

RECORDINGS

JACQUES BOUCHER: ITINÉRAIRE. Featuring ten organs in Quebec, Canada, Mortagne au Perche, Normandy, and Landes, France. XXI-21 Productions Inc. XXI-CD 2 1718. Available at Amazon.com. A leading figure in the Canadian organ world, Jacques Boucher has been active as a radio broadcaster and record producer, as well as an international performer who served on the jury of the Chartres Competition in 1996. Since 1984, he has been titular organist of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste church in Montreal, where he oversaw the 1995 restoration of Casavant's venerable Opus 615.

Boucher takes the listener on a fascinating musical journey, visiting some of Quebec's most significant organs, as well two Cavaillé-Coll instruments in France and Normandy. The majority of Boucher's program features works by 19th- and 20th-century French composers: Bonnet (*Variations de Concert*), Vierne (*Prélude* from *1er Symphonie*, *Élégie* and *Postlude* from *24 Pièces en style libre*), Widor (*Final* from *Symphonie romane*), Franck (*Andante-Adagio-Andante* from *Grande Pièce symphonique*), Tournemire (*Chorale alléluïatique no. 2* from *Domenica XVII Post Pentecostum*, *L'Orgue Mystique*), and Dupré (*Pange Lingua* and *Placare Christe servulis* from *Le Tombeau de Titelouze*). French-Canadian composers are represented by Arthur Létourneau (*Toccata*) and Antoine Bouchard (*In Paradisum*). Oddly, Boucher includes a *Toccata* by the early German organist-composer Matthias Weckmann, taken from a recording of historic Canadian organs and featuring the lovely mechanical-action Mitchell organ of 1874 in the Église Saint-André de Kamouraska. While by no means German Baroque in concept or sound, this instrument suitably conveys Weckmann's music under Boucher's stylistically in-

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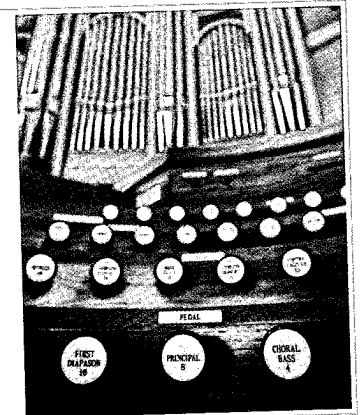
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formed interpretation. He also includes the *Gloria*, *1er couplet Plein Jeu* and *Élévation*, *Tierce en Taille* from the *Couvent Mass* of Couperin, performed on the French Classic-inspired Guilbault-Thérien organ of the Chapel in the Grand Séminaire de Montréal. Boucher likewise carefully suits the other works to the instruments on which they are played. These include organs by Casavant at the Église du Gesù (restored by Guilbault-Thérien), Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste (Casavant Opus 615 in both pre- and post-restoration state), and Basilique Notre-Dame in Montréal, Église Notre-Dame de Paspébiac, Basilique-Cathedrale Saint-Cécile de Valleyfield (restored by Guilbault-Thérien), Cathédrale de Québec (restored by Guilbault-Thérien), and the Cavallé-Coll organs of the Église Notre-Dame, Mortagne du Perche (Normandy) and the Abbatiale de Saint-Sever, Landes (France), the former built in 1901 following the death of Cavallé-Coll, the latter built in 1898 and one of the master's final instruments.

Boucher demonstrates a strong command of and affinity for the repertoire performed on this recording. His playing of the Final from Widor's Tenth Symphony is particularly compelling, emphasizing the virtuosic and dramatic as well as the pensive, lyrical qualities of this epic movement. It is interesting to compare the various instruments of Casavant (spanning 96 years, in states of pre-, post- or non-restoration), and to discern the subtle and not-so-subtle differences of these instruments built in the French Symphonic style with two late Cavallé-Coll organs.

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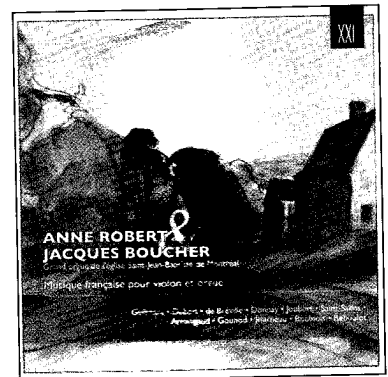
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MUSIQUE FRANÇAISE POUR VIOLON ET ORGUE. Anne Robert, violon; Jacques Boucher, organ. IV/92 Casavant organ of the Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal (Opus 615, 1915/1996). 1735 Guarnierius "del Gesu" violin on loan

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from the Canimex Foundation. Recorded in 2010. XXI-21 Productions, Inc. XXI-CD 2 1716. Available at Musique.fnac.com and Priceminister.com. This exquisitely performed and beautifully produced recording features twelve Romantic and modern French works for violin and organ. Several pieces are lyrical and expressive, while others explore various musical paths of the modern era. The former category is represented by Alexandre Guilmant, Théodore Dubois (two works), Pierre de Bréville, Anthime Donnay, Camille Saint-Saëns, Jules Armingaud, and Charles Gounod. The latter category is represented by Dominique Joubert, Maurice Journeau, Michel Boulnois, and Antoine Reboulot.

Anne Robert is a consummate artist who performs with a delicious sweetness of tone (abetted by the precious instrument on which she plays in this performance), elegance, and compelling lyricism, complemented by rhythmic precision tempered by freedom, infallible intonation, and technical aplomb. She is one of Canada's leading violinists, enjoying an international career as soloist, chamber, and orchestral musician. Jacques Boucher (see previous review) provides sensitive and unified collaboration, harnessing the considerable tonal resources of the large Casavant to perfectly balance and complement the Guarnerius "del Gesu."

This recording is well worth seeking out, as it will provide copious listening pleasure and also be an invaluable resource of significant yet little-known music for violin and organ.



VARIATIONEN, ELEGIEN, CANTILENEN. Thomas Piel, violoncello, Joachim Dorfmueller, organ. III/55 Alfred Führer organ of the Lutherkirche Wuppertal, Germany (1966/67, rebuilt in 2004 by Christoph Neuhaus). Sicus Klassik sic 014-2. Sicus.de. The 23 tracks of this ele-

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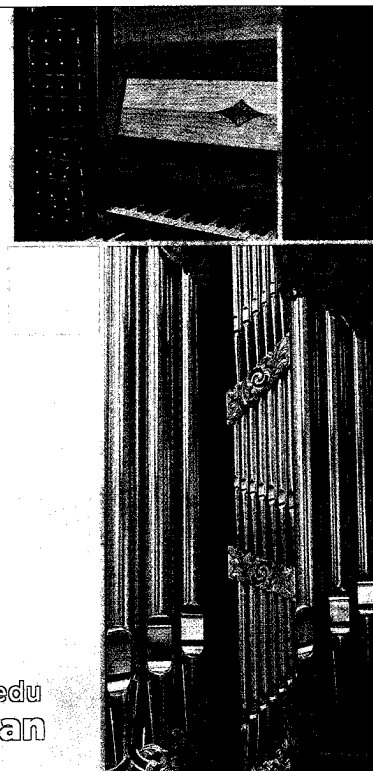
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gant recording present music familiar and obscure by eight composers representing the 19th and 20th centuries. The majority are based on versions for violoncello and piano. These include Gaspar Cassadó's *Toccatà à Giralamo Frescobaldi*, which clothes the original in modern, attractive harmonies and gestures; Fauré's *Élégie*, Op. 24, for which Joachim Dorfmueller provided his own organ adaptation from the original piano part; the *Melodisch-contrapunktische Studie 137 b zu Bachs Präludium h-moll BWV 869 a aus dem ersten Teil des Wohltemperierten Klaviers* by Ignaz Moscheles; Rheinberger's well-known *Cantilene* from the *Orgelsonate Nr. 11*; six excerpts from Grieg's *Lyric Pieces*; and Rachmaninov's ravishing *Vocalise*. Wolfgang Stockmeier's *Variationen für Violoncello und Orgel, Werk 249, über ein Thema von Franz Liszt* was originally conceived for organ and cello. It is based on a ten-tone theme from Liszt's *Via crucis* that lends itself to Stockmeier's compositional style, inspired by Schoenberg, in which atonality and serialism are the driving forces. The variations contrast elements of quietude and meditation with those of drama and virtuosity, also incorporating aleatorism. Finally, Arvo Pärt's *Fratres: Introduction und 8 Variationen* employs virtuosic techniques in the cello writing that evoke Pärt's signature "tintin-

nabuli" style. The work was originally scored for orchestra; the combination of organ and cello in this arrangement is a natural choice.

Cellist Thomas Piel is active as a chamber and orchestral musician as well as a soloist. His playing is vibrant, with sensitivity of phrasing that conveys his highly expressive style, particularly suited to the Romantic works. He has plenty of technical prowess to meet the virtuosic challenges. He fills each note with life and energy. His interpretations of the Rheinberger and Rachmaninov, with their lingering tempos, bring a fresh perspective to these familiar works. The maker of his instrument, which produces a lush, singing tone that is responsive to Piel's every nuance, is not named in the liner notes. Organist Joachim Dorfmueller, a prominent performer and educator in Germany, provides discreet accompaniments that allow the full beauty of the cello to shine. Only occasionally does he unleash fuller registers of the neo-Classical instrument, always balancing the soloist.

This recording is commendable for the beauty and sincere artistry of the performers, the recasting of familiar works in an attractive format, and the presentation of lesser known but significant works for organ and cello.

JAMES HEDGECOCK