

Extract from "New Light on the Use of the Metronome in Organ Music by Lefébure-Wely, Lemmens, and Franck", PART 3 César Franck.

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César Franck: Answering a Few Questions

I have been spurred to write the concluding part of this article by two things: firstly, the existence of a "César Franck tradition," with its very particular interpretation of the tempo indications in Franck's organ works, and secondly, the commotion that ensued upon the publication by Joël-Marie Fauquet of metronome markings by César Franck.¹

In the first section below, I examine the metronome figures and their internal logic; their correspondence with the Italian tempo marks; and how they fit into the larger context of the metronome markings in other works by Franck. I also attempt to apply the results of this analysis, suggesting implications for various aspects of performance practice. In the second section, I will suggest an explanation for how, in the twentieth century, a tradition of interpreting Franck arose that deviated so markedly from the evidence of the primary sources.

1) Metronome markings in the *Six Pièces*, the *Trois Pièces*, and two works for harmonium

The original score from which Fauquet took the marks is privately held and not accessible to the public. It is a first edition from 1868 in which the tempo marks have been penciled in, and on the cover of which Franck wrote, "Pierre-Joseph-Prospér Lecocq, 110 rue du Bac."² Fauquet has established the authenticity of this source beyond any doubt. There is also a second source for the marks: a letter by Franck now held by the Brooklyn Museum of Art.³ In this letter, Franck provides precisely the same marks as in the "Lecocq" score, and also adds two more: for the *Cantabile* and the *Pièce Héroïque*, respectively, in the *Trois Pièces*. The discovery of these tempo markings has been widely disseminated and discussed.⁴

For reference, here are the metronome marks for the organ and harmonium works:

¹ Joël-Marie Fauquet, *César Franck* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), Annexe V, 950.

² *ibid.*

³ Rollin Smith, "César Franck's Metronome Marks: From Paris to Brooklyn; Newly Discovered Indications for the *Trois Pièces*," *The American Organist*, 9 (2003): 58–60.

⁴ See Marie-Louise Langlais, "A New Discovery: César Franck's Metronome Markings for His Six *Pièces* for Organ," *The American Organist* (March 2000): 42–43; Joris Verdin, "Discussies over César Franck," *Het Orgel*, 2 (2011): 5–9; Ton van Eck, "César Franck's Metronome Markings Reconsidered," *The American Organist* 2 (2002): 52–55; Marie-Louise Langlais, "Découverte des mouvements métronomiques de César Franck dans ses oeuvres pour orgue," *Pro Organo Pleno, Essays in Honor of Ewald Kooiman* (Leeuwarden: Boeijenga, 2008), 61–66.

Six Pièces:

Fantaisie

Poco lento	quarter = 80
Allegretto cantando	quarter = 104
Quasi lento	quarter = 80
Adagio	eighth = 69

Grande Pièce Symphonique

Andantino serio	quarter = 112
Allegro non troppo e maestoso	half = 104
Andante	quarter = 72
Allegro	quarter = 126
Andante	quarter = 72
Allegro non troppo e maestoso	half = 104
Andante	quarter = 72
Beaucoup plus largement que précédemment	half = 72

Prélude, Fugue et Variation

Andantino	dotted quarter = 72
Lento	quarter = 60
Allegretto ma non troppo	quarter = 112
Andantino	dotted quarter = 72

Pastorale

Andantino	quarter = 76
Quasi allegretto	quarter = 126
Andantino	quarter = 76

Prière

Andantino sostenuto	quarter = 92
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Final

Allegro maestoso	half = 100
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Trois Pièces:

Fantaisie

Andantino	no M.M.
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Cantabile

Non troppo lento	quarter = 92
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Pièce Héroïque

Allegro maestoso	quarter = 104
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Harmonium works:⁵

Offertoire sur un Noël Breton,⁶

Andante	quarter = 88
Allegretto	quarter = 100
Tempo primo	quarter = 88
Tempo secondo	quarter = 100
Tempo primo	quarter = 88

Quasi Marcia op. 22⁷

Allegretto (the eighth is the shortest note value)	half = 88
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These metronome figures are very controversial. They are at odds both with the received image of Franck as “Pater Seraphicus” (on which more below) and the established tempo choices for his music that developed over the course of the twentieth century (although these can vary quite a bit as well). I will not review this debate here, but one thing is clear: the twentieth-century tempi deviate substantially from the generally quick and lively tempi that Franck himself prescribed. The differences are of such a magnitude that various arguments have been advanced which call the marks into question, nuance them, adjust them, or even dismiss them as nonsensical.

Many misgivings have thus been voiced about the authenticity of these metronome figures. I shall return to this point later, but I should like to begin by offering a few arguments in support of the markings: both their internal consistency and their correctness.

The logic of the metronome marks in the organ works

First and foremost, the metronome indications for the organ works display an internal logic. A few examples:

ALLEGRO

Final

Tempo indication: **Allegro Maestoso**

⁵ See Joris Verdin, “César Franck en het harmonium,” *Het Orgel* 94, no. 5 (1998): 6–23. This article was published a year before the metronome markings became known, and the conclusion says: “These tidbits of information lead us to believe that the tempo is rather fast. Therefore we need to review... the Franck ‘tradition.’ Many of the tempi provided by Tournemire in his edition of *L’Organiste* are doubtless too slow. For instance, the first piece, “poco allegretto,” bears the metronome marking quarter = 63 (the shortest note value is the eighth note), which differs quite a lot from the aforementioned marks. This leads to the general conclusion that in many cases, including for the organ works, we may safely take a faster tempo than is usual today.”

⁶ *Offertoire sur un Noël Breton*, *L’Athenée musical*, Paris: Sultzer (1867). This edition has optional registrations for the organ.

⁷ *Quasi Marcia*, Paris: Régnier-Canaux (1868).

Metronome marking: half note = 100
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth note triplets

Pièce Héroïque

Tempo indication: **Allegro Maestoso**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 104
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Grande Pièce Symphonique

Tempo indication: **Allegro non troppo e Maestoso**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 104
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth note triplets

The Allegro tempos are almost identical in all three cases, giving the same impression of the speed of the fastest note values.

ALLEGRETTO

Pastorale

Tempo indication: **Quasi allegretto**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 126
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Prélude, Fugue et Variation

Tempo indication: **Allegretto ma non troppo**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 112
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Fantasie en ut

Tempo indication: **Allegretto cantando**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 104
Meter: 2/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

The Allegretto indication fluctuates logically according to modifying terms. Franck gives no metronome mark for an unmodified Allegretto.

ANDANTINO

For Franck, “Andantino” is a “light walk,” usually in a 3/4 meter. Although the quarter-note tempo indications range widely between 76 and 112, the speed of the fastest note values differ by less than ten percent. The speed of the fastest note value in the Andantino serioso is logically proportionally slower:

Prélude, Fugue et Variation

Tempo indication:	Andantino
Metronome marking:	dotted quarter = 72
fastest note value	triplet eighth note = 216
Meter:	9/8
Fastest note values:	eighth notes

Pastorale

Tempo indication:	Andantino
Metronome marking:	quarter note = 76
fastest note value	sixteenth note = 304
Meter:	3/4
Fastest note values:	sixteenth notes

Prière

Tempo indication:	Andantino sostenuto
Metronome marking:	quarter note = 92
Metronome fastest-note-value equivalent	triplet eighth note = 276
Meter:	3/4
Fastest note values:	eighth note triplets

Grande Pièce Symphonique

Tempo indication:	<i>Andantino serioso</i>
Metronome marking:	quarter note = 112
Metronome fastest-note-value equivalent	eighth note = 224
Meter:	C
Fastest note values:	eighth notes

LENTO

An internal logic can be seen in **lento** examples as well. The "modified" lento tempos of the *Cantabile* and *Fantasia en ut* correspond c.q. **non troppo** and **poco** or **quasi**, while the lento with no modifying word in the transition from the *Prélude, Fugue et Variation* is clearly proportionally slower.

Cantabile

Tempo indication:	Non troppo lento
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Metronome marking: quarter note = 92
 Meter: C
 Fastest note values: eighth notes

Fantasia en ut

Tempo indication: **Poco lento and Quasi lento**
 Metronome marking: quarter note = 80
 Meter: C
 Fastest note values: eighth notes

Prélude, Fugue et Variation

Tempo indication: **Lento**
 Metronome marking: quarter note = 60
 Meter: C
 Fastest note values: eighth notes

The broader logic

Of course, internal coherence is not enough: the metronome markings also need to make sense in relationship to all of the other tempi prescribed by Franck. For comparison, here are some Tempo indications and their metronomizations from other works by Franck. They are sorted according to the hierarchy given by Matthis Lussy, as follows (see part 1):

Slow	Moderate	Fast
Grave/Adagio/ Largo	Andante Andantino	Allegro Presto

Largo	40–60
Larghetto	60–72
Andante	72–84
Andantino	84–120
(=Allegretto)	84–120)
Allegro	120–150
Presto	150–180
Prestissimo	180–208

SLOW TEMPOS

Hymne

Tempo indication: **Molto lento**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 48
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values–voice: eighth notes

*Le Chasseur Maudit, 24–25*⁸

Tempo indication: **Molto lento**
Metronome marking: quarter = 66
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Le Chasseur Maudit, 26–27

Tempo indication: **plus animé**
Metronome marking: quarter = 96
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: thirty-seconds

Prélude, Aria et Final, Aria

Tempo indication: **Lento**
Metronome marking: half note = 52
Meter: C alla breve
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Trio p. 1 no. 3 page 16

Tempo indication: **Adagio**
Metronome marking: eighth = 108 (quarter = 54)
Meter: "3"
Fastest note values: eighth notes, sixteenths in the last part

later in the piece (page 18)

Tempo indication: **Quasi allegretto**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 108
with the explicit note: "The quarter notes should have the same duration as the eighth notes in the preceding movement."⁹

*Rédemption, L'Archange (page 34)*¹⁰

Tempo indication: **Lent**

⁸ Page numbers are from Franck's version for piano for four hands, César Franck, *Le Chasseur Maudit, Poème Symphonique, pour Piano à Quatre mains (sic)*, Paris, Léon Grus, 1884. Note: a version for 2 pianos is by Pierre de Bréville.

⁹ "Il faut que les noires n'aient que la durée des croches du mouvement précédent."

¹⁰ Page numbers from Franck's "Partition Piano et Chant," Heugel (from Hartmann 1872).

Metronome marking: quarter note = 63
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Trio Op. 1 no. 3, Final (page 50)

Tempo indication: **Poco lento**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 63
Meter: “4”
Fastest note values: eighth notes (sixteenths as ornamentation)

Rédemption, Introduction (page 2_3)

Tempo indication: **Poco lento**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 63
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Rédemption, Récit Ah' malheur aux vaincus! (page 30)

Tempo indication: **Poco lento**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 63
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Danse lente

Tempo indication: **Quasi lento**
Metronome marking: half = 63
Meter: C alla breve
Fastest note values: sixteenths

Ruth, no. 6 (page 40)

Tempo indication: **Assez lent**
Metronome marking: M.M. quarter = 76
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Messe à 3 Voix, Gloria, qui tollis, “Cantabile”

Tempo indication: **Larghetto**
Metronome marking: quarter = 76
Meter: 3
Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets

This is only an insignificant deviation from Lussy's scale
(Larghetto 60–72).

Ruth, Trio, no 3.

Tempo indication: **Lento non troppo**
“*ad libitum*” recitativo (m. 8)
Tempo indication: “*Mesuré* quarter = 84”
“*un peu plus lent*” (page 2)
Tempo indication: “1er Mouvement un peu animé”

Metronome marking: quarter = 92
Meter: C
Fastest note values voice: eighth notes (some arpeggio's accompaniments in sixteenths)

MODERATE TEMPOS

Ballade Op. 9 (page 3¹¹)

Tempo indication: **Andante**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 40
(thus eighth note = 120)
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values eighth notes, some sixteenths in melody

Ruth, no. 5

Tempo indication: **Andante**
Metronome marking: quarter = 63
Meter: C
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

Ruth, no. 12

Tempo indication: **Andante**
Metronome marking: eighth = 104
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

Ruth, no. 13

Tempo indication: **Andante**
Metronome marking: eighth = 104
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

These examples show that the average value for the eighth note lies between 104 and 126.

Ruth, no. 2

Tempo indication: **Quasi andante**
Metronome marking: half = 69, no M.M. in autograph
Meter: 2
Fastest note values in voice: quarter notes

Ruth, no. 12

Tempo indication: **Quasi andante**
Metronome marking: half = 76
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

¹¹ p.54 in the edition by Vincent d'Indy

Rédemption, Air (page 106)

Tempo indication: **Quasi andante**
Metronome marking: quarter = 48
at letter B “plus animé” M.M. quarter = 69
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values in voice: eighth-note triplets

Trio Op. 1 no. 1

Tempo indication: **Andante con moto**
Metronome marking: quarter = 69 (Peters edition)
Meter: 4/4
Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets, sometimes sixteenth notes

Ruth, no. 8

Tempo indication: **Andante con moto**
Metronome marking: quarter = 96
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes
The Andante con moto is clearly faster than the Andante.

Messe à 3 Voix, Kyrie

Tempo indication: **Andantino**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 84
Meter: 3
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Ballade, Op. 9

Tempo indication: **Andantino**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 72
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Trio Op. 1 no. 2

Tempo indication: **Andantino**
Metronome marking: eighth = 138
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Rédemption, Choeur des Anges (page 101)

Tempo indication: **Andantino**
Metronome marking: quarter = 80
Meter: C
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

Messe à 3 Voix, Agnus Dei

Tempo indication: **Andantino quasi andante**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 72

Meter: 3
Fastest note values in the instrument and voice: eighth notes

Le Chasseur Maudit (page 2–3)

Tempo indication: **Andantino quasi allegretto**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 104
Meter: $\frac{3}{4}$
Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets, a few arpeggios in sixteenths

Le Chasseur (page 6-7)

Tempo indication: **l'istesso Tempo**
Meter: $\frac{9}{8}$
Fastest note values: eighth notes, upbeats sixteenths

Le Chasseur (page 6-7, letter B)

Tempo indication: **un poco piu animato**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 120
Meter: $\frac{9}{8}$
Fastest note values: eighth notes, upbeats sixteenths

Le Chasseur (page 19 two bars after the letter I)

Tempo indication: **un peu plus animé**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 126
Meter: $\frac{9}{8}$
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Le Chasseur (page 21 one bar after the letter K)

Tempo indication: **poco meno vivo**
Metronome marking: quarter note = 116
Meter: $\frac{9}{8}$
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

On the whole, these metronomizations fit the range given by Lussy.

Ruth, no. 4, “Marche”

Tempo indication: **Allegretto**
Metronome marking: quarter = 100
Meter: C
Fastest note values in voice and instruments: eighth notes

Ruth, no. 9

Tempo indication: **Allegretto non troppo vivo**
Metronome marking: quarter = 100
Meter: $\frac{2}{4}$
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

Perfectly logical, considering that $\frac{2}{4}$ meter by definition is faster than C.

Ruth, no. 10/1

Tempo indication: **Allegretto non troppo**
Metronome marking: quarter = 104

Meter: C
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes
This appears slightly at odds with the “Allegretto” of *Ruth*, no. 1.

Messe à 3 Voix, Gloria, Quoniam

Tempo indication: **Allegretto pomposo**
Metronome marking: quarter = 144
Meter: 3
Fastest note values
in voice and instruments: quarter notes

This relatively fast tempo for the “Allegretto” makes sense considering the prevalence of quarter notes and the intended “finale effect” of the Gloria. Furthermore, the meter is notated as “3,” not 3/4, clearly indicating a fast tempo.

Les Éolides Orchestra version Eulenburg

Tempo indication: **Allegretto vivo**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 69
Meter: 3/8
Fastest note values: sixteenths

(m. 333)

Tempo indication: **Un poco piu lento**
Metronome marking: none
Meter: 3/8
Fastest note values: eighth notes, some sixteenth upbeats

(bar 384)

Tempo indication: **Tempo primo**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 69
Meter: 3/8
Fastest note values: sixteenths

(bar 488)

Tempo indication: **Un poco piu lento**
Metronome marking: quarter = 63
Meter: 3/8
Fastest note values: eighth notes, some sixteenth upbeats

(bar 539)

Tempo indication: **Tempo del inizio**
Metronome marking: quarter = 69
Meter: 3/8
Fastest note values: sixteenths

Les Éolides Transcription for piano four hands, transcription for 2 pianos (by Franck)

Tempo indication: **Allegretto vivo**

Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 84
Meter: 3/8
(page 18)

Tempo indication: **un peu plus lent**

Metronome marking: quarter = 66
(page 21)

Tempo indication: **Mouvement du commencement**

Metronome marking: quarter = 84

The difference between the clearly faster *allegretto vivo* and the *piu lento* is more important in this piano arrangement by the composer:

84 / 66 instead of 69 / 63.

Eglogue, op. 3

Tempo indication: **Allegretto quasi andantino**

Metronome marking: quarter = 84

Meter: 3/4

Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets

Ruth, Introduction

Tempo indication: **Andantino poco allegretto**

Metronome marking: quarter = 84

Meter: C

Fastest note values: eighth notes

Ruth, no. 10/2

Tempo indication: **Andantino poco allegretto**

Metronome marking: quarter = 96

Meter: C

Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

Ruth, no. 1

Tempo indication: **none**

Metronome marking: quarter = 84

Meter: C

Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

All of these metronome markings agree with Lussy.

FAST TEMPOS

Ruth, no. 14

Tempo indication: **Allegro**

Metronome marking: quarter = 116

Meter: 2/4 for choir,
"2" for piano in the printed edition,
2/4 for the piano in the manuscript

Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

Premier Grand Caprice (page 8) (32 VDY)

Tempo indication: **Allegro**
Metronome marking: quarter = 152
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Quatrième Trio (Trio Concertant No. 4 in B Minor, op. 2)

Tempo indication: **Allegro**
Metronome marking: quarter = 152
Meter: C for the whole piece
Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets for the whole piece. Some sixteenth upbeats

later (twelve measures on page 4)

Tempo indication: **Più lento**
Metronome marking: quarter = 88

Tempo indication: **Più presto**
Metronome marking: quarter = 152

The same transition occurs three times. With eighth-note triplets as the fastest note value, the choice of tempo indication is logical in relationship to the “Allegro molto” of the *Final* from *Prélude, Aria et Final*, discussed below.

Trio Op. 1 no. 3

Tempo indication: **Allegro**
Metronome marking: half = 92
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets

Rédemption, Choeur général (page 112)

Tempo indication: **Allegro non troppo**
Metronome marking: quarter = 138
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets
Fastest note values in voice: quarters with eighth-note upbeats

later (page 122)

Tempo indication: **un peu plus lentement**
Metronome marking: quarter = 100
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

Psaume 150

Tempo indication: **Poco allegro ma maestoso**
Metronome marking: quarter = 120
Meter: C
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

Prélude, Aria et Final (Prélude)

Tempo indication: **Allegro moderato e maestoso**
Metronome marking: quarter = 116
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes with sixteenth upbeats

Trio Op. 1 no. 2
Tempo indication: **Allegro moderato**
Metronome marking: quarter = 126
Meter: 4/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Trio Op. 1 no. 1
Tempo indication: **Allegro maestoso**
Metronome marking: half = 112
Meter: “2” (Peters edition)
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Messe à 3 Voix, Credo
Tempo indication: **Allegro molto moderato e maestoso**
Metronome marking: half = 76
Meter: C alla breve
Fastest note values in voice: quarter notes

Trio Op. 1 no. 1
Tempo indication: **Allegro molto**
Metronome marking: dotted half = 112
Meter: 3/4 (Peters edition)
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Trio Op. 1 no. 2
Tempo indication: **Allegro molto**
Metronome marking: quarter = 152
Meter: 2/4
Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets, broken chords in sixteenths

Premier Grand Caprice (page 2) (26 VDY)
Tempo indication: **Allegro molto**
accelerando e crescendo Forte con passione
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 184
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Premier Grand Caprice (page 8) (32 VDY)
Tempo indication: **Allegro molto**
Metronome marking: half = 126
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Le Chasseur Maudit (page 30–31, four measures before the letter P)

Tempo indication: **Allegro molto**
Metronome marking: quarter = 152
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Le Chasseur Maudit (page 36–37)

Tempo indication: **Quasi presto**
Metronome marking: quarter = 168
Meter: 2/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Les Djinns (bar 1)

Tempo indication: **Allegro molto**
Metronome marking: quarter = 160
Meter: 2/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth-note triplets

at letter H

Tempo indication: **“Un temps vaut une mesure du mouvement précédent”**
Metronome marking: none
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes, thirty second notes in the last bars before “Tempo I”

Prélude, Aria et Final (Final)

Tempo indication: **Allegro molto ed agitato**
Metronome marking: half = 88
Meter: C
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Eglogue op. 3 (page 11) (14 VDY)

Tempo indication: **Allegro fuocososo**
Metronome marking: quarter = 144
Meter: 3/4
Fastest note values: sixteenth notes

Ruth, Récitatif et Air, no. 6

Tempo indication: **Animé**
Metronome marking: quarter = 168
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes (both in voice and orchestra)

Rédemption L'Archange (page 35)

Tempo indication: **Animé**
Metronome marking: quarter = 144

Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Ruth, no. 6

Tempo indication: **Assez animé**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 96
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

Rédemption, Chœur Terrestre, no. 1 (page 6)

Tempo indication: **Très animé**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 160
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values: eighth notes

later (page 9)

Tempo indication: **un peu moins animé**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 144
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

later (page 13)

Tempo indication: **Un peu plus vite**
Metronome marking: quarter = 160
Meter: 2/4
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

in instrument: sixteenth notes

at letter J (page 24)

Tempo indication: **Plus vite**
Metronome marking: quarter = 168
Meter: 2/4
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes

in instrument: sixteenth notes

later (page 25)

Tempo indication: **Plus vite**
Fastest note values in voice: eighth notes
in instrument: sixteenth notes

later (page 27)

Tempo indication: **encore plus vite**
Fastest note values in voice: quarter notes
in instrument: sixteenth notes

Final from *Prélude, Aria et Final* (manuscript page 29)

Tempo indication: **Animato**
Metronome marking: half = 108
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth-note triplets

See also *Final* op. 21.

Ballade, (page 4) (p.55 VDY)

Tempo indication: **Poco animato**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = 72
Meter: 6/8
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Messe à 3 Voix, Gloria

Tempo indication: **Maestoso**
Metronome marking: quarter = 104
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighths

Ruth, no. 11

Tempo indication: **Maestoso**
Metronome marking: quarter = 76
Meter: C
Fastest note values in voice: eighths

Ruth, no. 15

Tempo indication: **Maestoso**
Metronome marking: quarter = 66
Meter: C
Fastest note values in voice: eighths

Messe à 3 Voix, Credo

Tempo indication: **Molto maestoso**
Metronome marking: dotted half = 42
Meter: 6/4
Fastest note values in voice: quarters
Fastest note values in instr: eighths
(at “et expecto”)
Tempo indication: **1er Mouvement mais un peu plus large**
Metronome marking: dotted half = 40

Messe à 3 Voix, Sanctus

Tempo indication: **Molto maestoso quasi lento**
Meter: C
Fastest note values in voice: quarters
Fastest note values in instr: sixteenths
(at “Hosanna”)
Fastest note values in voice: eighths & sixteenths

Ruth, Récitatif et Air, no. 6 (page 40)

Tempo indication: **Moderato**
Metronome marking: quarter = 96
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Premier Grand Caprice, (pages 1, 4, and 18) (25, 29, 42 VDY)

Tempo indication: **Moderato**
Metronome marking: quarter = 96
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes

later (page 24) (46 VDY)

Tempo indication: **Tempo I. ma un poco animato**
Metronome marking: quarter = 108
Meter: C
Fastest note values: sixteenth-note triplets

Trio op. 1, no. 3, *Final*, (after *Lento* Introduction)

Tempo indication: **Moderato ma molto energico**
Metronome marking: quarter = 126
Meter: "4"
Fastest note values: eighths and sixteenths

later (page 40)

Tempo indication: **Il doppio piu lento**
Metronome marking: quarter = 126
Meter: 3/2

"il doppio piu lento" means the half note equals the quarter note of the first section, resulting in 6 ticks in a bar instead of 4.

later (page 42)

Tempo indication: **Tempo I°**
Metronome marking: quarter = 126
Meter: "4"
Fastest note values: eighths and sixteenths

This same tempo switch occurs one more time on the last page.

OTHER TEMPOS

Ruth, Chœur no. 7.

Tempo indication: **"Mouvement de la Marche"**
Metronome marking: quarter = 100
Meter: C
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Trio Op. 1 no. 2, ("Trio de Salon")

Tempo indication: **"Tempo di minuetto"**
Metronome marking: quarter = 112
Meter: "3"
Fastest note values: eighth notes

Rédemption, Choeur, Récit et Air de l'Archange (page 34)

Tempo indication: **“Animé”**
Metronome marking: quarter = 144
Meter C
Fastest note values in voices: eighth notes

On page 37, at letter M, *Air de l'Archange* it says “un peu plus lent que le chœur des anges.”

There are no metronome marks in the edition, but Franck writes in a letter of March 4, 1888 to Sylvain Dupuis:¹²

"...

Voici les mouvements au métronome des deux numéros de chant

...

Air de Rédemption page 37

Les rois dont vous vantez etc. noire = 84

On peut animer un peu la partie orchestrale qui (est) page 40. Puis pour = la terre a tressailli d'une extase profonde = on peut prendre à peu près noire = 112”

Additional indications and points of correspondence

We have no objective, verifiable historical information to tie the metronome markings notated by Franck to any particular durations for the pieces in question. In only a few, exceptional instances did Franck indicate the durations of his pieces. These timings deviate substantially from the way the pieces are usually performed – they presume a faster tempo – and their relevance, like that of the metronome markings for the organ works, is disputed. Let us, however, try the following *Gedankenexperiment* – merely by way of a parenthesis, and without seeking to reach any final conclusions.

The case of *Psyché*

Joël-Marie Fauquet has provided durations notated by Franck for several parts of the symphonic poem *Psyché*, set down by him in the unorchestrated score.¹³ The existence of these timings has been known since 1950.¹⁴ Fauquet, however, was able to verify their correctness directly against the manuscript score.¹⁵

¹² The organiser of a Franck concert in Liège, on Sunday March 19, 1888. Franck confuses the date of his letter with the date of the concert. The letter probably arrived too late, the arrival date stamped on the letter is “19 mars, 1888.”

¹³ Fauquet, *César Franck*, 704.

¹⁴ See: Léon Vallas, *La véritable Histoire de César Franck*, Paris, 1950..

¹⁵ Personal communication from Joël-Marie Fauquet: “During my research I have verified them with the aid of Franck’s manuscript (private collection). They match exactly.” (“A l’époque de mes recherches je les avais vérifiés sur le manuscrit de Franck [collection privée]. Ils sont exacts.”)

Franck provided Tempo indications for the movements of *Psyché*, but no metronome marks. By matching the Italian terms and meters with metronome marks elsewhere in Franck's oeuvre, however we can calculate estimated durations for the movements of *Psyché* and check those calculations against durations Franck actually indicated. In the list below, I give the following information for each movement: the title and Franck's timings ("minutage"); the notated tempo indication and meter; a suggested metronome marking; and finally the calculated duration, and references to other works by Franck to support the suggested metronome marking.

N° 1 Le sommeil de Psyché¹⁶ " 6' " (Franck)

Tempo indication: **lento**
Metronome marking: eighth = 112
Meter: 6/8
Duration: ca. 360 sec. (6:00)

Compare with *Hymne, Le Chasseur Maudit* (page 25); *Trio Op. 1 no. 1* (Adagio).

N° 2 Psyché enlevée par les zéphyr " 2' "

Tempo indication: **allegro vivo**
Metronome marking: dotted quarter = ca. 69
Meter: 3/8
Duration: 117 sec. (2:00)

There is no other 3/8 "allegro vivo" to compare with, but there is an "allegretto vivo": in *Les Éolides* orchestral version M.M. 69, piano version M.M. 84; see above.

N° 3 Les jardins d'Eros " 4' "

Tempo indication: **poco animato, un peu plus large, lento**
Metronome marking: quarter = 132
Meter: 2
Duration: 243 sec. (4:00)

See *Ruth*, no. 6, *Final*.

N° 4 Psyché et Eros (Amour, elle a connu ton nom) " 6'30 "

Tempo indication: **allegretto modéré**
Metronome marking: quarter = ca. 104
Meter: 3/4
Duration: 385 sec. (6:25)

See *Ruth*, nos. 4, 9, 10/1

N° 5 Souffrances et plaintes de Psyché. "en tout 24 minutes" (two parts)

Tempo indication: **Quasi lento**
Metronome marking: quarter = ca. 63
Meter: C
Duration: 282 sec. (4:32)

See *Rédemption, Introduction* (page 2-3), *Récit Ah' malheur aux vaincus!* (page 30)

¹⁶ I do not indicate the fastest note value since it doesn't have any influence or meaning on the duration of a piece.

Tempo indication: Lento
Metronome marking: quarter = ca. 60
Meter: C, C alla breve, 3/4
Duration: 1173 sec. (19'33)
See *Prélude, Fugue et Variation*

total duration: 24'05

The duration of *Prélude, Choral et Fugue*

In a letter from the late 1880s to an unknown recipient, Franck writes:

I offer you a new work for solo piano which will be shorter than the sonate, will not embarrass you, and which my cousin Mlle. Cécile Monvel should be able to interpret very well. The piece is entitled *Prélude Choral et Fugue*; in spite of the austere title it does very well with an audience [...] The work is 13 minutes long.¹⁷

We can carry out the same experiment here, matching Franck's tempo indications with metronome markings from other pieces. Given the large number of unknown factors this is a delicate and enterprise and chancier than the last one, but the result is nonetheless telling:

Prélude: 57 bars

Tempo indication: **Moderato**
Metronome marking: quarter = 96
Meter: C
Duration: 2:20

Compare with

Ruth, no. 6

Tempo indication: **Moderato**
Metronome marking: quarter = 96
Meter: C

and

Premier Grand Caprice, page 1

Tempo indication: **Moderato**
Metronome marking: quarter = 96
Meter: C

¹⁷ Fauquet, *Franck, Correspondence*, 175: "Je vous propose une oeuvre de piano seul qui sera moins longue que la sonate, qui ne vous donnera aucun embarras et qui sera absolument bien interprétée par ma cousine Mlle Cécile Monvel. Cette pièce est intitulée Prélude Choral et Fugue, mais malgré l'austérité du titre elle porte vraiment sur le public [...] Cette oeuvre dure 13 minutes."

Choral: 59 bars
Tempo indication: **Poco più lento**
Metronome marking: quarter = 88
Duration: 2:40

Fugue: 265 bars
Tempo indication: **Poco allegro**
Metronome marking: quarter = 126
Duration: 8:30

Compare with
Trio Op. 1 no. 2
Tempo indication: **Allegro moderato**
Metronome marking: quarter = 126
Meter: 4/4

Total time 13:30

These exercises in calculation are quite uncertain, of course, and cannot lead to any really firm conclusions. It does seem, however, that applying the metronome markings from other pieces in Franck's output can produce durations for these works quite close to the "minutages" set down by Franck.

Final Thoughts

a. The relationship between tempo indications and metronome markings

Franck's metronomizations display great internal consistency. With a few exceptions, the way he pairs metronome markings and Italian terms fully conforms with contemporary practice as described by theorists such as Lussy. The metronome markings in the organ works, especially, display broad agreement with these norms.

b. Adding nuance with adjectives

One striking feature of Franck's Tempo indications is his habit of adding an adjective or adverb to qualify the primary term. These qualifiers may pertain either to the tempo itself, helping to define it more narrowly, or to the intended character of the piece. In Franck's music, in other words, the Italian tempo headings can indicate two things: the tempo and the character.

First of all, modifiers such as "poco," "non troppo," and "quasi", which can be prefixed to slow tempi ("adagio," "lento") or fast tempi ("allegro"), communicate an adjustment to the

main categories, a refinement of them. The examples listed above demonstrate that prefixes of this kind are reflected in Franck's metronome markings (when these exist).

Second, suffixed modifiers can the character of the music and thus the manner of performance. Examples include:

“allegretto cantando” (*Fantaisie in C major*)

“allegro maestoso” (*Final*)

“andantino serio” (*Grande Pièce Symphonique*)

“andantino sostenuto” (*Prière*)

None of these “extra” words are superfluous. Taking the *Fantaisie* as an example, the tempo “allegretto” normally suggests a light, not too serious character. To avoid this effect, and realize a more singing feeling, the addition of “cantando” is a necessary one. An addition such as “scherzando” or “leggiero” would have pushed the character of the piece in a different direction (in addition to being a little unnecessary).¹⁸

Another example: in the *Final*, “Allegro maestoso” means that the piece must be played both fast and with a stately character. For both terms, contemporary norms allowed some scope for interpretation, but not an infinite range of possibilities: no matter what metronome marking Franck notated, “Allegro” always means “fast.” The stateliness of the term “maestoso,” meanwhile, is best expressed through a controlled sound, not exaggeratedly “brilliant” or “galant.” In this particular example, the direction “maestoso” will surely affect the use of staccato in certain passages: preventing the organist from being too light-footed in the pedal solo, for example, or articulating passages in longer note values too playfully. It will affect many other performance decisions as well.

The first movement of the *Grande Pièce Symphonique* is marked “Andantino serio”: in the context of the 19th-century hierarchy of tempi, this is a light walking speed, but with a serious affect. The “andantino” tempo, in combination with the syncopated rhythms, could easily lead the left hand into an affected style of accompaniment, jeopardizing the desired “serio,” symphonic effect. The chords in the left hand, therefore, should not be too detached, and the melody in the right hand must sound serious; in this case that means *legato*, without any “worldly” *portato* or other mannered articulation.

Similarly, in the *Prière*, the modifier “sostenuto” helps to define the length of the quarter and eighth notes. “Andantino” alone would probably imply a more detached articulation, lending an unwanted character to the eighth notes, especially, in particular on the upbeats.

We find a similar principle at work in the *Variations Symphoniques*, as well, where the tempi are indicated above the staff in bold letters, using the familiar Italian terms: “Poco Allegro,” “Poco più lento,” “Allegro,” “Molto più lento” and “Un pochettino ritenuto.” The character is usually indicated in italics: *Espress. ad lib.*, *Espressivo*, *Recitando*, *Passionato*, *Molto teneramente*, *con fantasia* (see the Premier Choral), *Espressivo con semplicità*, *Dolce*, *Espressivo sempre legatissimo*, *Dolce rubato*, etc.

We observe the same thing in the *Violin sonata*, and with more nuance in *Les Béatitudes*: here the tempo indications are often refined with adjectives, but they are “tempo

¹⁸ Nota bene: the M.M. = 104 is perhaps the only exception to a literal (one-tick) reading of the figures. In light of what I said in Part I about 2/4 meter – that is, that it has four beats – it is likely that in this case the M.M. = 104 should be applied to the eighth note. In my 1998 recording (207 402) I failed to take this into account.

adjectives” as a rule, not character indications. (The frequent use of “non troppo lento” is particularly striking.)

c. Implications for performance

Legato

It goes without saying that Franck’s metronome markings are irreconcilable with the dogma of absolute legato. In fact, they clearly indicate that Franck’s performance style was based on a kind of *legato approximatif* – a very negative name for what we could describe in more positive terms as a “finely judged and sophisticated shaping of musical tone.” The rule of absolute legato was promulgated after Franck’s time, and an absolute legato can never achieve the rich dynamic tapestry that can be produced by subtly differentiating the length of the notes. It is also important to recognize that any organist before Widor would have been a pianist first, and would have prepared his organ performances on the piano or pedal piano.

The literature on this topic often refers to the fingerings and pedaling that Franck devised for the *École Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles*. These fingerings not only bear witness to Franck’s sophisticated playing technique, but also to the fact that this repertoire demanded a performance style adapted to the musical context, and above all a flexible approach to legato. In no way are the fingerings proof that Franck adhered to the dogma of *legato absolu* in performing his own works.

Tempo flexibility

Respecting Franck’s original metronome marks does not necessarily imply following the metronome slavishly (something I discussed in Part 1 of this article). In other words, we can accept without reservation the dictum of Charles Tournemire: “Strictly following the movement of the metronome would be heresy and absolutely at odds with Franck’s intentions. We affirm this resolutely. There should be no discussion on this point.”¹⁹ The musical result is a globally flexible tempo, something in complete accordance with the theoreticians of Franck’s time. Thus it is no surprise that Tournemire also provides various metronome markings as guidelines: in the first and second parts of the *3ème Choral*, for instance, he gives 100 for the quarter note and 76 for the eighth note, respectively,²⁰ although the score calls for double tempo with the notation “le double plus vite.”

¹⁹ Charles Tournemire, *César Franck* (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1931), 35.

²⁰ Tournemire, *César Franck*, 35.

The classic counter-arguments

One sometimes hears that Franck would have been unable to execute his works at the tempi indicated, because of his “limited technique.” There is, however, no real evidence that his technique was “limited.” In fact, the opposite seems to be true. Franck was a strong enough performer, at least, to be invited to play for a number of prominent organ inaugurations, prestigious proceedings where he appeared alongside some of the most celebrated virtuosos of the day.²¹ The *Variations Symphoniques* was in his performance repertoire; he made a great impression on Liszt; he was asked to supply pedalings and fingerings for great works by J.S. Bach; and he initiated the project to write a pedal part for the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Franck’s pedal technique in particular is occasionally questioned. It has been argued, for instance, that the Pleyel-Wolff pedal piano he ordered in 1858 (and paid for in monthly installments) was meant to help remedy his poor pedaling. The instrument undoubtedly helped to improve his technique, but there is no reason to suppose the technique was not good to begin with.²²

The pedal parts of Franck’s great organ works are entirely on a par with those of other organ composers of the period; indeed, the pedal parts in the *Six Pièces* are frankly superior to other contemporary compositions. The pedal parts only become easy to play if the pieces are played slowly – and then the manual parts become perhaps even easier. It is important to recognize here the extent to which the controversial style of Charles-Marie Widor, head of the Paris Conservatoire from 1890, shaped later Franck reception.

Widor took over the Conservatoire from Franck, but to continue the work of such an extraordinary figure as Franck is never easy. Setting a new course, and discarding the achievements and practices of one’s predecessors, can be a more successful strategy. Widor, in any case, preferred a change of course to continuing in Franck’s footsteps. Looking back to his student years with Lemmens, who had died several years before, he emphasized performance over improvisation and Lemmens’ famous organ technique – as, indeed, he had also done at Saint-Sulpice, as the successor to Lefébure-Wely. Certainly these circumstances do not diminish my esteem for the organist Widor, but they do provide an important background for some many claims and ideas that are current today. In any case, Widor could probably never have accepted a “fast” Franck while remaining true to his own ideals and those of his teacher Lemmens.

We might also recall that Alkan, in 1867, dedicated his highly demanding *11 Grands Préludes pour Piano à clavier de pédales* Op. 66 “to his colleague César-Auguste Franck.” These pieces demand a much more advanced technique than the one Widor and Guilmant learned from Lemmens in the early 1860s.

It is sometimes claimed that Franck (a professional pianist-composer and professor at the Paris Conservatoire!) did not know how to use a metronome, or how to replace the weight properly if it slid off the pendulum – assuming replacing it incorrectly was even physically possible.²³ The *nec plus ultra* is the suggestion that Franck thought in double metronome

²¹ See also *Revue et Gazette Musicale* 1869, p. 101 (Inauguration de la Trinité), and below in this chapter.

²² Fauquet, *Franck, Correspondance*, 62.

²³ See Part 1.

beats, and so his metronomizations must be read at half tempo.²⁴ This would have the interesting consequence that the *Grande Pièce Symphonique* would last a good 45 minutes,²⁵ with an “Allegretto” (Scherzo) in which two sixteenths (the fastest note value) correspond to a beat of 120. The *Prière* and the *Final* would last almost 20 minutes each. The performance of the *Six Pièces* would take about two hours and 20 minutes, not including registration breaks. Applying the same principle to, say, *Ruth* or the *Messe à 3 voix* would seem the pinnacle of absurdity.

The “Franck tradition”

The performance (the “interpretation”) of Franck’s organ works presents no great problems as long as we rely on firsthand informants or contemporary sources. The notion that there is a “difficulty” springs solely from Franck’s received image as a “Pater Seraphicus”: an image which was constructed posthumously, and in parallel with changes in organ music and associated performance techniques in the Catholic church in the late nineteenth century.

After his death, Franck assumed an almost mystical aura of angelic delicacy. This was reflected in tempo choices for his music that evoked a sense of eternity, paired with an absolute legato where the organ retained, as Widor would have put it, a perfect tranquility. This image of Franck was manufactured in the period after Franck’s death and went hand in hand with the evolution of organ music in France.

When Charles-Marie Widor took over the organ class at the Conservatoire, the curriculum changed drastically. Less space was given to improvisation, and more to the performance of composed music. A playing style was introduced that reflected the most modern ideas about performance. These ideas, in turn, represented the culmination of a long process, and they paralleled changing views about church music in general. The most important point for our purposes is that Widor established new norms for true, authentic organ music.

Widor recorded his ideas in the editions of his organ symphonies of 1887 and 1901.²⁶ His vision of the organ was linked to late nineteenth-century philosophical and religious thought, and specifically to the ideal of transcendence. The organ and organ playing had to liberate themselves from everything human, i.e. imperfect. There was no space in organ music for the expression of sensuous human sentiments, thus no call for strong accents, passionate crescendos, or over-excited agogics. All these were replaced by a musical “architecture” that featured clear, straight lines, like the contours of the great cathedrals: “The great voice of the

²⁴ Henrico Stewen, “César Franck’s Mysteriously High Metronome Marks,” *The Organ* 88, no. 5 (2009); p18ff.

²⁵ Louis Vierne indicates in his *Souvenirs, Cahiers et Mémoires de l’Orgue, Nr 3, Paris, Les Amis de l’Orgue* 1970: “as one of us remarked to Widor, the piece lasted twenty-six minutes at its true tempo” (“comme l’un de nous faisait observer à Widor que la pièce durant vingt-six minutes dans le mouvement réel, ...”). “Twenty-six” is a very specific number and we may assume that it indeed reflects the accepted tempo at the time, including the demanding register changes. Vierne does not say “at Franck’s tempo” but “at its true tempo,” so the exact meaning remains unclear.

²⁶ Charles-Marie Widor, “Avant Propos,” in *Symphonies pour Orgue, Maho-Hamelle, Paris* (1887).

organ should have the calm of things *definitive*.”²⁷ Now the word “Orgue” was written in capitals, as befitted an instrument worthy of the Supreme Being. The organ transcended the earthly realm, making the organist a medium between this world and the next.

Franck had to be recruited into this new order, and all his works that did not conform were resolutely pushed aside. The *Pièces posthumes* and the *Andantino*, along with *L’Organiste* (for harmonium), are good examples. These pieces, written in the organ style of the mid-nineteenth century, were a poor fit the idiom of the “Pater Seraphicus.”

Thirty-six years after Franck’s death, Guilmant wrote:

"Are not some modern pieces often played too fast, even today? A piece such as César Franck’s *Prélude, Fugue et Variation* is often played *Allegro* although Franck merely marked it *Andantino cantabile*! This kind of virtuosity is misplaced. The author did not want the piece to be executed like this. The tempo was approximately: dotted quarter 52 for the *Prélude* and the *Variation*, and 72 for the *Fugue*.”²⁸

But this statement does not prove that Franck really taught those tempi: Guilmant could only have gotten his information at second- or third-hand. What it does prove is that some people still played “fast” – perhaps like Franck! But that information did not in the least accord with the new ideology of the organ. Charles Tournemire (who, not coincidentally, composed a piece entitled *L’Orgue Mystique*) tried the same kind of thing in his editions of Franck, in which he revised Franck’s performance directions and sometimes even the music itself, in order to create the proper transcendental mystique.

This revisionist interpretation of Franck stands in stark contrast to the documented facts about the tempi Franck himself wanted, and the kind of performance those tempi produced. Regrettably, there are few or no sources from Franck’s time that say anything specific about his organ playing. In the entire body of Franck’s correspondence²⁹, there is almost nothing to indicate that he ever departed from the normal brilliant playing style of his contemporaries, such as Lefébure-Wely or Saint-Saëns, to name two examples *par excellence*. There is also nothing to suggest that Franck would have performed his own works in anything but the manner he himself prescribed. An important source is the review of the inauguration of the Cavallé-Coll organ in the Église de la Sainte-Trinité in 1869. In addition to the intriguing information it contains about the interests of the publishers, composers, and theaters who all wanted to profit from the event, the text also reviews the organists – Widor, Saint-Saëns, Durand and Franck:

²⁷ “La grande voix de l’orgue doit avoir le calme des choses *définitives*.” Charles-Marie Widor, *Technique de l’Orchestre moderne, faisant suite au Traité d’Instrumentation et d’Orchestration de H. Berlioz*, rev. ed. (1904; Paris: Lemoine, 1925), 188.

²⁸ “Même, de nos jours, n’arrive-t-il pas que des morceaux modernes sont joués souvent trop vite? Une pièce comme *Prélude, Fugue et Variation* de César Franck est souvent jouée *Allegro*, alors que l’auteur a simplement marqué *Andantino cantabile*! C’est de la virtuosité déplacée. L’auteur ne le faisait pas exécuter ainsi; le mouvement était environ: noire pointée 52 pour le *Prélude* et la *Variation*, et 72 pour la *Fugue*.” Alexandre Guilmant, “La Musique d’Orgue,” in *Encyclopédie de la Musique et Dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, ed. Albert Lavignac, vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1921), 1170. My thanks to Annelies Focquaert for drawing my attention to this passage.

²⁹ Fauquet, *César Franck, Correspondance*, 1999.

"Mr. César Franck from Sainte-Clotilde [played] a vigorous, thoroughly worked out improvisation in which he sought to throw as many sonorities as possible into sharp relief."³⁰

The French "vigoureux" means forceful, strong, energetic; certainly not slow or languid. "Mettre en relief le plus grand nombre possible" implies a colorful and varied approach, and surely not the "calm of things *definitive*"!

Doubts regarding the received image of Franck arose as early as 1930. I quote Joël-Marie Fauquet:

"In his *La musique française de piano* (1930-I, page 65), Alfred Cortot, too, refuses to subscribe to the somewhat biased legend of a mystical César Franck, a kind of Pater Seraphicus lost in an immaterial dream, illuminated by that ecstatic and contemplative piety that liberates us from contingencies and delivers us from unimportant realities. The nobility of Franck's life, which is inseparable from the beauty of his works, resulted from the fact that he did *not* underestimate reality, nor make light of the insecurity of human existence, but he did not yield to these things. And though they could sometimes be acute and tyrannical, he did not allow them to rob his soul of the lively flame of his enthusiasm nor diminish his passionate respect for music."³¹

It was not possible for the builders of Franck's "mystical" image to find evidence in historical sources, because there is none. Instead they had to evoke "testimonies" from after Franck's death. The name of Vincent d'Indy comes to mind here; d'Indy was instrumental in the formation of the Franck "tradition," both through his music editions and his biography of Franck. Yet in 1895, Georges Franck writes of d'Indy:

³⁰ "M. César Franck, de Sainte-Clotilde, une improvisation vigoureuse, bien développée, où il a cherché à mettre en relief le plus grand nombre possible de sonorités." RGM 1869, p. 101 ("Inauguration de la Trinité"). Because this article mentions so many interesting figures, I will reproduce the entire paragraph: "Les autres organistes conviés à prendre part à cette cérémonie, en faisant valoir les nombreuses ressources de l'instrument, se sont fait entendre dans l'ordre suivant: M. Henri Fissot, de Saint-Merri, a joué une Méditation religieuse, sobre d'effets, mais d'une grande sérénité et d'un beau caractère; M. Ch. M. Widor, de Lyon, un andante et un scherzo où il a déployé une très-grande habileté technique; M. Saint-Saëns, de la Madeleine, une bénédiction nuptiale, morceau de peu d'effet et de peu d'idées, ce n'est pas cependant que l'auteur soit à court d'ordinaire; M. Auguste Durand, une Fantaisie Pastorale où les réminiscences tenaient trop de place ; M. César Franck, de Sainte-Clotilde, une Improvisation vigoureuse, bien développée, où il a cherché à mettre en relief le plus grand nombre possible de sonorités. Plusieurs chœurs et soli, chantés par MM. Bollaert, Marié, Grisy, etc. alternaient avec l'orgue. Enfin M. Chauvet a terminé la cérémonie par une brillante sortie en forme de marche, à laquelle il a préludé par le motif de l'Offertoire prohibé à l'église et accaparé par le théâtre; protestation ingénieuse qui a eu l'assentiment général."

³¹ "Alfred Cortot qui, dans *La musique française de piano* (1930-I, p. 65), ne souscrit pas non plus à la légende toute faite et quelque peu tendancieuse d'un César Franck mystique, sorte de Pater Seraphicus perdu dans un rêve immatériel, illuminé de cette piété extatique et contemplative qui libère des contingences et délivre des négligeables réalités. La noblesse de la vie de Franck, indissoluble de la beauté de son œuvre, est précisément de n'avoir ni méconnu la réalité, ni méprisé les contingences humaines, mais de ne point leur avoir cédé. Et, pour immédiates et tyranniques qu'elles fussent parfois, de ne pas leur avoir permis de voiler en son âme la flamme vivifiante de l'enthousiasme, ni d'affaiblir en lui de respect passionné de la musique." Fauquet, *César Franck*, 714.

"You speak to me of the "devoted student" [d'Indy].³² It is time to put an end to this self-serving legend. I know very well that it is, by now, not as harmful as it was in 1890 and 1891 [i.e. directly after Franck's death]; but it is ridiculous! Properly spoken, Mr. X [d'Indy] was never the student of my father. He passed through the organ class, no more. Like all young composers of that time, he did indeed occasionally ask César Franck for advice, and he presented himself with other composers, and especially the students of my father, at the salon at Boulevard Saint-Michel. Then as soon as my father died, he called himself the "favorite student"!!³³

D'Indy was never shy about communicating his personal vision of Franck. In particular, his downplaying of Franck's compositions before the *Six Pièces* (both organ and church music) helped shape the image of Franck in the twentieth century. He brushed aside everything reminiscent of the brilliant style of the period of the Second Empire. His actions fit into a larger contemporary framework and an ideology that held "musique pure" in the highest esteem.³⁴ It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss this topic in depth, but we might recall his position that there existed "two categories...we might even say two separate kinds of art... Symphonic Music and Dramatic Music." The first he viewed as "pure" music and the second as an "application" of music to text, to words. In "pure" music, therefore, expression is set aside, while it still plays a major role in in text-based music. "Musique pure" rejects worldly elements, strong expression or exaggerated tempi: the very characteristics that Widor wanted to ban from organ music. This kind of "pure music," according to d'Indy, is religious by its very nature:

"In fact, the guiding principle of all *free art* is, indisputably, religious faith. Without *Faith* there is no Art. And thus the idea of Art appears before us, from it's beginning, permanently connected to the religious vision, to the adoration or worship of the divine."³⁵

It was necessary to make César Franck fit this picture, and so his music was re-cast as essentially religious music. One of the consequences for performance was that the tempo changed: music for the church had to have "the calm of things *definitive*," as Widor so neatly put it. Such music was slow by definition, not for acoustical reasons, but for ideological ones (other criteria were form, rhythm, and harmony). The divide between church and concert hall was thus also reflected in a clear adjustment to the choice of tempo.

³² The addressee is Louis de Fourcaud (1853–1914), author of the story for *Psyché*.

³³ In a letter from Georges Franck to Louis de Fourcaud, December 28, 1895: "Vous me parlez de "l'élève dévoué". Il est temps que cette légende intéressée prenne fin. -Je sais bien qu'elle ne peut plus à cette heure être nuisible comme elle l'a été en 1890 et 1891; mais, c'est ridicule! Mr. X n'a jamais été à proprement parler, l'élève de mon père. Il n'a fait que passer dans la classe d'orgue. Il a demandé de temps à autre des conseils à César Franck comme tous les jeunes compositeurs de ce temps et a défilé souvent avec eux, surtout avec les élèves de mon père dans le salon du boulevard Saint-Michel. Mon père mort, il s'est intitulé "l'élève préféré"!!" Fauquet, *Franck, Correspondance*, 265.

³⁴ Vincent d'Indy, *Cours de Composition Musicale*, ed. Auguste Sérieyx, 4th ed. (1912; Paris Durand et Fils., 1948). vol. 2, 5ff.

³⁵ "En effet, le principe de tout *art libre* est incontestablement la foi religieuse. Sans la *Foi*, il n'est point d'Art. L'idée de l'Art nous apparaît donc, dès l'origine, indissolublement liée à l'idée religieuse, à l'adoration ou au culte divin." d'Indy, *Cours de Composition*, vol. 1, 10–11.

The *Six Pièces* and the *Trois Pièces* are concert music: extroverted, brilliant, fresh, virtuosic, and energetic, even if some critics in Franck's own time labeled Franck's music "serious." He *was* serious: his musical structures are carefully crafted and he often used fugato developments, to name just a few weighty elements in his music. But the titles of the pieces – *Fantaisie, Pastorale, Final, Pièce Héroïque* – tell the story: this is not religious music. Not even the *Prière* is inherently religious; that genre appeared both in concert music and in music for the liturgy. The *Trois Chorals* are concert pieces too. A "Choral" has no function in the Catholic liturgy; it is a genre, a compositional technique.³⁶

This distinction between worldly music and church music is essential to understanding nineteenth-century French organ culture, and Franck in particular. I hope that my arguments here can help place Franck and his music in a more correct framework, even if they collide with some current thinking. I understand that there is little point in trying to use logical arguments to change "beliefs." To this truth our time, perhaps more than any time in the past, bears frightening witness. We know more about physical, biological, psychological mechanisms than ever before, but to all such knowledge, contradictory "beliefs" remain impervious; nor can any other beliefs sway them.

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³⁶ For the same reason, a chorale could appear in an organ symphony, for instance by Widor or Vierne.