the base of the central turret come from the original organ case. Works carried out by Callinet are still present in the pipeworks mainly in the wind chests of the Positif, Grand-Orgue and the Pedal divisions.

Very quickly, it was realized that the gallery built to receive the organ was sinking causing mechanical troubles. Callinet intervened and was worried, so a carpenter controlled the level of the gallery and certified that it did not move any more. In 1836, Callinet warns that the mechanical action could cease working in the near future but the architect persisted in saying that the beams which took a light curve should not bend any more. Nevertheless it was necessary to tie the organ to the western wall with iron shafts.

In 1861, with new subsidence, the instrument became more and more difficult to use. In 1866, a gallery beam broke off causing damage to the action mechanism which was completely dislocated. In 1869, Aristide Cavallé-Coll was asked to submit a proposal concerning works to be carried out. In 1870, war broke out and 10,000 French soldiers were made prisoners and interned in the cathedral. During one night, they wrecked the organ. In order to rebuild it, the Chapter, in 1878, called upon the most famous organ builder of the time, Aristide Cavallé-Coll (1811-1899) who had completed, in 1846, the chancel organ of the cathedral. In order to better the acoustics in the very long nave, Cavallé-Coll wished to lower the gallery by a few meters but the Chapter refused. Today, we still can appreciate this instrument with its 54 stops over 4 manuals and pedal. Since its inauguration by organist Alexandre Guilmant on February 5th, 1880, the instrument has never received major transformations save for the installation of an electric blower in the 1920's. It withstood the 1940 and the 1944 bombings and bad weather. Its tonal structure was not revised during the neo-Classic wave popular from the 1930's.

In 1949, Robert Boisseau carried out a general cleaning and regulations. In 1955, it was decided to restore the organ and to carry out modifications corresponding to the style of the time, particularly with the introduction of independent stops in the Bombarde division. But financial resources were lacking and the restoration lingered on.

In 1973, organist Marie-Claire Alain wrote an important report on the instrument in order to obtain a classification by the Historic Monuments Commission. She states that the instrument "high-class (...) is a perfect authentic example of the works of Cavallé-Coll." However, she added that a major restoration was urgently needed. The classification was adopted in July 1974, and renovation works were commissioned to organ building firm Haerpfer in 1978. During the course of these works, the diapason (A=435Hz) was raised (A=440Hz) in order to organize "Trumpet and Organ" concerts, then very popular. Unfortunately, this action harmed the brightness of the instrument, now more reedy. In 1981, the Chapter commissioned organ builder Haerpfer to restore the instrument and when completed, the cathedral enjoyed again the nice instrument that still arouses admiration from organists and organ lovers while being often used for recordings. In 1996, organ builder Bernard Huvry carried out works on the instrument.

The instrument from Aristide Cavallé-Coll is original in more than one way, in comparison with other contemporary instruments of this organ builder. For one thing, the back Positif was preserved and was never altered. This Positif includes an autonomous 5-rank Plein Jeu. On the other hand, the presence of a Bombarde keyboard, that calls upon reeds, Cornet and Plein-jeu from the Grand-Orgue division, reminds one of the extraordinary Isnard organ in St. Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume, with its Résonnance keyboard allowing one to play the pedal stops. In the pedal division, the organ has a 16' Bombarde, a common stop, but also another Bombarde called 32' Contre-bombarde which is the fifth of the 16' Bombarde, a real height of 10 2/3', and is an extremely rare and uncommon occurrence. The tonal structure of the organ is more of the Romantic style with its many 8' stops, its narrow stops and its harmonic flutes but it strongly precludes symphonic organs; it is a decisive turning point in the organ aesthetics evolution at the end of the 19th century.

The elegant console is "en fenêtre" between the Positif and the main organ case. Only the Positif manual has mechanical action while the other manuals use pneumatic assistance by Barker machines. Stop draw knobs, located on each side of the keyboards, are round and the name of the stop is written on a ceramic disc. Ventil pedals are made of metal and the storm pedal is located on the left of the pedalboard. Recit expression is activated by a balanced pedal.



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- 1 Choral No. 1 F Major, Moderato 16:15
- 2 Choral No. 2 B Minor, maestoso - Largamente con fantasia - Tempo I ma un poco meno lento 14:53
- 3 Choral No. 3 A Minor, Quasi allegro 13:18
- 4 Fantaisie Nr.1 C Major op.16, Poco lento - Allegretto cantando - Quasi lento - Adagio 15:15
- 5 Fantaisie No. 2 A Major - Andantino 14:56
- 6 Cantabile B Major - Non troppo lento 05:26
- 7 Grande pièce symphonique F-sharp Minor op.17, 29:20
- 8 Prière C-sharp Minor op.20 - Andantino sostenuto 13:06
- 9 Prélude, Fugue et Variation B Minor op.18 - Andantino - Lent - Allegretto ma non troppo - Andantino 11:43
- 10 Pastorale E-Major op.19 - Andantino - Quasi allegretto - Andantino 10:42
- 11 Pièce héroïque B Minor - Allegro maestoso 09:37
- 12 Finale B-flat Major op.21 - Allegro maestoso 14:02

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