

La Belle Époque





La Belle Époque · 1890-1914

This album presents examples of organ music from the *Belle Époque* period. Mostly this period is named *beautiful era* to contrast with the horrible subsequent period of the First World War. In the Belle Époque, Europe was doing well, resulting in the development of musical styles that differ greatly from one another. Serious composers, such as Max Reger, had the opportunity to invent complex musical forms. Meanwhile, music from the Far East was discovered and presented in the World Exhibitions, inspiring European composers including Louis Vierne. Other composers were bored of all the beauty and went their own way in minimalist music (Erik Satie) or modern composing techniques (Charles Ives). Yet most organ composers were not that avant-garde; they just wrote beautiful music, doing honour to the name of this period.

César Franck (1822-1890)

1 Choral no. 3 in A minor (1890)

To Augusta Holmès

If you say 19th century organ music, you say César Franck. He is considered as one of the greatest composers for organ. The Three Chorals were composed at his death bed and can be considered as the end of this organ era. These pieces now form a cornerstone of the organ repertoire.

Erik Satie (1866-1925)

Three Gnossiennes (1890)

To Roland Manuel

Erik Satie was clearly an innovator in his times. He is well known for his unique behaviour and music. Like the Three Gymnopédies, the Gnossiennes are written for piano formed by a simple tune over a gentle accompaniment. This first Gnossienne is perfectly fit for an organ transcription.

2 Gnossienne no. 1

Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

24 Pièces en style libre, Op. 31 (1913)

Louis Vierne is one of the great composers in the French symphonic organ style. He received his early organ education from César Franck, and he himself taught Nadia Boulanger. From his birth, he was almost blind. The *24 Pièces en style libre* ('pieces in free style') are a set of splendid miniatures in every key, each with a different character.

3 Scherzetto

To Alexandre Cellier

4 Arabesque

To Emile Bourdon

5 Divertissement

To Joseph Bonnet

Edward Bairstow (1874-1946)

6 Evening song (1900)

Obviously, the music of Edward Bairstow is written in the Anglican church music tradition. This *Evening song* is a perfect example of his elegant music.

William Wolstenholme (1865-1931)

7 Allegretto in E-flat major (1900)

William Wolstenholme was an English organist and composer who was blind. This light-hearted *Allegretto* was originally written for Viola and Pianoforte.

Max Reger (1873-1916)

Fantasia and Fugue in D minor, Op. 135b (1915)

"In special veneration to master Richard Strauss"

The German composer and organist Max Reger is particularly well-known for the enormous proportions of his organ music in length, difficulty and contrasts. This Fantasia and Fugue is among his last works, in which he combined his complex writing style with a new clarity.

8 Fantasia

9 Fugue

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

10 Adeste Fidelis in an organ prelude (1897)

Charles Ives was one of the first composers that applied modern innovations in music. As a musician, he wanted to stay independent, which is why he earned his living with a job in insurance. In the score for this prelude, he wrote “*These high chords should be like distant sounds from a Sabbath horizon*”.

Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979)

Trois Pièces (1911)

The French composer, conductor, pianist and organist Nadia Boulanger is notable for having taught many of the leading composers and musicians of the 20th century. She did not write many music, as she considered her own music “worthless”. In these two pearls we can hear the opposite is true.

11 I. Prélude in F minor

12 II. Petit Canon in A minor

Léon Boëllmann (1862-1897)

Suite Gothique Op. 25 (1895)

To Mister William Crane Carl

The ‘Suite Gothique’ is one of the most well-known compositions from the French symphonic tradition. The brilliant *Toccata* has a dramatic main theme, combined with a rhythmic drive.

13 III. Prière à Notre-Dame

14 IV. Toccata

Franssen-organ Elandstraatkerk

The Hague 1906

Hoofdmanuaal (I)

Prestant 16'
Bourdon 16'
Prestant 8'
Flûte harmonique 8'
Violon 8'
Flûte cheminée 8'
Quint 5 1/3'
Prestant 4'
Flûte octaviane 4'
Octaaf 2'
Mixtuur III-VII
Cornet IV-V
Trompette 16'
Trompette 8'
Clairon 4'

Pedaal

Contrebass 16'
Violonbas 16'
Subbas 16'
Octaafbas 8'
Violoncello 8'
Octaaf 4'
Bombarde 16'
Trombone 8'

Positief expr. (II)

Bourdon 16'
Violon principaal 8'
Gemshoorn 8'
Viola 8'
Holpijp 8'
Fugara 8' *
Flûte traversière 4'
Mixtuur III
Basson hautbois 8'
Vox Humana 8'

* tuned slightly beating

Koppels

Oct. aigue GO
Oct. grave Pos
Oct. grave Réc
Ped + GO
Ped + Pos
Ped + Réc
GO + Pos
GO + Réc
Pos + Réc

Récit (III)

Diapason 8'
Violine 8'
Voix Céleste 8'
Flûte harmonique 8'
Bourdon 8'
Prestant 4'
Flûte octaviane 4'
Piccolo 2'
Trompette harmonique 8'
Clarinette 8'

Treden

Expression Positief
Totaal koppel
Tutti
Tremolo + Vox Humana



Bert van Stam

Bert van Stam (1989) is a Dutch organist and composer.

As concert organist, he regularly performs in The Netherlands and abroad. His programs are characterised by a passion for the classical repertoire, combined with innovative elements such as thematical concerts, collaborations with other artists and new music. From 2018, Van Stam has been the main organist in the Maranathakerk in The Hague, a congregation with special attention to music and liturgy. He recorded his first album *Sprezzatura* (2019) on the unique Mense Ruiter-organ in this church.

As composer, he writes for organ, but also for other instrumentations. Influences of classical and light music can be found in his music. His compositions are published in *De Orgelvriend* and *Muziek & Liturgie*.

At the age of 15, he started in the Young Talent class at the Rotterdam Conservatoire with Bernard Winsemius, followed by the bachelor's and master's organ (with Ben van Oosten) and improvisation (with Hayo Boerema). In addition, he studied church music and continuo. In 2013, he finished this all with high grades. Van Stam won several prizes, including three prizes at two consecutive editions of the International César Franck Competition (2013 and 2017) and the Sweelinck-Müller prize (2014). Besides these musical activities, Van Stam works as a software developer.

Bert van Stam · La Belle Époque

Venue: Elandstraatkerk, The Hague

Organ: Franssen, 1906 (43/IIIP)

Dates: 4 & 5 June 2020

Recording: 88.2 kHz, 24-bit Van Medevoort C1000

Balance engineer: Marcel van den Tol

Artwork: Naomi de Bruijn

Portrait: Flow fotografie

Special thanks to Bert den Hertog and Ed van Aken

Copyright © 2021 Bert van Stam

www.bertvanstam.org