

### Ex. 11



Decker is paying homage to the style of thematic transformation and ornamentation used by J.S. Bach in his ornamented chorale, *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, BWV 659. The first segment of the embellished theme suggests the outline of the first line of the chant melody. Subsequent statements of the thematic material are more freely original. This ornamented theme returns in the pedal later in the work, during the final toccata segment (Ex. 12):

### Ex. 12



The middle toccata section of the piece is based on a motif developed from a fragment of the last line of the chant (Ex. 13):

### Ex. 13

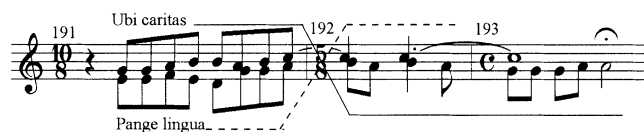


The two-measure motif is repeated at different pitch levels during this dance-like section, accompanied by a rhythmic pedal punctuation and a two-measure chromatic pattern in the left hand that follows the contours established by the motif in the right hand.

The final toccata section is followed by a jubilant recapitulation of the opening chord structures on full organ. The music then gradually quiets to the registrations of the opening of the piece, and the work concludes much as it began, with the pedal stating the last line of the chant.

Decker quotes a single line of chant from her "Retablo I: *Pange lingua*" toward the end of the *Ubi caritas*, and cleverly pairs it with a statement of the first phrase of the *Ubi caritas* (Ex. 14). As diagrammed in the example, the notation of each chant fragment switches lines in the second measure:

### Ex. 14



Decker's first published chorale prelude is included in *A New Liturgical Year*, edited by John Ferguson (*A New Liturgical Year*, ed. John Ferguson [Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997]). Decker's setting of the Passion Chorale, *Herzlich tut mich verlangen*, is written with the extremely chromatic figuration exhibited in her other works, juxtaposed against the unaltered presentation of the A-minor chorale melody in the pedal.

Decker's set of three tangos for organ, *Flores del Desierto* ("Desert Wildflowers"), was written for concert organist Janice Beck. Beck premiered the three dances (*Albarda*, *Es-puelita*, and *Saiya*) at the University of Arizona on May 2, 1999. Decker was also commissioned to compose a work for the AGO National Convention, held in Seattle in July 2000. *Río abajo río* ("River Beneath the River") was premiered by Christa Rakich at St. Mark's Cathedral in Seattle.

### Organ Music by Pamela Decker

Passacaglia (1984), Hinshaw

Toccata (1987), Edition Peters

Night-song and Ostinato Dances (© 1994), Wayne Leupold Editions

Retablo I: *Pange lingua* (1995)

Retablo II: *Ubi caritas* (1996)

Retablo III: *Victimae paschali* (1997)

## DEAR UNCLE MAX

Send questions to Dear Uncle Max, AGO National Headquarters, 475 Riverside Dr., Suite 1260, New York, NY 10115.

*On the reissuing of Dupré's historic recordings at St. Thomas Church in New York City (Mercury Living Presence, "Marcel Dupré playing the organ at St. Thomas Church, New York City," 434 311-2), the "Salve Regina" from Widor's Symphony II (recorded Oct. 16, 1957) has significantly different registrations from those indicated by Widor. Would you comment on this, please?*

J.D., Mass.

Any discussion of this has to be twofold: historical—including a brief inquiry into the composition itself, its place in Widor's works, and some reference to Widor's methods of working and how he viewed his compositions, as well as Dupré's relationship to Widor—and aesthetical, what are the artistic grounds that may have caused Dupré to make these changes, and then how important are they.

One has always, with Widor, to remember just how long he lived—born February 21, 1844, died March 12, 1937, at

93. From the age of 25, he was organist at Saint-Sulpice for a total of 64 years. He retired from Saint-Sulpice at 89, perhaps feeling he needed time for a second honeymoon as he married a 20-year old wife at 76.

As has often been pointed out, his contemporaries at the beginning of his career would have included Gounod, Franck, and Saint-Saëns; at the end, Vierne, Dupré, and Messiaen, whose early organ works he may have heard. Honeger and Milhaud were students in Widor's fugue class.

I clearly am deeply indebted to John Near, as will be anyone who tries to say anything about Widor, and make free use of his *The Life and Work of Charles-Marie Widor*, published by Bell and Howell Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, Mich. (1992), as well as materials from his *Charles-Marie Widor: The Symphonies for Organ* (A-R. Editions Inc., Madison, Wis.). I am grateful to him, too, for private conversations now and in the past. Many readers will remember his excellent extended article in TAO, "Charles-Marie Widor: the Organ Works and Saint-Sulpice" from February 1993.

Widor's symphonies fall into three groups: Op. 13, Symphonies in c, D, e, and f from 1872, followed by Op. 42 from 1878–87, in f, g, a, and B, and finally, in 1894, by Op. 70, the *Symphonie Gothique*, and in 1899, by Op. 73, the *Symphonie Romane*.

The style changes from the first symphonies to the last are not easily missed. Like many composers, Widor's life was spent rewriting, cutting, expanding, and altering what he

had already written and published, and this, over a period of some 60 years! Opus 13 came out first in 1872, then was reissued in 1879, 1887, 1888–92, 1900–01, 1911, 1914–18, 1920, and 1928–29, all that plus emendations found after 1929. He was, as you can guess, working on revisions until he died! As Dr. Near notes, it is a “fact, the revisions sometimes spoil the stylistic integrity of the original conception.”

The earlier format for *Symphony No. 2* consisted of:

- I. Prelude
- II. Pastorale
- III. Andante
- IV. Scherzo
- V. Adagio
- VI. Finale

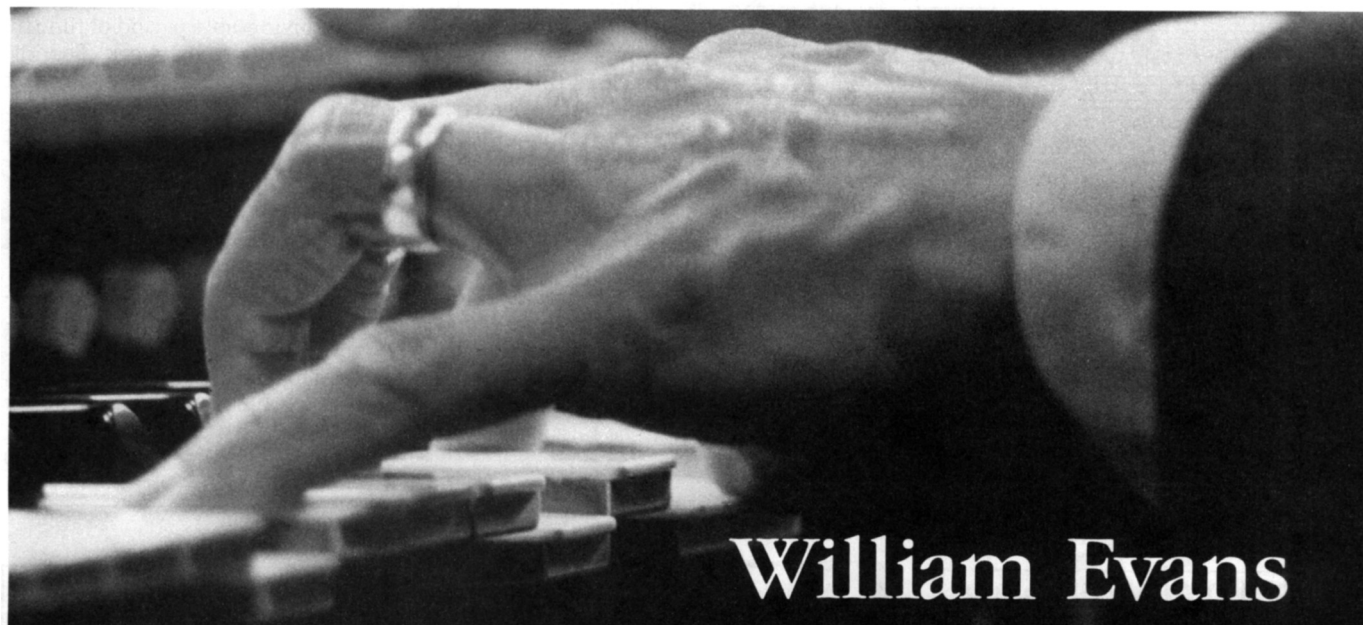
Into this format, some 30 years after its first publication, Widor slipped his masterpiece, the “Salve Regina,” in place of the original Scherzo. Masterpiece or not, it breathes at a different altitude than the other movements, which are all lightness and pretty much uncomplicated joy. A brooding, mystical quality is now introduced. The “Salve Regina” stands with the “Gothique” and “Romane” symphonies as Widor’s tribute to the revival of interest in Gregorian chant. In fact, Widor said to Albert Schweitzer, “I can no longer think of any organ art as holy that is not consecrated to the church through its themes, whether it be from the chorale or from Gregorian chant.” This stance is now considerably distanced from the concert music ethos of his early works.

The “Salve Regina,” a chorale-fantasia that uses the Gregorian chant melody quite freely (suggesting rather than quoting the cantus very directly), falls into some five uneven-length sections with two and four having a slower ba-

sic rhythmic unit, and one, three, and five a rather toccata-like figure. John Near says, “The sectional character of the movement suggests the *alternatim* practice commonly adopted by the grand organ and choir organ in large French churches.” Noteworthy, though not that especially unique, is that the Pedal registration begins with a marking for Flute 8’ coupled to Swell Mixtures; in section 2, the Pedal joins the Great Fonds 8’ by a change of Pedal couplers. So it goes, back and forth, until the closing section when Swell and Choir are coupled to Great and all three manuals to Pedal. At the 59th bar, a crescendo leads to the addition in the Pedal (bar 60) of the Trumpet 8’ for the cantus. Except for a brief moment in bars 61 and 62, the Pedal remains the real bass line, gradually sinking down for the final cadence. As written, the composition has a heritage that reaches back into the Renaissance to earlier fantasias on the “Salve Regina”—the use of the 8’ Pedal pitch also *suggests* the older cantus firmus in the Pedal on 8’ pitches where it is a tenor (that line which holds the tune). In spite of two brief voice crossings, the Pedal line starts in a tenor register and sinks slowly down until the end of the composition.


What does Dupré do that is contrary to the indications we have? The basic conceptual changes are:

1. When the chant melody comes in, it is separated out on a different manual, rather than the one manual indicated, the Swell.
2. Heavy 16’ tone is used in the Pedal from its first entrance, rather than none at all; this gives a real distortion in the voice leadings in bar 15, where in the double pedal part the upper line is a clear continuation of the tenor manual line.
3. Beginning in bar 56, the crescendo pedal is added all the way to bar 60; where the original indicated the addition of the Trompette 8’, we now have heavy reeds at all pitches, 32’ and up. Another addition midway in bar 66 is made, intro-



# William Evans

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ducing manual 16's. Full organ. At bar 72, we reverse the process, taking stops off, again by the crescendo pedal until by bar 77 we are soft again for a quiet end. An exciting performance for sure.

Marcel Dupré became Widor's assistant at Saint-Sulpice in 1927, and eventually succeeded him there. Perhaps no one knew Widor's mind better. In view of Widor's constant revisions of his works, it is possible that Dupré played the "Salve Regina" for him in this manner, or had a discussion about alternate ways of playing it and the master said, looking stern but benevolent, "Marcel, that's one way of doing it! When I am dead and gone, do what you like." Then under his breath, to himself, "You will anyway!"

A couple of postscripts:

1. Which way do I like best? I favor Widor's markings—feel them a bit more restrained, less like using the composition as a virtuosic tour de force. Also, the part-writing is left intact. Instead of using the composition as an excuse for a large crescendo/decrescendo effect, it remains more of an insightful and deeply felt meditation on the tune with a joyful, affirmative conclusion.

2. The changes from the various editions I have examined seem slight, as may be illustrated by the following examples from the 1920 edition ("New edition, revised, and entirely modified by the composer") and the John Near edition referred to earlier.

#### Hamelle, 1920 edition

##### Bar 36



#### Near edition



##### Bar 47



#### Bar 49



#### Hamelle, 1920 bars 64–65



#### Near edition bars 64–65



3. It seems a tough question to answer when one is asked which is the best edition to play from—all were issued by Widor at one time or another and thus represent Widor's best thought, presumably, at the time of their publication; in any event they represent one exact, historical moment. Often the changes are basically slight, and one may want to mix and match. Revisions made over a considerable period of time by composers don't always represent their best work. The impulse of the inspiration is often different, and sometimes it would have been better to have left things alone! True or not, gossip or fact, organists who knew Widor early in the last century used to say many of the editions were brought forward for financial gain or to secure copyright control and had to do with little else. If one wants to be precise, it could be done by listing the publisher and the year of publication of the edition you are playing from.

4. John Near's edition suggests that if the whole of *Symphony No. 2* is played at once, the "Salve Regina" is better omitted for stylistic reasons, and the original Scherzo reinserted. I certainly agree—I have always had a soft spot for the Scherzo. It's not easy, but such a sprightly sort of tune ought not to be forgotten entirely.

MAX B. MILLER, FAGO

#### HAROLD ABMYER, S.M.M.

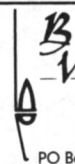
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