

Recital programme

St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Adelaide (Adelaide Fringe Festival)

Wed 26th Feb 2025

Piece Heroique

Cesar Franck (1822 - 1890)

One of my favourite pieces of Cesar Franck stemming from the French symphonic tradition.

Cantilene (2nd movt from 'Symphony No 3' in f sharp minor)

Louis Vierne (1870 - 1937)

Vierne wrote his third symphony in 1911 and dedicated it to Marcel Dupre. I love the masterful way Vierne explores the lyrical qualities of the pipe organ truly making it sing – notice how he writes not merely accompaniments, but melodic 'lines' to support the main melodic entity; just like a 'symphony' with the various orchestral instruments all interacting with each other. And notice how he concludes this movement: from the realm of melodic interplay he moves to a more 'textural' compositional mode enveloping the listener in an ethereal soundscape.

Chanson de matin

Edward Elgar (1857 - 1934); arranged A. Herbert Brewer

A great interest of mine is the adaptation of pieces for the pipe organ: a practice especially prevalent in the early 20th century. This trend resulted in some masterful transcriptions - including this one of Elgar's 'Chanson de Matin' originally written for violin and piano. This charming melody with an accompaniment which gently coaxes it forward makes for a most enjoyable musical experience !!

Versets: 'Ave Maris Stella' (from '15 versets pour les Vepres du commun des fetes de la Sainte Vierge') Op 18 nos 6-9

Marcel Dupre (1886 - 1971)

chant	Hail, thou Star of the ocean...
I	When the salutation Gabriel had spoken
chant	Break the captives' fetters...
II	Jesus' tender Mother, make thy supplication
chant	Virgin of all virgins...
III	So now we on journey, aid our weak endeavour
chant	Praise to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...
IV	Amen

This composition of Marcel Dupre moves us into a timeless space: one of the early uses of the pipe organ in Catholic liturgy was the practice of 'alternatim': the pipe organ, seen as a 'voice' in the liturgy, would 'alternate' with the human voice in the singing of the verses of psalms, canticles, hymns - and even the Ordinary of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, etc). The pipe organ verses (known as 'versets') became masterful and sometimes quite elaborate variations on the hymn tune/psalm tone.

Widely recognised as a brilliant improviser, Dupre's masterful 'variations' on the hymn 'Ave Maris Stella' explore different possibilities and perspectives of this hymn tune: from a canonic approach (1st verset) to a ravishing, rhapsodic variation (4th verset): one can easily perceive this as huge, sonorous flashes of energy moving through the cavernous interior of St Sulpice where Dupre was organist from 1934 until his death in 1971. This energetic texture truly propels the listener into a veritable soundscape highlighting the grandeur of the surrounds - and pointing to the magnificence of Our Lady, of whom this hymn speaks of.

Today I will be playing these versets interspersed with the original chant verses, complete with subtle Glagolitic-style variations.

Toccata Tu es petra et portæ inferi non prævalebunt adversus te (No 10 from 'Esquisses Byzantine')

Henri Mulet (1878 - 1967)

Mulet's 'Esquisses Byzantine' is a set of ten pieces dedicated to the Sacre-Coeur, Paris. The various movements honour a specific part of the church or indeed liturgy.

The title of this Toccata translates to: You are Peter, the Rock, and the gates of hell will not prevail against thee.

Despite its title (an antiphon for the feast-day of Saints Peter and Paul), this piece is in fact not based on the well-known chant 'Tu es Petrus' but is a 'free' composition which has become one of the most celebrated pieces of the French symphonic school.

Programme notes: Jacinta Jakovcevic, 2025