

**PROGRAM FOR FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
ELGIN, ILLINOIS**

**30 MARCH 2007**

**12:00 NOON**

**JOHN KEVIN LINKER, ORGANIST**

---

**Charles-Marie WIDOR (1844-1937)**

**Symphonie gothique, Op. 70 (1895)**

- I. Moderato
  - II. Andante sostenuto
  - III. Allegro
  - IV. Moderato; Allegro; Moderato; Andante; Allegro
-

## PROGRAM NOTES

In France during the mid nineteenth century a particular organ builder in by the name of **Aristide Cavallé-Coll**, often in collaboration with organist César Franck, developed a style of organ building that embodied lush symphonic sounds, a departure from the somewhat “top heavy” brilliance of organs of previous generations. The ability of these instruments to play a wide variety of dynamics kindled the development of the symphonic school of organ playing and composition in France, chiefly thanks to an organist and entrepreneur-organ builder at the height of the industrial revolution.



**Aristide Cavallé-Coll**

Enter **Charles-Marie Widor**, hailing from Lyons and showing remarkable promise at a young age. M. Cavallé-Coll introduced Widor to Jacques Lemmens, the famous teacher at Brussels Conservatoire, a “descendent” of Bach’s pupils. After Widor made remarkable progress, he was appointed organiste-titulaire (principal organist) of Saint-Sulpice in Paris succeeding Léfèbure-Wely, in 1869 at the young age of 24. It must have been a good job as Widor remained there for 64 years!



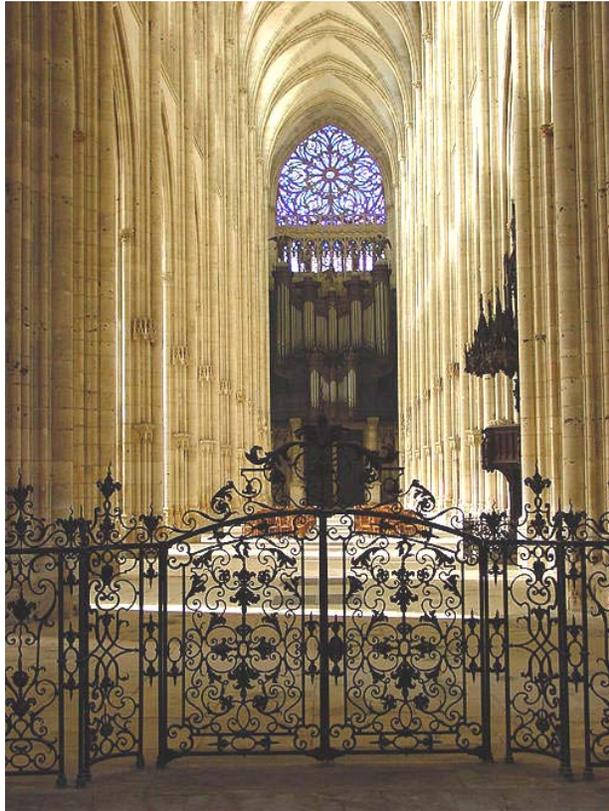
**Widor at the monumental Cavallé-Coll organ,  
St Sulpice, Paris**



**Console of the Cavallé-Coll organ,  
St Sulpice, Paris**

Widor, inspired by Cavallé-Coll’s instruments, composed no fewer than 10 organ symphonies. ***Symphonie gothique*** is unique among them in that it is dedicated not to a person, but to a building, the soaring gothic structure of the Church of St Ouen in Rouen. This imposing edifice, begun in 1319 and bearing the name of a seventh-century bishop, and its superb Cavallé-Coll organ were the objects of Widor’s greatest admiration. Of the organ, which Widor inaugurated in 1890, he liked to say, “There is

some Michelangelo in this organ.” *Symphonie gothique* is in fact Widor’s ninth symphony, but he once stated that he should not allow it to be called a “ninth” out of respect to Beethoven.



Nave of St Ouen, Rouen



Cavallé-Coll organ in St Ouen, Rouen

Of the **first movement**, musicologist Alfred Riemenschneider states: “The persistence of a flowing theme in eighth-notes with a chord theme as a countersubject, gives the impression of a desire to establish firmly the Gothique principles, such as the arch and flying buttress....” Émil Rupp, a friend and early writer on Widor’s music, suggests that the first movement represents the desolation and comfortless darkness that covered the world before the birth of Christ, which is then celebrated in the last two movements with the introduction of the Gregorian chant Introit antiphon for Christmas day, “Puer natus est.”

## AD TERTIAM MISSAM. IN DIE.

Intr. 7.  
**P** U-er \* ná-tus est nó-bis, et fí-li-us dá-tus est  
 nó-bis : cú-jus impé-ri-um super hú-me-rum é-  
 jus : et vocá-bi-tur nó-men é- jus, má-gni consí-  
 li- i Ange-lus. *Ps.* Can-tá-te Dó-mi-no cánti-cum nó-  
 vum : \* qui-a mi-rabí-li-a fé-cit. Gló-ri-a Pá-tri.  
 E u o a c.

## Introit for Christmas Day, "Puer natus est" ("A Child is born for us")

The **second movement** purportedly brings the listener inside the church. Riemenschneider describes it as "a rare movement with a spiritual content so chaste and pure that involuntarily the atmosphere of prayer and incense suggests itself."

The fugal **third movement** is at once brilliant and majestic. Riemenschneider describes this movement "in the tempo of a gigue or scherzo portrays the pomp of some grand-fete day when the splendour of the parades asserts itself." Towards the middle of the movement, the pedal introduces a slightly modified initial phrase of "Puer natus est" in solemn juxtaposition to the exuberant 6/8 lilt of the contrapuntal upper voices.

The **fourth movement** is entirely given over to the development of the plainsong melody in a theme, five variations, three of which are canonic, and a free-style finale. Again, Riemenschneider's analysis: "Thus one set of variations or choral preludes in various moods follows another, as if to portray the different parts of a service at the cathedral, until the entrance of a toccata-like allegro which designates the sortie at the close of the service. This allegro works up to a superb climax over the hymn and at the close dies away to a tranquil section, as if in benediction."



**Charles-Marie Widor**

---

## JOHN KEVIN LINKER

A native of Princeton, Illinois, John received a Bachelor of Music degree from Northern Illinois University (DeKalb) in 1997 where he studied organ with Robert Reeves and Richard Hoskins, and a Master of Music degree from the Chicago Musical College (Roosevelt University) in 2003, an organ and harpsichord student of David Schrader. He is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Cincinnati (College-Conservatory of Music) where he is an organ student of Roberta Gary. At CCM Linker has served as staff accompanist for the University Men's Chorus, and has performed with the CCM Chorale, CCM Chamber Singers, and as organ soloist with the CCM Philharmonic. Linker was first place winner in the annual Strader Organ Competition at CCM in 2004.

From 1993-1996 Linker was Director of Music & Organist at St Mary's R C Church in Elgin, and from 1997-2001 was Organist & Choirmaster of St Charles' Episcopal Church in St Charles. In 2001 Linker was appointed Organist/Choirmaster of the Church of the Good Shepherd (Episcopal) in Lexington, Kentucky, where he leads a vibrant choir program of professional and volunteer singers. The choir maintains a rigorous rehearsal and service schedule, and sings two major concerts annually. Recent major works performed by the choir include Maurice Duruflé, *Requiem*, Op. 9, J S Bach, *Magnificat in D*, BWV 243, and Leonard Bernstein, *Chichester Psalms*. The choir has made two international tours under Linker's leadership, singing in Gloucester Cathedral in 2003 and in Lichfield and Durham Cathedrals in 2006. Linker is also the immediate past Dean of the Lexington Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, and currently serves in the capacity of Registrar and Associate Newsletter Editor. Other recent projects include the forming of a new professional choir in Lexington known as the Lexington Bach Choir, for which Linker serves as Assistant Artistic Director.

John lives in a small 80-year-old bungalow home just a few blocks from Good Shepherd Church on a quiet street with his piano, harpsichord, and two overweight cats Nigel and Pierre.