





THOMAS TROTTER

Thomas Trotter was the 14th organist to be awarded the position of Organ Scholar at King's College, taking up the post in 1976. Organ Scholars at King's are undergraduate students at the College with a range of roles and responsibilities, including playing for choral services in the Chapel, assisting in the training of the probationers and Choristers, and conducting the full choir from time to time. The position of Organ Scholar is held for the duration of the student's degree course.

Thomas is a prize-winning concert organist and one of the UK's most admired performing musicians. For this recording he returns to the Chapel in which his extraordinary performing career began.

DURUFLÉ

COMPLETE ORGAN WORKS

Thomas Trotter *organ*

CD

73:25

MAURICE DURUFLÉ (1902-1986)

1 FUGUE SUR LE THÈME DU CARILLON DES HEURES
DE LA CATHÉDRALE DE SOISSONS | *OP. 12 (1962)* 3:15

2 MÉDITATION | *OP. POST. (1964)* 3:53

PRÉLUDE ET FUGUE SUR LE NOM D'ALAIN | *OP. 7 (1942)*

3 I Prélude 6:25

4 II Fugue 5:51

5 SCHERZO | *OP. 2 (1926), DEDICATED TO CHARLES TOURNEMIRE* 5:58

6 PRÉLUDE SUR L'INTROÏT DE L'ÉPIPHANIE | *OP. 13 (1961)* 2:19

PRÉLUDE, ADAGIO ET CHORAL VARIÉ SUR LE THÈME DU 'VENI CREATOR' | *OP. 4 (1926/1930),
DEDICATED TO LOUIS VIERNE*

7 I Prélude 8:03

8 II Adagio 6:08

9 III Choral varié 5:43

10 CHANT DONNÉ: HOMMAGE À JEAN GALLON | *(1953)* 1:43

SUITE | *OP. 5 (1932), DEDICATED TO PAUL DUKAS*

11 I Prélude 8:44

12 II Sicilienne 6:40

13 III Toccata 8:43



MAURICE DURUFLÉ COMPLETE ORGAN WORKS

'The few poetic lines achieved had been destroyed, re-written, destroyed, re-written, destroyed, re-written, slept on, read, re-read, re-written, destroyed'... The recalcitrant Muse, who caused such problems for Anthony Burgess's fictional poet Mr Enderby, has afflicted many composers too. Curiously, three of them could be consecutive entries in a dictionary of French composers: the intensely self-critical Paul Dukas, who published only seven major works; Henri Duparc, who was silenced in his thirties by an obscure form of neurasthenia, leaving just a handful of immortal songs; and Maurice Duruflé, whose complete works would almost fit onto two generous CDs. We know that Dukas and Duparc both destroyed many of their manuscripts, and after Duruflé's death in 1986 there were hopes of a secret store of unpublished masterpieces; but nothing emerged – just one miniature and a few arrangements and transcriptions.

35 years later, Duruflé would be astonished, and probably somewhat embarrassed, to discover that his quiet life and his modest output have inspired several substantial books and countless

theses, dissertations and articles, and that he is now regarded in many quarters as one of the great French composers of the 20th century. His two organ teachers, Vierne and Tournemire, were not only celebrated organists but also committed (if under-rated) mainstream composers. Creative work dominated their lives; as soon as one work was finished, they would start planning the next. But Duruflé claimed not to believe in 'inspiration', and he was never motivated by this kind of inescapable inner compulsion. 'Musical creation', he said, 'is for me the fruit of a persevering and laborious effort. I can only write music down with difficulty, and I am constantly revising what I have already written. I am attracted most of all by the organ and the orchestra... The literature of the piano contains so many masterpieces that I feel incapable of adding to them. The string quartet fills me with apprehension for the same reason, and I am terrified by the very thought of writing a song...'

Duruflé was 24 when he first entered a composition class at the Paris Conservatoire; 'I was not just a *débutant*', he said, 'but an *ignorant*. I had never been tempted by the idea of composition.' The natural result of this inexperience would usually be a succession of tentative student works (like the derivative and rather uninteresting early compositions of Vierne and Tournemire). But herein lies the great mystery of the art of Duruflé. Like the goddess Minerva springing from the head of Jupiter, his Muse was born fully armed. Within a few months he was producing music of startling maturity: stylistically assured, beautifully

proportioned and 'orchestrated', full of imaginative textures and subtle harmonic colour. And once he had found his unique personal voice, he remained true to it throughout his life. The music on this recording spans a period of almost forty years, but it displays a remarkable stylistic consistency; every bar is unmistakably Duruflé.

Born in Normandy in 1902, Duruflé was the oldest of an outstanding generation of organist-composers who established their careers in Paris during the 1930s, including Messiaen (b1908) and young Jehan Alain (b1911), whose tragic death in the War would later inspire one of Duruflé's finest works. When he was ten his parents sent him to the choir school of Rouen Cathedral, and it was during his seven years here – amid the grandiose music, the beautiful flowers and the sumptuous robes of the great Feast Days – that he found his vocation as a church musician. And it was here that he fell in love with Gregorian Chant and the timeless world of the mediæval modes, in which he found 'a variety of colours and expression which is infinitely seductive'; 'truly,' said his widow many years later, 'he had a Gregorian soul.'

Already an accomplished organist at the age of 16, Duruflé began travelling to Paris for private lessons with Charles Tournemire and Louis Vierne. Entering the Conservatoire in 1920, he was a student here until 1932, winning numerous financial awards, and coveted *premiers prix* in five disciplines: organ (1922), harmony (1924), piano accompaniment (1926), fugue, and composition (both in 1928). It was during his years at the Conservatoire that he composed six of his eleven significant works

(including Op. 1, a piano work that he refused to publish): the Scherzo, the chamber trio (Op. 3), the *Veni Creator* and Suite for organ, and the gorgeous *Trois Danses* for orchestra. Meanwhile he was busy establishing a concert career and juggling various duties at different churches: *titulaire* at the church in his hometown of Louviers, deputy to Tournemire at Sainte-Clotilde in Paris throughout most of the 1920s, and then to Vierne at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. In 1929 the new Association of *Les Amis de l'Orgue* founded an annual competition for performance/improvisation and for composition, in alternate years. Duruflé won the performance prize in 1929 and the composition prize in 1930, a remarkable and never-repeated double which greatly enhanced his prestige. He was also, in 1929, appointed organist at the historic church of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont.

Duruflé held this post for the rest of his life, and his name is indelibly associated with the church, like Vierne with Notre-Dame or Tournemire with Sainte-Clotilde. It also led him to an extraordinary home a few steps away, where he lived for over fifty years: a tiny rooftop eyrie with spectacular views of the city, and space for a three-manual organ, a grand piano, and very little else. But the appointment was not all it seemed. The organ in 1929 was in a poor state of repair (an *affreux coucou*, as Vierne called it), and in course of restoration by an incompetent organ-builder. After years of negotiation a new scheme was drawn up, and the inadequate instrument was dismantled in 1938. Nearly twenty years passed before the new organ was completed; during this

time Duruflé had nothing to play except a little choir organ at the other end of the church. And when it was finished, it was a disappointment: *un orgue qui ne chante pas*, he said, an organ which doesn't sing. Further work in 1975 effected a wonderful transformation, but by this time Duruflé was too ill to take full advantage of it.

So it is perhaps not surprising that after the Suite of 1932 Duruflé lost interest in composing for the organ. Indeed, he did no new creative work at all for ten years, apart from preparing the *Danses* for their premiere, and reworking his Scherzo in a new and gloriously colourful version for full orchestra. But his concert career continued to flourish: 'Maurice Duruflé is not only one of the best Parisian organists of the present day, he is also a complete musician, a sensitive and intelligent artist, of whom much may be expected.' He broadcast regular recitals on the radio, played with the best Paris orchestras and premiered Poulenc's Organ Concerto, while the premiere of the *Trois Danses* in 1936 was a triumphant success: 'From this moment the music of Maurice Duruflé takes its place alongside the most celebrated composers of French music, and he is assured of a most brilliant future.' In 1938 he made his London debut to great acclaim, prompting this astute comment from Archibald Farmer in the *Musical Times*: 'If he had but a little of that flair for showmanship of which others seem to have so much, he would have travelled the world like them...'

In 1941 Duruflé presided at the rebirth of France's largest concert organ – the old Cavaillé-Coll from the demolished Palais du Trocadéro (on which

Franck had premiered his *Trois Pièces* and Widor three of his Symphonies), modernised and 'neo-classicised' by Gonzalez, and installed on a massive mobile platform in the new art-deco Palais de Chaillot. It was surely this spectacular instrument that awakened his slumbering Muse, and inspired one more major organ work, the *Prélude et Fugue* which he premiered there the following year. Duruflé was notoriously reticent about his own music and secretive about his private life, but there followed a tumultuous period of crisis, creativity, and consolidation. Crisis: the failure of the mysterious first marriage of which he never spoke, which left him in a state of 'appalling sadness and moral distress'. (The divorce was confirmed in 1947, and his first wife, a pianist, died in 2005, a few months short of her 100th birthday.) Creativity: the composition in 1946/7 of his greatest masterpiece, the Requiem based on the chants of the Gregorian Requiem Mass. And hope for the future: his appointment in 1943 as a Professor of Harmony at the Conservatoire, which brought him a job he had always dreamed of, and occupied much of his life until his retirement in 1970; and his meeting soon after the War with a phenomenally gifted student, Marie-Madeleine Chevalier, who became his assistant at Saint-Étienne-du-Mont in 1947, and his wife in 1953.

During the next twenty years the two Duruflés formed a devoted and inseparable partnership both on and off stage, appearing together in joint recitals, touring in the USA, teaching, and enjoying the increasing popularity of the Requiem. In 1950 Duruflé composed an orchestral prelude to precede

his scherzo, but after his second marriage he wrote very little: two postscripts to the Requiem – the *Four Gregorian Motets* (1960) and the *Messe 'Cum Jubilo'* (1966) – and two brief organ pieces. Increasingly depressed by the state of contemporary music, and by the Catholic Church's abandonment of plainsong and the traditional Latin liturgy, he lost interest in composition. However, he did channel his creativity into other projects: notation of the recorded improvisations of Vierne and Tournemire, alternative accompaniments for his choral works, orchestrations and piano reductions... Sadly, tragedy struck in 1975, when the Duruflés were both seriously injured in a horrendous car crash. They were in hospital for nearly a year, and Duruflé's career was effectively ended. His wife recovered well enough to resume her career, to care for him during his long final decline in the 1980s, and to continue to promote his music in performances of breathtaking virtuosity until her own death in 1999.

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Writings about Duruflé all – quite rightly – emphasise the influence of the three teachers to whom he dedicated his first three organ works 'in grateful homage': Tournemire, Vierne, and Dukas, his Professor of Composition. But equally important was the harmony teacher, Jean Gallon, with whom he studied at the Conservatoire for two years. Gallon broadened conventional harmony teaching by encouraging 'the flavour of modality so characteristic of modern French music', and

this was perfect for Duruflé, who was naturally drawn to this style of 'white-note' music via his love of Gregorian Chant (just as English composers were drawn to it through their love of old folksongs). The concentrated essence of Duruflé's art can be found in the single page of the **Chant donné** (*Hommage à Jean Gallon*), which he wrote in 1953 for an anthology of harmony exercises offered to Gallon on his retirement by his former pupils. For the 20-year-old Duruflé, the study of harmony had opened a whole new world: not just simple block chords, but immaculate four-part realisations of a given melody or bass, in which each voice should have a life and interest of its own. It was here that he learnt (and afterwards taught) the delicate art of blending harmony and counterpoint, the vertical and the horizontal, which he would later display to such moving effect in works like the Kyrie of the Requiem, the *Fugue sur le nom d'Alain*, and the *Adagio* on the *Veni Creator*.

At the same time Gallon also included the works of Debussy and Ravel in his harmony courses, and these were the two composers whose influence Duruflé was always quick to acknowledge. Tournemire was already showing him how respect for modality need not preclude a rich harmonic palette, and while Duruflé never went as far as his teacher, much of his music revels in the added sevenths, ninths and thirteenthths that add such subtle and constantly shifting colours to the harmony. They are a feature of his first published work, the evocative **Scherzo**, which takes the form of a rondo with two episodes and a coda. For Mme Duruflé, its magical opening bars evoked 'a

peaceful sleep, suddenly disturbed by a flutter of fairy wings; they wake the slumberer and entertain with their dances, and disappear as abruptly as they arrived, allowing the sleeper to return to the land of dreams...' In contrast to this frankly secular piece, Duruflé also wrote something else in 1926, a set of variations on a liturgical theme, which he played at his own recitals that year. The Composition Competition of *Les Amis de l'Orgue* in 1930 specified a work in three movements, so he wrote two new pieces to precede the variations, and won the prize with his **Prélude, Adagio, et Choral varié** on the Pentecost hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* (*Come Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire*). The themes of the first two movements are derived from various phrases of the hymn, but the tune is never heard in its original form. After some twelve minutes of quiet music, Duruflé suddenly whips up a rushing mighty wind at the end of the *Adagio*, and then the whole tune is finally revealed in radiant glory, followed by three short variations and a triumphant toccata-finale.

The following year Duruflé discovered that the rules of the competition did not preclude him from entering for a second time in 1932. In a letter to Tournemire in May 1932 he confessed that it was 'material considerations' that had led him to compose the three-movement **Suite**, in the hope of winning the prize again, but in the end he decided it would be too much of a risk. The **Prélude** is one of the most powerfully emotional works in the French repertoire; Duruflé never wrote anything as intense as this again, even in the most impassioned moments of his Requiem.

The solemn theme is a sinister, slowly unfolding lament; building up inexorably in an ominous crescendo, it reaches a heart-rending climax and then subsides into a poignant recitative for the Clarinet and a hushed reprise of the opening bars. The elegant melody of the **Sicilienne** is heard three times in all, above an accompaniment that becomes more intricate with each repetition, with contrasting episodes in between. In these episodes Duruflé conjures up a ravishing array of evocative sonorities; the fragrant modality of the melody, the rippling flutes of the first episode, and the mysterious nocturnal murmurings of the second never fail to weave their own magic spell.

In the final movement of the Suite Duruflé raised the conventional French organ **Toccata** to a new level of compositional and technical complexity. Brilliant figuration and relentless rhythm are maintained from first bar to last, but there is lyricism too in the soaring *cantabile* second subject, contrasting with the angular energy of the principal pedal theme and the subsidiary material derived from it. After the turbulent recapitulation of the opening theme, the hesitant re-appearance of the second subject is abruptly swept aside as the music finally erupts into a savage whirlwind of sound. In later years Duruflé disowned the piece and refused to perform it, on the grounds that 'the main theme is very bad!' But no-one else agreed, and it is now firmly established as one of the most rewarding works of its kind in the 20th-century repertoire.

'À la mémoire de Jehan Alain, mort pour la France': Duruflé premiered his **Prélude et Fugue**

in the Palais de Chaillot on Boxing Day 1942, constructing his memorial from a musical version of Alain's name (ADA AF), which he devised by extending the letters of the alphabet to form a second series of notes corresponding to the conventional scale. The rapid triplet movement of the Prelude recalls the *Veni Creator* Prelude, but the textures here are much less complicated. The melody that sings out on top is a gently distorted version of the theme of Alain's most famous organ work, *Litanies*, and the connection is confirmed in the Prelude's moving epilogue, where the two tunes are heard side by side. The double Fugue begins with the exposition of a new lyrical theme derived from the Alain motif; the introduction of a more lively second subject brightens the mood, and the music gradually builds in a great crescendo to a heroic conclusion.

The little **Méditation** dates from around 1964, but it was not published until 2001. Duruflé used its haunting refrain again in the *Agnus Dei* of his Mass of 1966; in the organ piece it alternates with the improvisatory flights of a solo flute above luscious string chords. The other two short works from the 1960s were both written in response to specific commissions, and their harmonic language is much more restrained. The **Prélude sur l'Introït de l'Épiphanie** forms a postscript to Duruflé's *Four Gregorian Motets*, and it was premiered at the same concert in Paris in May 1961; soft sparkling mixtures and a pungent solo trumpet celebrate the arrival on earth of the King of Heaven: '*Behold, the Lord our Ruler comes...*' The **Fugue sur le thème du Carillon des Heures**

de la Cathédrale de Soissons was commissioned by the Cathedral Organist, Canon Henri Doyen, in 1962, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the death of Louis Vierne. Devastated in 2017 by Storm Egon, which blew in the cathedral's west window, the Gonzalez organ at Soissons (1956) was one of Duruflé's favourite instruments, and he much preferred it to his own organ in Paris. This very free 'Fugue' (opening in two voices over a pedal-point) is almost exclusively modal. But Duruflé always had the gift of drawing the maximum impact from these self-imposed limitations, and the music packs a real emotional punch as it builds to a thrilling toccata-style climax.

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THOMAS TROTTER

Organ

Thomas Trotter is one of Britain's most widely admired musicians, reflected in Her Majesty The Queen awarding him The Queen's Medal for Music on St Cecilia's Day 2020. He was appointed Birmingham City Organist in 1983 following Sir George Thalben-Ball, based at the city's renovated historic Town Hall where he is also Resident Organist of the magnificent Klais organ in Symphony Hall. He is also Organist at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey. Earlier in his career he was Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge, and he later continued his studies with Marie-Claire Alain in Paris where he took the Prix de Virtuosit  in her class.

Thomas Trotter has been awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's prestigious Instrumentalist Award in recognition of his particular achievements as 'one of the foremost exponents of the organist's art', International Performer of the Year Award for 2012 by the New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and, in 2016, the Royal College of Organists Medal. The excellence of his musicianship has also long been recognised internationally in his musical partnerships. He has performed as soloist



with conductors Sir Simon Rattle, Bernard Haitink, Riccardo Chailly, Valery Gergiev, Sir Charles Mackerras, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Sakari Oramo, Edward Gardner, Francois-Xavier Roth, Petri Sakari, Andris Nelsons and Thomas Sondergaard. He performs recitals in Berlin's Philharmonie and Konzerthaus, the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, both the Musikverein and the Konzerthaus in Vienna alongside London's Royal Festival Hall and Royal Albert Hall, at the major new venues of Moscow's International Performing Arts Centre and Budapest's Palace of Arts.

Among many highlights have been recitals at the Edinburgh International Festival, performing at the 50th Anniversary Concert of the Organ at the Royal Festival Hall, and the re-inauguration of the organs at the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Festival Hall.

Thomas has recorded extensively with Decca and Regent Records. He has received a Grand Prix du Disque for his recording of music by Liszt.

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