

Saint-Saëns

Complete Music for Organ

MICHELE SAVINO

Welte Organ, Roman Catholic Church of Saint Boniface, Emmendingen, Germany
Forster and Andrews Organ, Roman Catholic Church of Saint John the Baptist, Forchheim, Germany

Camille Saint-Saëns 1835-1921
Complete Music for Organ

1. Fantaisie No.1 in E flat	6'28	8. Marche religieuse in F Op.107	5'14
2. Bénédiction Nuptiale in F Op.9	6'22	9. Offertoire	10'46
3 Rhapsodies on Bretons Themes Op.7		9 Pieces for Organ or Harmonium	
3. Rhapsodie No.1	5'45	10. I. Marche - Cortège	3'44
4. Rhapsodie No.2	6'53	11. II. Interlude - Fugué	2'57
5. Rhapsodie No.3	7'50	12. III. Offertoire	3'18
		13. IV. Procession	2'24
6. Theme, Variations & Choral on 'le Dies irae'	6'58	14. V. Elévation	2'48
		15. VI. Offertoire (Sarabande)	3'19
7. Fantaisie No.2 in D-flat Op.101	14'10	16. VII. Ave Verum	4'02
		17. VIII. Offertoire	3'02
		18. IX. Elévation	1'41
		19. Prélude in F	1'38
		2 Versets	
		20. Verset No.1 in E minor	0'49
		21. Verset No.2 in in F - Andante	1'03
		22. Elévation, or Communion in E Op.13	6'06
		23. Prélude in C	2'19

24. Cyprès Op.156	8'13	3 Préludes and Fugues Op.109	
		34-35. Prélude and Fugue in D minor	5'36/7'15
25. Choral - Prélude sur 'O Salutaris hostia'	3'07	36-37. Prélude and Fugue in G	2'32/3'37
26. Prélude in C minor	3'24	38-39. Prélude and Fugue in C	3'40/8'34
27. Fantaisie No.3 in C, Op.157	13'38	7 Improvisations Op.150	
3 Préludes and Fugues Op.99		40. I. Molto lento	10'35
28-29. No.1 Prélude and Fugue in E	6'27/6'12	41. II. FERIA pentecostes	5'10
30-31. No.2 Prélude and Fugue in B	5'21/3'20	42. III. Poco adagio	6'16
32-33. No.3 Prélude and Fugue in E flat	2'48/5'37	43. IV. Allegretto	3'44
		44. V. Pro Martyribus	5'17
		45. VI. Pro Defunctis	8'12
		46. VII. Allegro giocoso	5'03

Michele Savino
Tracks 1-7 & 24-46 Welte Organ, Roman Catholic Church of Saint Boniface, Emmendingen, Germany
 Assistants: Hans Aerts, Marc Hug
Tracks 8-23 Forster and Andrews Organ, Roman Catholic Church of Saint John the Baptist, Forchheim, Germany
 Assistant: Marc Hug

Camille Saint-Saëns was born in Paris on 9th October 1835 as the only child of his parents, Victor and Clémence. Following the subsequent death of his father in the same year and due to his weak constitution, he was raised first of all in the countryside in the care of a foster mother and then in Paris' Latin Quarter with his mother and great aunt, both of whom recognized his gift early on and proceeded to foster his musical talent. It was his great aunt, Charlotte Masson, who taught the two -and-a-half year old how to read music and gave him lessons in aural training and piano. Even though Saint-Saëns' young, broad-ranging talents and interests developed in the areas of literature, ancient languages, philosophy, mathematics, archeology and astronomy, his musical achievements suggested that he would become a great artist: at four years of age, he wrote his first compositions; at eleven, he had his debut as a concert pianist; at thirteen, he was accepted by the Paris Conservatory to study organ and composition; at eighteen, he took over the position of organist at the church of Saint Merri and experienced the first performance of his *Symphony in E flat major Op.2*; furthermore, at twenty-two, he traveled abroad for the first time as a virtuoso pianist. His change to the position of organist at the reputable Église de la Madeleine surely represented a high point in his career, even though he could also count the following among his successes: the Lecturship of Piano at the École Niedermeyer, his co-founding of the Société Nationale de Musique and his acceptance in the Académie des Beaux-Arts. However, despite two attempts, he did not manage to win the Prix de Rome for his compositions, although he would later be honored both internationally (for instance, through his being granted an Honorary Doctorate from Cambridge University) and nationally (for example, being made a Grand Officier de la Légion d'Honneur). If Saint-Saëns was initially rightly viewed as a child prodigy, in later years he was able to enjoy the reputation of being a 'outstanding musician' (Hans von Bülow) and one of the 'most remarkable musical figures' (Charles Gounod). He maintained friendships with the most prominent composers of his time, such as Fauré and Liszt, whose works for piano and organ he performed with enthusiasm and awe.

Saint-Saëns' career is based on his work as both a concert pianist and organist, which took him abroad within Europe, but also to America and even to Algeria, as well as his extensive work as a composer. Interestingly, Reynaldo Hahn characterizes Saint-Saëns, for his style of both playing and composing, as 'musical art's last great classicist', as seen in his favouring of, on the one hand, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn and, on the other hand, in his efforts for national art and culture, but with an aesthetic that did not completely fit the spirit of his age. Saint-Saëns is one of the first French composers in the nineteenth century, who composes for harmonium and chamber music and some of his compositions even have avant garde traits. Saint-Saëns' private life was shaped by personal difficulties: in 1878, both sons died a few months apart from each other while still small children and, although the marriage between himself and Marie-Truffot did not end in divorce, both led separate lives from 1881 onwards. Camille Saint-Saëns died in Algeria on 16th December 1921 and was buried in the Montparnasse Graveyard on 24th December, after receiving a state funeral.

Saint-Saëns as Organist

Nowadays, alongside Berlioz, Saint-Saëns is well known as one of the most important French composers of the nineteenth century, his oeuvre embracing important orchestral and chamber works, as well as much admired works for solo instruments, alongside a few operas and a little church music. However, in his time, Saint-Saëns also made his name as a pianist and organist. After piano tuition under Camille Stamaty, one of Kalkbrenner's best pupils; organ lessons with Alexandre Pierre François Boëly between 1846 and 1848 and his study of the organ at the Paris Conservatory under François Benoist (first prize 1851), he accepted appointments as organist first in Saint Merri (1853-57) and then Madeleine (1857-77). His official organ duties did not prevent Saint-Saëns from accepting numerous invitations to organ consecrations at home, as well as actively performing abroad. Alongside concert programmes and some phonographic recordings, the voices of his

contemporaries testify to how much of a capable instrumentalist he was. Against this background, academics today are united in believing that Saint-Saëns 'together with Guilman, Gigout and Widor, [belongs] to the few musical personae of the Belle Epoque, who not only analytically knew Bach's organ work, but who could also play it themselves and let it be played by their pupils.'¹ Thus, through his refined manual and pedal technique, he achieved an impressive precision, cleanness and speed.² Saint-Saëns' manual technique is much derived from Kalkbrenner's 'guide mains', a machine for finger training that already played an important role in his piano lessons with Camille Stamaty and which allowed him to acquire a refined touch, that he could transfer onto the organ.³ The pedal technique, gained under Boëly, could be characterised as old-fashioned, as Saint-Saëns only used the all-toes pedal technique, whereas contemporary organ schools, such as those of Martini or Miné, favoured the alternate use of heel and toes when playing. However, this allowed him to achieve a similar clarity and precise articulation to that achieved with his hands, contributing to the creation of an overall unified impact in his organ playing.⁴

Due to the condition and typology of some church organs, the doubtful taste of some church congregations and, last but not least, the 'obsession with what they call improvisation'⁵ on the part of some organists, popular Italian opera melodies could be heard coming from the church gallery and liturgical organ playing became geared towards 'special effects'. Bearing in mind these contemporary tendencies, Saint-Saëns can be seen as exceptional as a practitioner from a number of points of view. He not only mastered the challenges of Bach organ works such as the *Fuge in D major* (BWV532) or *Prelude and Fuge in E flat major* (BWV552) with boldness, but also interpreted works by Liszt, whom he much admired: such as his organ piece *Fantasie und Fuge über den Choral 'Ad nos, ad salutarem undam'*, one of the most demanding works ever in organ literature, as well as challenging piano pieces that Saint-Saëns adapted for organ: for instance, *Saint François d'Assise: La predicament aux oiseaux* and *Saint François de Paule marchant sur les flots*. Simultaneously, Saint-Saëns set

new standards for liturgical organ playing. He is regarded as a gifted improviser, whom contemporaries like Liszt, Sarasate, Rubinstein and Clara Schuman visited on the gallery and about whom newspapers wrote, '[he] captivated his audience and held it constantly under the charm of his brilliant and varied improvisations'⁶. Whether giving a concert or in a mass, Saint-Saëns could improvise in such a structured, clear and coherent way so as to create the impression that the music was already notated.⁷ His improvisations in the style of Bach, Mozart or Mendelssohn were undistinguishable from the organ works of these composers, as Charles Widor praisingly recognized. His own style was characterized by his contemporaries as 'correct and severe' and a 'quiet, fine and polished taste'⁸ was attested to him, which is, without doubt, audible in his *Sept Improvisations Op.150*.

Works for Organ

Though Saint-Saëns' organ works do not occupy a particularly large place within his complete works, they do consist of around forty pieces, to which chamber works with organ, as well as the 'Third Symphony', the so-called 'Organ Symphony', can be counted. Regarding style, research into the organ works testifies to how 'a similar stylistic breadth to that in his other works, ranging from Bach inspired compositions through to early impressionist tendencies, can be observed'⁹. In this way, Saint-Saëns is counted among the classical composers, who in their harking back to Bach and Beethoven and in their recourse to old French forms 'realized a synthesis of German and French stylistic principles'¹⁰. The classicists, to whom not just Saint-Saëns, but, importantly, his teacher, Boëly, as well as Loret, Chauvet, Gigout, Dubois, Guilman and Boëllmann also number, represent, alongside the symphonists, one of the two principle courses for music in nineteenth century France. Saint-Saëns' intellectual closeness to Boëly would be made particularly explicit in the *Interlude – Fugué*, the second piece from the *Neuf Pièces pour Harmonium*, in that it, in terms of compositional technique, reminds us strongly of his teacher. Impressionist echoes

are, however, also to be found in the *Sept Improvisations Op.150* as well as in the *Fantaisie Op.157*.

For Saint-Saëns, form came before artistic expression, as demonstrated by the titles of the majority of his works, which reflect the classical tradition: Prelude, Fugue, Fantasy or Rhapsody. It is seldom that one comes across titles with a liturgical reference, such as 'Bénédiction', 'Offertoire' or 'Élévation', and choral-related literature is even rarer. The exceptions consist of: the choral prelude *O salutaris hostia*, based on a melody from his *Mass Op.4*, the *Improvisation No.2 – 'Feria Pentecostes'* based on the first verse of the Whitsun lauds hymn 'Beata nobis gaudia', the *Improvisation No.5 – 'Pro martyribus'*, that contains three melody fragments from the Offertory for the Feasts of the Martyrs; the *Improvisation No.6 – 'Pro defunctis'*, that cites from the beginning of the 'Domine Jesu Christe', the Gregorian Offertory from the Mass for the Dead; *Thème, Variations et Chorale*, in which one can hear the 'Dies Irae', even if the title would not suggest it; furthermore, in *Trois Rhapsodies sur des Cantiques bretons*, composed while Saint-Saëns was travelling with his pupil, Fauré, through Brittany, next to the Breton 'Cantiques' in the third movement we hear three old-French Noël's. Distinctly recognizable, even though not named in the title, is the fact that the *Procéssion* from the *Neuf Pièces pour Harmonium* is a piano arrangement of *Tollite Hostias*, the final chorus of Saint-Saëns' *Oratorio de Noël Op.12*, transposed into C major. Overall, Saint-Saëns' compositional technique and the musical structure recognizable in the works suggest that a symphonic registration of the organ is not absolutely necessary.

In contrast to the tendency of his contemporaries to give every piece a precise guide to organ registration, Saint-Saëns generally abstained from such details. The opposite however is true for his use of his continual use of dynamic markings and indications for pitches and couplers. For example, in the *Trois Rhapsodies Op.7*, the manuals were signified with Roman numerals or in the *3e Fantaisie Op.157*, names were used ('Récit'). Through such practices, Saint-Saëns reminds us more of the German school

than that of the French symphonists. However, occasionally, for instance, at particular points of a score where register change is not only relevant to an alteration in pitch but also tone colour, we do find stop names to indicate the register change: such as in the *Bénédiction Nuptiale Op.9*, in the *Trois Rhapsodies Op.7*, the *2e Fantaisie* and in the *3e Fantaisie Op.157*. Interestingly, in *Neuf Pièces pour Harmonium*, pieces one, three and four are given register stops for the harmonium, while for pieces five and from seven to nine, only dynamic notations are presented. Piece two has no register indication, but pedal notation; piece six features register and manual indications similar to the above mentioned rhapsodies and fantasies. Some compositions such as the *2e Prélude et Fugue Op.99*, *Thème, Variations et Chorale*, the *1re Fantaisie* explicitly require an organ with three manuals. Although Saint-Saëns was well-acquainted with both the organs of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll and the registration of the symphonists, he does not particularly commit himself to these organs or sound qualities in his organ works. Saint-Saëns' preference in registration can be deemed to come from the sound spectrum of the old French masters, as believed by both listeners and critics like Joseph Bonnet or Jean Huré: that means a classical registration, as Saint-Saëns 'understood the charm of a Nasard combined with a Gambe or Bourdon, a Cornet solo, a Grosse quinte or a Carillon in the Pédale and a Récit de Tierce en taille or en dessus'¹¹. Saint-Saëns' organ works suggest a musical aesthetic that is, therefore, multifaceted and not fixated on the French symphonic tradition.

Research reveals Saint-Saëns to be 'probably the only eclectic French organ composer'¹², who had composed music, that can be suitably interpreted on many instruments. Saint-Saëns' world-wide concert performances may have led to his broad horizons regarding organ typology and be the reason why his compositions for organ do not specifically require a Cavaillé-Coll organ for performances. In this way, he differs from composers like Frank or Widor, who can be associated with particular organs.¹³

The Organs

Saint-Saëns' organ works with their typical characteristics do not require being played on a French symphonic organ by Cavaillé Coll. For the purposes of this album recording of the complete organ works of Saint-Saëns, produced in 2021 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of his death, two historical organs were chosen: a **Forster and Andrews organ**, built in 1891, and a **Welte organ**, built in 1939. The Forster and Andrews organ comes originally from the parish church of Maybole in Scotland, but was restored by the Dutch organ builder, F. R. Feenstra, before finding its home in Forchheim, Kaiserstuhl, in the parish church of Saint John the Baptist. The Welte organ is to be found in the parish church of Saint Boniface in Emmendingen.

The smaller works have been recorded on the Forster and Andrews organ, with its two manuals and nineteen registers. Calling certain works 'smaller' is not just a question of their length but, above all, has to do with the fact that they require less tonal differentiation: the *Neuf Pièces pour Harmonium*, the *Élévation ou communion Op.13*, the *Préludes in F major and in C major*, the *Offertoire*, the *Deux Versets* and the *Marche religieuse Op.107*. The Forster and Andrews organ allows for a registration that resembles the sound of a harmonium, which is particularly advantageous for *Neuf Pièces pour Harmonium*. All further works that require a higher level of registration and differentiation were recorded on the Welte organ, the significantly larger of the two, with three manuals and forty-seven registers.

Choice and compilation of the organ pieces

This particular recording of the complete organ works of Camille Saint-Saëns only includes those compositions originally intended for organ. For this reason, the *Trois Pièces pour Harmonium* are not included, as they were composed exclusively for the harmonium, in contrast to *Neuf Pièces pour Harmonium*, where Saint-Saëns himself suggests the organ as an alternative instrument. Also not included is his

Fantaisie pour Orgue-Aeolian, as this was initially composed especially only for this instrument, and is only available as a modern reworking for the conventional organ. Though *La Prédication aux oiseaux* is a piece readily-played by Saint-Saëns, it was, in fact, penned by Franz Liszt. Saint-Saëns was only responsible for the reworking of the piece for organ, meaning that it does not appear in this recording. In contrast, though *O salutaris* is, in the strict sense of the word, a reworking for organ, here Saint-Saëns incorporated an excerpt from his own *Mass Op.4*, legitimizing its inclusion in the recording. Furthermore, as only the first part of *Cyprès et Lauriers Op.156* was written for organ, with the second part being composed for orchestra, only *Cyprès* can be heard here.

The playing-order of the pieces does not follow the chronology of their composition. Rather, the aim of each CD has been to create, through an arc of suspense, as varied a listening experience as possible, as if the listener were at a concert.

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Translation: Christopher O'Reilly

- 1 Faber, Rudolf und Hartmann, Philip (Hgg.). Handbuch Orgelmusik. Komponisten, Werke, Interpretation. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2002, p. 392.
- 2 Cf. Smith, Rolin. Saint-Saëns and the Organ. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992, p.185f..
- 3 Cf. Murray, Michael. French Masters of the Organ. Saint-Saëns, Franck, Widor, Vierne, Duprè, Langlais, Messiaen. Yale UP: New Haven & London, 1998, p. 45f..
- 4 Cf. Smith, Rolin. Saint-Saëns and the Organ. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992, p.185f..
- 5 Fétis, François-Joseph. "L'Orgue mondaine et la musique érotique à l'église", Revue et Gazette musicale (6. April 1856), p. 1.
- 6 Bourdon, Marc Amédée. Notice sur le grand orgue de Notre-Dame-de-Saint-Dizier, construit par M. Cavaillé-Coll. Bar-le-Duc: Numa Rolin, 1863, p. 40-47.
- 7 Cf. Smith, Rolin. Saint-Saëns and the Organ. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992, p.192.
- 8 Batte, Adolphe. Revue et Gazette musicale (25. November 1860), p. 406.
- 9 Busch, Hermann J.. Zur französischen Orgelmusik des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. Ein Handbuch. Bonn: Butz, 2011, p. 303.
- 10 Faber, Rudolf und Hartmann, Philip (Hgg.). Handbuch Orgelmusik. Komponisten, Werke, Interpretation. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2002, p. 392.
- 11 Huré, Jean. L'Esthétique de l'orgue. Paris: Sénart, 1923, p. 167.
- 12 Smith, Rolin. Saint-Saëns and the Organ. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992, p.192.
- 13 Cf. Smith, Rolin. Saint-Saëns and the Organ. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992, p.187.

The Organ of the Saint John the Baptist Church, Forchheim, Germany
 Forster and Andrews 1891, Scotland (Parish Church of Maybole)
 Restored by F. R. Feenstra in Forchheim since April 2011, 19 stops/II

Great C-g3

Open Diapason	8'
Hohlflute	8'
Dulciana	8'
Waldflöte	4'
Principal	4'
Twelfth	2 2/3'
Fifteenth	2'
Clarinet	8'

Swell C-g3

Bourdon	16'
Open Diapason	8'
Lieblich Gedackt	8'
Salicional	8'
Voix Celestes	8'
Principal	4'
Mixture	3 rks
Cornopean	8'
Oboe	8'

Pedal C-f1

Open Diapason	16'
Bourdon	16'



Forster and Andrews 1891



Welte 1939

The Organ of the Saint Boniface Church, Emmendingen, Germany

Welte 1939

47 stops/III

Pedal		Koppeln		III Manual (Schwell)	
Principal Bass	16'	II – I sub		Lieblgedeckt	16'
Untersatz	16'	III – I super		Geigendprincipal	8'
Zartbass	16'	II – I super		Quintade	8'
Weitprincipal	8'	I – super		Weidenpfeife	8'
Gedecktbass	8'	III – P		Schwebung	8'
Nachthorn	4'	II – P		Ital. Principal	4'
Bassflöte	4'	I – P		Querflöte	4'
Hintersatz 5 – 6 fach (5 1/3)		III – II		Gemsquinte	2' 2/3
Posaune	16'	III – I		Nachthorn	2'
Dulzian	16'	II – I		Terz	1' 3/5
Trompete	8'	Hand Register ab		Scharf 4 fach	1'
Clarion	4'	(only fort the 2 free combinations)		Dulzian	16'
I Manual		II Manual		Trompete Harm.	8'
Gedacktpommer	16'	Weitgedeckt	8'	Singend Regal	4'
Principal	8'	Principal	4'	Tremolo	
Holzflöte	8'	Gedacktlöte	4'	Man. C1 – G5	
Dulzflöte	8'	Swiegel	2'	Ped. C1 – F3	
Octav	4'	Sifflöte	1' 1/3	Accessories:	
Blockflöte	4'	Nachthorn	1'	Walse	
Quinte	2' 2/3	Terzzymbell	5 fach	Schweller (III)	
Octav	2'	Krummhorn	8'	General Tutti	
Mixtur 5 – 7 fach (1 1/3)		Tremolo		Tutti	
Kornett	5 fach			2 free combinations	
Trompete	16'			Electro-pneumatic action	
Trompete	8'				



Born in 1978 in Teggiano (SA), Italy, **Michele Savino** studied organ and composition at the ‘Domenico Cimarosa State Conservatory’ in Avellino, from which he graduated in 2003 with distinction. Attracted by the historical organs of his home region of Southern Italy (Neapolitan School) and influenced by the historically informed performance style, Savino deepened his understanding of Baroque music. While focusing on the interpretation of Early Music

during his studies in Italy, Savino’s further interests took him, in 2005, to Freiburg University of Music, Germany, where he became familiar with the organ repertory of the Romantic and Late Romantic period. In 2007, Savino won third prize in the national competition ‘Città di Viterbo’ in Italy, as well as obtaining his diploma as ‘concert organist’ under the tutoring of Prof. Klemens Schnorr, subsequently, going on to complete his bachelor’s degree in ‘Church Music’ in 2010. While employed as a church musician near Cologne, Savino, supported by his mentors Prof. Reiner Schuhenn and Otto Maria Kraemer, was able to further pursue his studies in church music to master’s level at Cologne University of Music and Dance, particularly focusing on organ improvisation. He finished his studies in February 2018, performing a final recital with improvisations in various styles.

Savino intensively developed his studies through taking master classes with Paolo Crivellaro, Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, Jean Boyer, Jon Laukvik, Ludger Lohmann and Ton Koopmann.

Having worked as a church musician at various churches in Baden-Wuerttemberg and in North Rhine-Westphalia, Michele Savino accepted, in 2017, a new position as a church musician in Endingen, near Freiburg. Currently, he is active in ‘Musiforum Kaiserstuhl’, organising organ concerts in the Kaiserstuhl region. In addition to his performances as a soloist, Michele Savino also participates in numerous projects with singers and instrumentalists, choirs and orchestras, while regularly performing as a concert organist at national and international organ festivals.