

FRANK TAYLOR



PLAYS THE MUSIC OF
PIERRE DUMAGE & JEAN-FRANCOIS D'ANDRIEU

CHARLES FISK ORGAN, OLD WEST CHURCH, BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS



Notes

In music, unlike the graphic or literary arts, things are never complete of themselves. Black notes and mute instruments are of themselves powerless to make anything happen. They are vessels, made with love and artifice, set adrift in the world by their makers who trust that their intents will be realized; who trust because that is necessary to ongoing creativity.

The French are classified as passionate, which maybe the reason their music art is so personal, and therefore so idiomatic. The serene mystical logic of Bach survives even the computer, almost as if it had a direct line to the heart. A child can hammer Anna Magdalena's pieces on an untuned upright and be charmed. *Les Baricades Mystérieuses* are just that unless played on the right harpsichord by the right person.

So it is, most especially so, with the French and their organ music, from the early baroque to this moment. The Germans revere organ; the English profess a foolish fondness for it; the French very simply love it. Their writing has always been a very personal love affair with a specific instrument, and for that reason an organ must have certain specific sounds for the notes to become music. The player must first understand this, and then must play with love.

The late Melville Smith was an educator, musician, and musicologist. His name is well-remembered in some small circles, and virtually unknown in the larger ones. It's their loss. He could give an imitation of a stuffy professor that fooled a lot of people and still has some of them fooled. But he cracked the mysteries of true and inner rhythm at a time when most musicians still believed that their only salvation lay in fawning slavery to the soul-destroying metronome.

And he went to France, and he had a love affair, and he won the Grand Prix du Disque. Now this love affair was a very personal thing between himself, the long-dead composer Nicolas deGrigny, and the very much alive classical organ in Marmoutier Abbey. These two taught him things, which he brought back to America and taught to his students. Strangely, he had few students of importance. He had not the flamboyance or magnetism to attract the flocks of gifted youths, and they largely passed him by. All but Frank Taylor. As little prone to professional horn-blowing as Smith himself, Frank Taylor emerges as the true inheritor of the Melville Smith tradition. Here is the passion for the French baroque literature, the love of the sonorities for which it was written – plus an enviable keyboard technique and a splendid feeling for the underlying rhythmic flow of the music. DeGrigny was Smith's thing; Dandrieu is Taylor's: the commitment is the same. Melville Smith died before the organ at Boston's Old West Church was even conceived, but Frank Taylor recognized it (almost before its completion) as the vehicle for re-creating Dandrieu and Du Mage. Not surprisingly, its maker, Charles Fisk, was also strongly influenced by Smith and, more particularly, by Smith's favored Andreas Silbermann organ at Marmoutier. Several strong and individualistic artistic personalities come to focus in this recording.

Pierre Du Mage [1674-1751] and Jean-François Dandrieu [1684?-1740] were contemporaries not only of each other, but of many luminaries in what was surely a golden era of French organ building and playing. Alas, much more music was played in this period than was committed to paper, for a great deal of what was heard during the mass was improvised. Thus we have the phenomenon of fine, polished composers like Du Mage, DeGrigny, Guilain and Marchand, among others, who are known only for a single surviving book of pieces. Others, like Dandrieu and Couperin, wrote fairly prolifically, not only for the organ, but for the harpsichord as well.

Du Mage's *Livre D'Orgue* is a single slim volume comprising a suite of eight pieces in the First Tone in the form of an organ mass according to the usage of the cathedral in Laon, where Du Mage was titular organist for most of his life. The *Pièces d'Orgue* of Dandrieu, from which the pieces on this recording have been excerpted, is a more substantial volume containing six suites on the Magnificat interspersed with an equal number of suites in three major keys and their corresponding minor keys. Without doubt they were composed for use in one of the three Paris churches Dandrieu served, most probably the Chapel Royal.

The eight pieces of Du Mage reflect both his background as a student of Marchand and the conservatism one would expect of the organist of a provincial cathedral. They are cast in the tried and classic forms, framed with a *Plein Jeu* at the beginning and a *Grand Jeu* at the end, spare in structure but rich in invention. The more cosmopolitan Dandrieu, influenced no doubt by his dual career as an organist and a clavecinist, was more adventurous in his choice of forms. His *Muzète* and *Duo en Cors de Chasse* show a frankly secular whimsy in their imitation of bagpipes and hunting horns – a tendency which shows up in his *Noëls*, which frequently contain fife and bagpipe variations. While most of the pieces written by French composers for church use are of necessity short, the one exception is the *Ofertoire*, and extended, often sectional form, in which Dandrieu excelled.

Both the Du Mage and the Dandrieu pieces are cast in the typical organ idiom of the period, an idiom made possible by the uniformity attained in basic organ design in 18th century France, and also by the fact that many organist-composers held the same post (and thus were associated with the same organ) for life. Only in France (and to a lesser extent in England) was organ music consistently composed with a specific stop registration in mind, often clearly indicated in the title or inserted by the composer into the score. Without the proper registrations, the whole import of the music is lost; without the right organ even the “right” registrations are meaningless.

An American organ of the mid nineteenth century could still make some sense of this music. It still had its English tierce mutations, piquant flutes, full but brilliant reeds of the proper kinds, and had acquired good manual 16' stops. By the early 20th century the American organ had lost all its brilliance at the price of thick unisons, keen strings, and novel solo stops. More recently a revival of classical tonal principles brought back bright reeds, mixtures, and mutations, but their models came from 17th century Germany and represented a very different concept from that of 18th century France. It is only within the past decade that American organ builders and players have begun to recognize the validity of these French sonorities to the point where they have been incorporated into contemporary instruments, and a discriminating organist is at last able – as on this recording – to play the classic French literature on a small number of American instruments with authenticity and understanding. At last one does not need to journey to France to find a player and an organ that will complement this long misunderstood music.

Statement by the Organ Builder

When Melville Smith was alive, one's chief joy in building an organ lay in the knowledge that one might hear him play upon it. Whenever I was personally in the process of designing or voicing, the sound of his playing – his inimitable touching of the keys – was constantly in my head. Each organ was thus in some measure made for him, for his art, under his influence. Indeed, a number of our organs came into being through his direct influence: King's Chapel, the large organ at Harvard, the small organ at Wellesley College and the organ in Newburyport; each is the result of his efforts. The organ heard in this recording, that of the Old West Church, Boston, was never known to him, yet it is perhaps the organ he would have enjoyed most. Certainly we have tried to make it so. Many heterogeneous elements went into its construction – parts of an 1835 case made by Thomas Appleton (though the case is mostly new), a basic façade design from the 17th century English builder Bernhard Smith, new carvings by James McClellan, certain stops from various old organs, along with a great deal else that is new – and yet the conception is essentially Alsatian and is most closely related to the single Andreas Silbermann organ that Melville Smith loved above all others: Marmoutier.

The chorus scalings are Marmoutier, so are the voicing with unskived upper lips, the tin bodies and lead feet for the principalia, the Parisian style reeds - all are, as it were, appointed to please our deceased friend. How fitting it is that this recording, which sets forth the sounds of an organ made as though for Melville Smith, should be played by his most favored disciple, Frank Taylor, a person of rare musical gift, one in whom Melville Smith's art still lives. And how appropriate that the music too should be Smith's favorite, the stuff that he first brought to us for us to learn, and eventually to know, and finally to love as though it were our own.

Charles Fisk 1925 – 1983



The Fisk Organ, Old West Church, Boston 1971

Great Organ

16' Bourdon
8' Prestant
8' Spire Flute
4' Octave
2' Doublet
Sesqualier II Rks.
Mixture IV - VI Rks.
8' Trumpet
4' Clarion

Swell Organ

8' Violin Diapason
8' Stopped Diapason
4' Spitzflute
Cornet III Rks.
Furniture III Rks.
16' Contra Hautboy
8' Trumpet
Tremulant

Choir Organ

8' Stopped Diapason
4' Prestant
4' Night Horn
2' Fifteenth
Nazard Tierce II Rks.
Sharp IV Rks.
8' Cremona

Pedal Organ

16' Sub Bass
8' Octave
8' Rohrpipe
4' Octaves (4'-2') II Rks.
Mixture III Rks.
16' Trombone

Unison Couplers
Manuals 61 notes Pedals 32 notes

Producer's Note

I met Frank Taylor in 1972, fresh out of high school, when I became friends with a young woman who turned out to be his daughter. I was a budding musician myself, but in a completely different musical genre, a drummer, studying at Berklee College of Music in Boston, and playing modern jazz and rock. I had also been classically trained as a child – private piano lessons starting at age 5, sight reading drills, solfege, etc., and I attended concerts at Boston Symphony Hall throughout my childhood. So, I was no stranger to the world of classical music. But when I first walked through the front door of the Taylor household and saw a pipe organ, with its registers filling the end wall of the massive foyer of their Victorian house, I was enthralled. Frank had commissioned Charles Fisk, one of the premier organ builders in America, and the builder of the organ at Old West Church, played on this recording, to design and build an organ for his house. Aficionados of this craft can take a moment to ponder the thought of a Charles Fisk organ in one's home. The mind reels ...

Although I knew nothing about this music, I developed a keen interest in it solely by virtue of hearing Frank play. Later, when I had the opportunity to compare his renditions of the works on this recording to other artists, his superior feeling for the material, and his beautiful use of time and emphasis were apparent. But long before I had any education about it or comparisons for reference, the initial impact of the music on me, specifically Frank's renditions of it, was staggering. As Ms. Owen points out in her review of this work, the French have a deep love for their organ music, and the work of the French composers inspires that response. Although there are many composers and players whose work I love, most of the time the experience of listening is primarily a cerebral one, a rewarding (occasionally profoundly so) intellectual engagement. This music evokes, at least it did in me, an immediate gut response; a purely emotional reaction. After numerous repetitions, one can finally calm down and examine the music. Today, I still get the same chills down my spine listening to this recording that I got the first time I heard it over thirty years ago. There is very little in my collection – of any genre – that has held up as well.

Frank had the kind of ambivalence about his work that I see in many artists; I have experienced it myself. I can barely stand to listen to most of what I have recorded over the years, regardless of any praise I get. Frank was not confident about the quality of this work, and he made no effort to promote it or himself generally. I exhorted him time and time again to pursue it, and he was largely unconvinced. Once, after a "pep talk" I gave him, he said, a bit tongue-in-cheek I thought, that he would count on me to propagate his legacy.

Frank passed away in 1986, and less than a year later I was married. At our ceremony, in Old West Church, the recessional was DuMage's Grand Jeu, played by the church's organist, a former student of Frank's. As I walked out of the church, bride in hand, we made it to the door halfway through the piece. I forced her to stop, and we stood there in the doorway until it was finished. I could not bear to leave until it was over. Now, twenty five years later, I am honoring Frank's request to promote this work. Like all art treasures, this music only grows in value with age, so I'm only mildly regretting the delay in having done so. Whether or not you are familiar with this material, prepare for a thrill.



5
Tremulant

6
Rohrpipe
8'

7
Froschen
16'

1
Subbass
16'

2
Octave
8'

3
Saperoctave
II

4
Mixtur
III

Frank Taylor Plays Du Mage & Dandrieu

Frank Taylor

Pierre Du Mage

1. Plein Jeu 2:26
2. Fugue 2:12
3. Trio 2:08
4. Tierce en Taille 2:53
5. Basse de Trompette 2:19
6. Récit 2:36
7. Duo 1:56
8. Grand Jeu 3:15

Jean-François Dandrieu

9. Dialogue 1:49
10. Basse de Trompette 1:36
11. Tierce en Taille 2:35
12. Concert des Flûtes 1:27
13. Duo 0:56
14. Muzette 2:52
15. Duo en Cors de Chasse sur la trompette 1:05
16. Ofertoire - marqué - Suite de l'ofertoire 4:55

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