

Marie Joseph ERB

ORGAN WORKS, VOLUME ONE

SONATINES NOS. 1 AND 2 FOR ORGAN AND COR ANGLAIS

PRIÈRE SUR LE MOTIF DU 'PATER' FOR ORGAN AND VIOLIN

SONATA NO. 2, MATER SALVATORIS, FOR ORGAN

SONATA NO. 3, VENI CREATOR, FOR ORGAN

MÉDITATION FOR ORGAN AND CELLO

Paula Malmivaara, cor anglais

Anna-Leena Haikola, violin

Marko Ylönen, cello

Jan Lehtola, organ of St Paul's Church, Helsinki

MARIE JOSEPH ERB: ORGAN MUSIC, VOLUME ONE

by William Melton

Family lore traced the ancestors of the Alsatian composer Marie Joseph Erb back to the twelfth century:

Originally from Graffenstaden, they were *vidâmes* of Strasbourg, then, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, knights attached to Rathsamhausen. They were lords of the Waldsberg near Mont Sainte Odile, then *Stettmeister* and senators in Strasbourg, sometimes honoured by this city, sometimes fighting against it.¹

What is conclusively documented is that the family had been organists in Strasbourg since the eighteenth century.² It was there that the composer was born on 23 October 1858 to Anne Marie Erb, *née* Herrmann, and Marie Georges Erb, who was the director of the École St Jean and the organist of the Church of St Jean (built in 1477). The organ (of twenty ranks, two keyboards and pedal) which the father played, and on which the son began under his father's tutelage, was originally built by Stiehr and Mockers in 1820 and enlarged in 1878 by Heinrich Koulen.³

A formative musical event in Marie Joseph's youth took place on 22 June 1863, when his father brought the five-year-old to the first local rehearsal of *L'Enfance du Christ* conducted by its composer, Hector Berlioz. The boy's reaction to hearing the work performed with a massive 500-voice chorus is not recorded, but shortly

¹ Jane Erb, 'Marie-Joseph Erb', in *Un grand musicien français: Marie-Joseph Erb, sa vie et son œuvre*, Éditions Le Roux, Strasbourg and Paris, 1948, p. 7. *Vidâmes* were initially episcopal officers who later expanded their offices into feudal holdings. *Stettmeister* had been the chief magistrates of the free imperial city of Strasbourg since the thirteenth century.

² Véronique Muller, 'Les Ancêtres Alsatiens de Marie Joseph Erb (1858-1944)', *Bulletin du cercle généalogique d'Alsace*, No. 163, 2008, p. 424.

³ Johann Andreas Silbermann had furnished an organ for St Jean in 1762, but after the French Revolutionary take-over of the city the instrument was sold to Illkirch (and eventually to Mannheim).

afterwards Berlioz shared the audience response to the performance with his friend Humbert Ferrand:

People wept, they cheered, and they spontaneously interrupted several pieces. You cannot imagine the impression made by the mystical chorus at the end: 'O mon âme! O my soul!' It was indeed the religious ecstasy I had dreamed of when I composed it. [...] At the last *Amen*, a *pianissimo* which disappears into a mysterious distance, there was unparalleled acclamation as sixteen thousand hands applauded. Then came a shower of flowers and demonstrations of all sorts.⁴

A more savage experience was the Siege of Strasbourg, which occurred in August 1870, after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. When Marie Joseph was eleven, troops from the Duchy of Baden and Prussia bombarded Strasbourg extensively for a month, with the specific aim of terrorising the civilian population. The Erb family house was badly damaged and the youngster's birthplace, at the former Cloister of the Chevaliers de St Jean, was destroyed. Marie Joseph was later questioned about the siege:

'Were you bombed?' asked a little curly-haired man (he was B., later chapel master at St Sulpice).

'We had a house bombed and burned,' I answered.

'Did you eat horse or rat? Did you live in the cellars?'

'Yes, I ate horse, but not rat and we slept in our cellars.'⁵

Ten thousand people were left homeless, and the young man celebrated his twelfth birthday in a conquered city, the beginning of an occupation that would last for nearly 50 years.

After Erb finished his early education at a local finishing school, his father sent him to Paris and the renowned École Niedermeyer. Erb wrote of his arrival in 1874:

As soon as I entered the courtyard-garden of the school, my ears had been struck by a singular noise, a mixture of forging and tinkling bells, an annoying and uninterrupted

⁴ Hector Berlioz, *Lettres Intimes*, Lévy, Paris, 1882, pp. 251–52.

⁵ Marie Joseph Erb, 'Mon entrée à l'École Niedermeyer', *L'Alsace française*, Vol. 14, No. 50, 16 December 1934, p. 886.

noise. [...] This noise, which soon mingled with the sustained bass and treble of organ sound, became so loud that I looked at the supervising professor in amazement. He laughed and simply said, with two gestures, one to the left and one to the right: 'This is the study room, this is the organ room.' I have often reflected since on the rigid and terrible discipline imposed by the Niedermeyer School on the young artists it trained, which consisted of the following: in a large room, which also served as a theatre, were thirty or so upright pianos lined along the walls. Between these pianos were two long rows of desks, next to which, on long wooden benches, were seated some of the students immersed in their work of harmony, plainchant accompaniment, counterpoint, fugue or composition, while the other group practised furiously on the old pianos along the walls. It was an exercise in concentration, forcing the students to think only of their individual composing or playing in the midst of the hellish storm raging around them.⁶

Among Erb's teachers were Camille Saint-Saëns, Gabriel Fauré, Charles-Marie Widor and, most importantly, Eugène Gigout, who like Erb hailed from the eastern border (Lorraine). Gigout stood out even in a very talented generation of French organists like Widor and Alexandre Guilmant, Saint-Saëns stating bluntly, 'I regard him as the most impressive organist that I have ever known.'⁷ One of the earmarks of Gigout's teaching was the intensive study of Bach fugues (which Erb would make a lifelong habit), and his further pupils would include André Messager, Albert Roussel, Maurice Duruflé, Germaine Tailleferre and the Alsatian Léon Boëllmann. On Erb's graduation in 1880, he was offered organ and teaching posts in Paris.

Against the wishes of the eminent director of this school, the unforgettable Gustave Lefevre, who would have liked to keep me nearby and engage me as a teacher at his establishment, I had yielded, a docile son, to my father's urgings. In 1880 I took over his post of organist at the church of St Jean, a post which he had held in conjunction with that of director of the church primary school for more than 40 years.⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Mark David Bailey, *Eugène Gigout (1844–1925): Performer and Pedagogue*, DMA Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1988, p. 104.

⁸ Marie Joseph Erb, 'Ma première entrevue avec Ch. Hamm', *Cent ans de musique sacrée en Alsace 1882–1982*, Union Sainte Cécile, Strasbourg, 1983, p. 13.

The choice of Strasbourg over Paris proved a fateful decision for Erb's future prospects.

Erb's Strasbourg homecoming was initially disheartening. He endured a series of deaths, first that of his mother, then his youngest brother Charles in 1883, and finally his father in 1886. Some professional paths were stymied: conducting, long an ambition, was prevented by his extreme myopia, and local Conservatoire posts would long be denied him. In 1883, he took an additional job as organist at St Georges in nearby Sélestat. He also composed the first of sixteen masses (the *Messe en honneur de Sainte Odile*), and began generating instrumental and symphonic music at a formidable pace. The gifted Alsatian pianist Marie Jaëll recommended Erb to her teacher Franz Liszt, and several rewarding weeks were spent with Liszt in Weimar in 1884 (the young man's *Images et Legendes d'Alsace* for piano were composed afterwards and dedicated to Liszt).

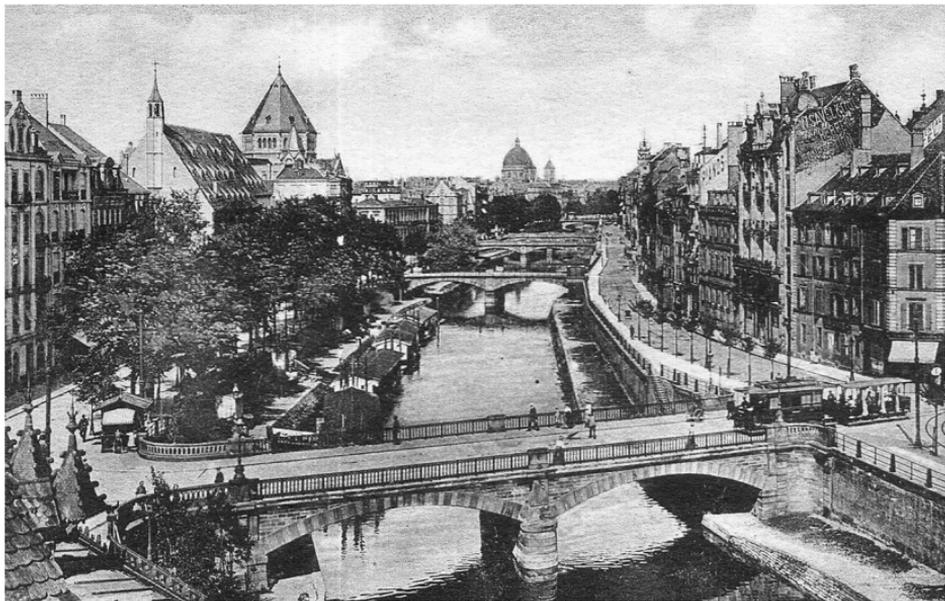
The Abbé Charles Hamm partnered Erb in establishing the Association Sainte Cécile and its journal *Caecilia*. Erb toured Alsace and Switzerland giving piano and organ concerts and saw his early compositions both performed and published. A piano recital that he gave in Mulhouse served to inspire a local youth.

Hardly had the pianist begun to play, when the boy was thrilled by the solemn emotion, which so far he had experienced only when hearing church music. He was still quite enthralled when the first enthusiastic applause began. He sat motionless among the clapping people, and while his neighbours were chattering away again, rattling papers, and handing round sweets in their silly, empty-headed way, there still ran through his head the music he had just heard. [...] What did the music really matter to these dressed-up people who could not even express their gratitude for the beauty and greatness of what they had heard by the tribute of silence?⁹

These were weighty thoughts from a twelve-year-old at his very first concert, but then the boy was Albert Schweitzer.

In September 1887 Erb married Marie Cécile, *née* Adam. The couple produced a son, Jean, and a daughter, Marguerite Jeanne (later known as Jane). Erb's modest earnings were largely made up of his organist salary and payments from private pupils.

⁹ Robert Jungk, *Albert Schweitzer: The Life of a Great Man*, Lutterworth, London, 1956, pp. 27–28.



Strasbourg; left, the Church of St Jean and the Synagogue

Other leading Alsatian musicians had been engaged by the now German-dominated Conservatoire.

Marie-Joseph Erb, on the other hand, made numerous unsuccessful approaches to the municipal administration. Twice, in 1881 and again in 1890, the organist-composer applied for a position as organ teacher at the Conservatoire. In vain. He was told that because of his French training at the Niedermeyer School, it was out of the question.¹⁰

¹⁰ Myriam Geyer, *La vie musicale à Strasbourg sous l'empire allemand (1871-1918)*, École des Chartes, Paris, 1999, p. 53.

Erb then turned his gifts to the stage, composing several operas, and not without success. In Strasbourg early in 1900,

The municipal theatre saw a major achievement by Messrs Marie-Joseph Erb, the composer, and Gustave Stoskopf, the librettist, with their *Abendglocken*, an opera in two acts, [...] a lyrical drama full of emotion. Mr Erb, a composer of great talent, was able to give free rein to his musical inspiration, presenting us with a compelling work.¹¹

The opera was conducted by Felix Mottl in Karlsruhe before the year was out. Several other works for the stage, also based on Alsatian folklore, were well received by Strasbourg audiences, but their weak librettos were noted by critics. Meanwhile, Erb's symphonic works were performed by conductors who included Edouard Colonne, Gustave Doret, Robert Heger, Félix Mottl, Paul Paray, Hans Rosbaud, Carl Reinecke and Fritz Steinbach.

In 1901–2, an organ by Joseph Rinckenbach (of 36 ranks, three keyboards and pedal) was installed at St Jean under Erb's supervision. Called by Erb 'a masterpiece of the highest order',¹² it would serve as his main instrument for more than four decades. On 18 July 1903, the composer's son Jean died, and Erb lost his brother Georges the following year. In reaction to these and other personal tragedies, the bulk of Erb's creations in later life would be given over to the sacred liturgy.

Albert Schweitzer had not forgotten Erb's positive influence, and after studies and early successes was able to join his erstwhile hero onstage in the first performance of Erb's Second Symphony for Organ and Orchestra ('Speravi'), Op. 77, in December 1909, at the Salle des Fêtes in Strasbourg.

A novelty, a symphony for orchestra and organ, specially written for the occasion by Mr Marie-Joseph Erb, the young and distinguished master from Strasbourg, was a great success in terms of both the work and the performance.

¹¹ Auguste Oberdorfer, 'Correspondances: Strasbourg', *Le Guide Musical*, Vol. 46, No. 9, 4 March 1900, p. 207.

¹² Médard Barth, 'Elsass "Das Land der Orgeln" im 19. Jahrhundert', *Archives de l'Église d'Alsace*, Vol. XV (Nouvelle Série), 1965–66, p. 355.

With a beautiful harmonic presentation and a distinctive main theme that is repeated throughout the orchestral framework in skilfully ordered combinations, this Symphony Op. 77, by Mr Erb, is interesting from one end to the other, and ultimately impresses by the majestic brilliance of its conclusion. Messrs Widor and Erb were wonderfully assisted by Mr Albert Schweitzer, the famous Alsatian organist and musician, who delivered the organ part masterfully [...].¹³

M. Welte & Sons of Freiburg were makers of the renowned Welte-Mignon orchestrions, organs and reproducing pianos. Erb's home in Strasbourg was less than 90 kilometres from the Welte factory, and he eventually made ten roll recordings of pieces for the firm. 'The repertoire he plays', noted David Rumsey, 'is interestingly mixed, although the French school is clearly important and predominates.'¹⁴

It was not until 1910, thanks chiefly to the new director of the Strasbourg Conservatoire, Hans Pfitzner, that Erb was finally hired at that institution (first for composition and organ, and from 1919 also piano and music theory). Subsequent generations of piano, organ and composition students were enriched by his tutelage. When the future conductor Charles Munch was a young violinist studying at the Strasbourg Conservatoire, 'His lessons in harmony and counterpoint came from Marie-Joseph Erb.'¹⁵ The tall, reserved gentleman of modest personal habits introduced his students to his own deepest love, Bach, but also to the French harpsichord repertoire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the early works of Debussy and Ravel. The progressive weakness of his eyes forced Erb to make as little use of printed music as possible; most of the time he improvised and so acquired a rare mastery. To hear him improvise on the organ was a memorable experience:

He did not know the hesitant meditations of the dreamer, nor the musical strolls to the confessional. He always consciously carried out the development, previously decided, of a musical idea. His improvisations were not bound closely to the written compositions;

¹³ Oberdorfer, 'Correspondances: Strasbourg', *Le Guide Musical*, Vol. 55, No. 51, 19 December 1909, p. 799.

¹⁴ 'Afternoons with Eugène Gigout', p. 10 (http://www.davidrumsey.ch/Gigout_article.pdf).

¹⁵ D. Kern Holoman, *Charles Munch*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, p. 9.

indeed, they often surpassed them as he rose to a higher level. When the last of the congregation had filed out, the empty church would vibrate with the most daring toccatas and the most elaborate fugues, all for the few initiates who were aware of this miracle and full of respect [...].¹⁶

A student characterised Erb the pedagogue:

The Master's technical knowledge, his long experience and his wisdom enabled him to teach in an astonishingly rich fashion. In addition to mastery of the subjects he taught, Erb had acquired serious training as a singer and violinist. In frequent talks he brought past periods in the history of music to life for his young pupils: with what enthusiasm, for example, he recalled his stay with Liszt in Weimar! To his pupils he was an affectionate and benevolent father, severe when necessary, but always fair. His punctuality was scrupulous, his temper serene and even. Differences would arise between him and his pupils when we would request that we work on one of his own pieces. Then he would modestly demur [...].

Once the period of study was over, friendly and cordial relations were established between him and his pupils, relations which, despite the difference in age, were inspired by the most open camaraderie and which nothing could disturb [...].¹⁷

The Great War brought sacrifice throughout France. Erb's inspiration, the Vosges Forest, was now the scene of massive troop manoeuvres and therefore off-limits. Still composition went on: the Requiem, Op. 87, was followed by the Mass *Dona nobis pacem*, Op. 89. The end of the conflict brought a close to half a century of German occupation. Unfortunately, the new municipal bureaucrats were as discouraging as the old. Erb's petition to be considered for the directorship of the Conservatoire was disregarded, and he was given ever more classes without commensurate pay rises (a complaint that would be legitimised on his retirement when he was replaced with three separate instructors).

The General Congress of Sacred Music in Strasbourg from 26 to 31 July 1921 encouraged wider appreciation of Erb's religious music. His wife Marie Cécile died in

¹⁶ Ernst Bour, 'Notes éparses', in *Un grand musicien français, op. cit.*, p. 93.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

1923, an emotional wound that was compounded by the loss of her musical expertise. She had been a scrupulous cataloguer of her husband's works, and after her death Erb no longer bothered giving his works opus numbers. Erb later married his student Juliette Fey, and the couple produced a son, Jacques.

Erb's former teachers, including Eugène Gigout, would visit when passing through Strasbourg, and Charles-Marie Widor dropped by the Erb home to engage in long, reflective discussions. Erb was known for his support of other Alsatian composers and artists, which included long-time membership in the *Kunschthafe* – Alsatian for roundtable, from *Kunsch* ('art') and *Hafe* ('pot'). This society, initiated by Auguste Michel, a *fois gras* manufacturer, was aimed at invigorating disparate elements of Alsatian culture. The group began its evenings of dining and discussion in 1891, and brought together the regional poets, painters, sculptors, musicians, architects, lawyers, politicians, bankers and industrialists at Michel's *Schloessel* ('little castle') in Schiltigheim over a period of 35 years.

In 1934 a 'Marie Joseph Erb Festival' took place, and the Strasbourg Radio Orchestra under Maurice de Villers broadcast Erb's works. Erb retired from the Conservatoire in 1937, and in January 1939 he was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour. After the German invasion of Poland on 1 September and declaration of war, the civilian population of Strasbourg was evacuated and took refuge on the Dordogne. Erb left his manuscripts with a friendly cleric in Barr and joined his family in Périgueux. The war in the west began on 10 May 1940, and on 22 June France signed an armistice. In his south-west exile Erb played the organ part in a performance of his *Alsatian Mass*. He impulsively returned to occupied Alsace and Strasbourg in October 1940, while local resistance groups were using St Jean as a station to smuggle out escaped prisoners of war.

Early in 1943, the now 84-year-old endured a series of ailments. To convalesce, Erb went to Andlau at the foot of Mont Sainte Odile, the spiritual centre of Alsace, of which Odile is the patron saint. There he revived and began to compose again: a sixteenth mass for mixed choir was written in February 1944 for Canon Hoch of the Strasbourg Cathedral, and two *Élégies* for solo voices and mixed choir were dedicated to his pupil Pierre-Materne Andrès, who had been killed in the war. Erb's manuscripts had long



A meeting of of the Kunschthafe on 31 January 1901: Auguste Michel (seated far right), the poet Gustave Stoskopf (standing, third from left), painter Théodore Haas (standing, third from right) and composer Marie Joseph Erb (seated third from right)

been done in ink, and corrections remained rare. The composer was still in Andlau on 9 July 1944, when the sudden onset of pneumonia took his life. In his wallet was a note written in the hand of Cécile, his first wife:

The artist must be a man of science and patience. He must leave nothing to chance. Everything he does must be deliberate. One must be able to put up with ignorance, bad faith or envy. If you are concerned with pleasing the public, a monster with millions of heads, you will lose your personality and your independence. But by limiting your needs, you can work as you wish, and retain your own freedom of thought.¹⁸

The funeral took place at Erb's beloved Eglise St Jean, where he had been at home on the organ for six decades. He was buried nearby in the cemetery of St Gall de Koenigshoffen (now La Montagne Verte). A month later a bomb destroyed both St Jean and its organ, and 'the silencing of both the artist and then his instrument proved a particularly distressing coincidence for his friends.'¹⁹ On 23 November 1944, Général Philippe Leclerc and the French Second Armoured Division brought Strasbourg again under French control.

The Diapason mourned 'Marie Joseph Erb, who died in 1944 and who deserves to be better known.'²⁰ An *Association des Amis de Marie Joseph Erb* was formed and commemorations of the composer were plentiful in Strasbourg, like the memorial plaque sculpted by René Hetzel in 1969 that is displayed in the rebuilt St Jean. The Colmar International Competition for Chamber Music Ensembles (established in 1985) awards prizes annually, the highest of which carries the name of Marie Joseph Erb. 'His native Alsace', Jacques Feschotte noted, 'which he hardly ever left, undoubtedly gave him the best inspiration, both for symphonic poems, stage works, songs and for a wealth of choral works in which he employed folk songs.'²¹ Though largely forgotten elsewhere – including the latest published editions of the *The New Grove* and *Die Musik in Geschichte*

¹⁸ Anon., 'Marie-Joseph Erb', *Cent Ans de Musique Sacrée en Alsace 1882–1982*, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁹ N., 'Marie-Joseph Erb', *L'Alsace française*, Vol. 1 (Nouvelle Série), No. 3, March 1949, p. 13. The church was rebuilt in 1962–64, and a new organ by Curt Schwenkede was installed in 1967.

²⁰ Anon., 'Edouard Nies-Berger', *The Diapason*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (469), 1 December 1948, p. 2.

²¹ Erb, Marie-Joseph, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Friedrich Blume (ed.), Vol. 3, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1954, p. 1464.

und Gegenwart – Erb's reputation in his home province is assured. Albert Schweitzer, like many Alsatians, continued to cherish Erb as man and artist:

What impressed especially those who had the privilege of coming close to Erb were his simplicity and his modesty. His very nature made it impossible for him to assert himself. He interested himself without prejudice in the musical creations of various schools and personalities, trying to judge them only in accordance with their innate worth. His criticism was never harsh. He believed that what was destined to endure would endure, and that the rest would of itself pass quietly into oblivion. He had a calm and wholesome wisdom from which he never swerved.

Such was Marie-Joseph Erb, as I knew him, and admired and loved him. I am sure that his memory and his works will always give him a place in the history of Alsatian art and in the hearts of the Alsatian people. As for me, I consider him the most remarkable of all the composers Alsace has produced.²²

Erb composed a noteworthy catalogue of music across all genres, including operas and other stage works (*Der glückliche Taugenichts* ('The Fortunate Wastrel'), 1893; *Abendglocken* ('Evening Bells'), 1900; *Vogesentanne* ('Fir Trees of the Vosges'), 1904; *L'Homme de fer* ('The Man of Iron'), 1928), symphonic pieces (three symphonies, suites, symphonic poems) and sacred works for chorus and orchestra or *a cappella*, which included the masses *Grande messe à 6 voix en l'honneur de Saint Jean-Baptiste* (1908) and *Dona nobis pacem* (1914), a *Te Deum*, cantatas for Easter (1916), Christmas (1917), Pentecost (1917), magnificats, offertories, motets, psalms and hymns. Erb also produced secular choral works, songs (in French, German and the Alsatian dialect), chamber music (three sonatas for violin, sonatas for cello and for horn, a string trio, two string quartets, a saxophone quartet and an octet for strings and winds) and many pieces for piano, both solo (*Images et Légendes d'Alsace, Suite 'En Alsace'* and a slew of shorter works) and four-hands. Though a number of these pieces remain in manuscript, many were issued by notable publishers, the number of which (and their geographical sprawl) is noteworthy. In Alsace they included Le Roux and Wolf of Strasbourg and Gloess

²² Marie-Joseph Erb, in Charles R. Joy, *Music in the Life of Albert Schweitzer*, Harper, New York, 1951, pp. 185–86.

and Salvator of Mulhouse, and in wider France Delrieu of Nice and Costallat, Durand, Hamelle, Leduc, Schola Cantorum and Sénart of Paris. Publishers in adjacent countries included Hug (Zurich), Schott (Brussels), André (Offenbach), Feuchtinger (Stuttgart), Coppenrath-Paweleck (Regensburg), Schwann (Dusseldorf), Fürstner (Berlin) and a long list from Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, Fritzsch, Junne, Kahnt, Leuckart, Reinecke, Schubert and Simrock. Further afield Erb was issued by Universal of Vienna, Joseph Williams of London, Hansen of Copenhagen, Real Collegio of Valencia, Holy Heart of Halifax (Canada), Boston Music of Boston (USA) and Fischer of New York.

During his lifetime Erb was best known for his sacred music and, particularly, his works for organ. The iconic academic Hugo Riemann did not fail to note ‘valuable organ compositions’²³ and an edition of Erb’s organ works was welcomed by the editor of the journal *Musica Sacra* as ‘a substantive enrichment of the repertoire.’²⁴ A summary of Erb’s meaning to the organ was given by the organist-scholar Norman Dufourcq, a professor of music history at the Paris Conservatoire and long the organist at Saint Merri in that city:

The varied and unique work of the Alsatian organist has a special place in the French literature of the modern organ. It contributes to the rebirth of our national school, avoids remaining fixed in academic formulas, takes into account the evolution of forms and style, and maintains the instrument’s noble mission.²⁵

A complete listing of Erb’s organ creations follows: *1ère Sonate sur des motifs liturgiques*, Op. 70 (1905); *Prière sur le motif du ‘Pater’* (‘Gib’ uns heute unser täglich Brot’) for organ and violin, Op. 71 (1906); *20 Pièces*, Op. 73 (1907); *80 Pièces Brèves sur des thèmes grégoriens*, Op. 74 (1907); *Douze Postludes*, Op. 75 (1908); *2ème Sonate Mater Salvatoris*, Op. 82 (1912); *Angélus* for organ and violin, Op. 82b (1912); *Suite liturgique*, Op. 83 (1913); *Méditation* for organ and cello, Op. 88 (1911); *Suite*, Op. 90 (1919); *Duo* (1916); *Offertoire pour faire suite au Crédo du V ton* (1926); *Cinq Pièces* (1926);

²³ Hugo Riemann, *Musik-Lexikon*, Max Hesse, Berlin, 1916, p. 289.

²⁴ Franz Xaver Haberl, ‘Neu und früher erschienene Kirchen- und Orgel-kompositionen’, *Musica Sacra*, Vol. 20/41, No. 5, 1 May 1908, p. 54.

²⁵ Norbert Dufourcq, ‘L’Oeuvre d’Orgue’, *Un grand musicien français, op. cit.*, p. 81.

8 *Postludes sur des airs de cantiques populaires – Sorties*, 1926 (1926); 3^{ème} *Sonate Veni Creator* (1927); *Symphonies grégoriennes*, two vols. (1936); 1^{ère} *Sonatine* for organ and cor anglais (1940); 2^{ème} *Sonatine* for organ and cor anglais (1940); *Trois Pièces* (1941); two *Capricci* (1941); *Quatre Pièces* (1941); *Fantasia* (1943).

Erb's Second Sonata for organ, **2^{ème} Sonate Mater Salvatoris, Op. 82**, was dedicated to the organist of St Eustache in Paris, Joseph Bonnet, and published by Alphonse Leduc of Paris in 1912. This lengthy, dense and ultimately serene work frames an A major middle movement with outer movements in F major. Within the first three pages of the opening *O Sanctissima*, Erb presents the theme in fragmentary foreshadowing, a complete statement and, beginning at *Poco animato*, free development that gives a real sense of Erb's skill as an improviser. Norbert Dufourcq described this homage to the Virgin Mary at length:

The introduction – of classical construction – takes as its subject the invocation *O Sanctissima* [1] [*Andante con moto*]: the development, of infinite tenderness and in two or three voices should be noted, and the conclusion is bathed in a radiant mystery. In the middle movement, which employs more varied orchestral stops, Erb surrounds the fifteenth-century chorale *Flos de radice Jesse* [2] ['Flower from the root of Jesse'; *Lento*] with delicate garlands; how artfully he makes the oboe sing! In the finale, he elucidates the theme of the *Magnificat* [3] [*Maestoso e largemente*] in a long paraphrase, which he ends in the form of a carillon [chime], *molto espressivo e jubilante*. The writing is at times overloaded: Erb is not afraid to double octaves in the bass, in the pedal and in the manual, and as he was addressing a Romantic instrument which neglects the full stops, one can regret the heaviness of this aural stew. Yet he does also furnish illumination, and vigorous movement that provides life. Erb, at every moment, reminds us that he is of Widor's generation and that he values Franck very highly – yet he is more audacious in adding accidentals that spice up the modal language. A powerful colourist, Erb moves us as much by the charm of his lyricism as by the scope of his epic conceptions.²⁶

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

The *1ère Sonatine for organ and cor anglais* (1940) was dedicated to Norbert Dufourcq. The brief work remained in manuscript until ‘befoco music’ of Coburg published the work in 2020. ‘This masterful first sonatina,’ the oboist Lajos Lencsés commented, ‘is already a sensation because there are few original compositions for this instrumentation.’²⁷ The movements of the brief, jewel-like work are arranged in ABA, or song form. The *Prélude* [4] (*Con moto*) in G minor and common time, offers florid *piano* semiquaver patterns in the right hand of the organ, which underpin the deliberate *mf* melody in the cor anglais. A *Larghetto* [5], *Molto tranquillo* in $\frac{6}{4}$, *piano* in D minor, presents a sinuous crochet theme in the bass of the organ, which balances the wide-ranging *espressivo* line of the cor anglais. In the Finale [6] (*Allegro vivace* in common time) the cor anglais begins *forte marcato* in E flat major in swift motion over broken-chord quavers in the organ, with a middle section in F major (*più dolce, ma marcato*) and a repeat of the opening which closes *ff* in G major.

The *Méditation for organ and cello*, Op. 88 [7], appeared first in a 1911 collection²⁸ by the organist-cleric Otto Gauss, from Rottenburg am Neckar, that was published by Coppenrath-Paweleck of Regensburg and reissued separately by the same firm in 1916 with a dedication to the cellist Marix Loewensohn. The piece opens *Molto moderato ed espressivo*, $\frac{3}{4}$ in B major, with a repetitive semiquaver pattern in the organ supporting a deliberate, questing cello theme. Fluid chromaticism separates two additional appearances of the opening, first in B minor, and finally in a B major *Molto tranquillo* coda of 24 bars that diminishes to *pp*. Dufourcq noted: ‘In a *Méditation*, he contrasted our instrument with the cello’; Erb ‘did not hesitate to combine the organ with other instruments’²⁹ in a liturgical style that combined with an intimate chamber-music aesthetic. In spite of the 1911 publication, Cécile Erb entered it into her list of opus numbers under the year 1916, between the Requiem, Op. 87, and the Mass *Dona nobis pacem*, Op. 89.

²⁷ Erb, *1ère Sonatine pour Orgue et Cor Anglais*, preface, befoco music, Coburg, 2020.

²⁸ *Orgel-Konzert, Sammlung alter und neuer Kompositionen für Orgel und mit anderen Instrumenten zum Konzertgebrauch wie zum Studium*, Vol. 2, No. 13.

²⁹ Dufourcq, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

The **2ème Sonatine for organ and cor anglais** (1940), slightly longer than the first sonatina for this instrumentation, remains unpublished. It was once again dedicated to Norbert Dufourcq, who remarked on ‘two very welcome sonatinas for the English horn and the organ: highly original ensembles that serve as an example to artists keen to expand the repertoire of the concert or church organ.’³⁰ An *Allegretto amabile* [8] begins the work in $\frac{6}{8}$ and a well-disguised C major, the distinctive dotted cor anglais melody appearing *grazioso* over closely voiced organ writing (with chromaticism taking over in bar 5). After a short recitative-like passage, the starting theme and key return, and a coda at *più lento* shepherds the movement to a C major *pp* finish. The *Grave pastorale* [9], *Sehr langsam, sehr ausdrück [sic]*, which progresses variously through common time and $\frac{11}{8}$, begins in F major. A contrasting section at *ben tranquillo* prefaces the return of the opening theme and an F major *ppp* close. The Finale [10], *Allegro*, pits swirling *mf* semiquaver sextuplets in the organ against a slower crochet-based theme in the cor anglais in C major, *forte*. The theme then fragments, moving through other keys before returning whole at *Maestoso* and closing *ff* in C major.

Dedicated to Albert Schweitzer, the **Prière sur le motif du ‘Pater’ (‘Gib uns heute unser täglich Brot’) for organ and violin, Op. 71** [11], was published by Leuckart in Leipzig (1906). The gentle *piano* opening theme, perched between C minor and E major (*Molto moderato* in $\frac{3}{4}$), gives way to chromatic treatments of the theme, particularly at *più lento*. A ghostly 25-bar section serves as contrast, the key ostensibly in C major but highly chromatic, with the violin contribution marked *ff*, *Mit vehemenz* (‘With vehemence’). Reminders of the tender opening appear divided by sections of chromatic and rhythmic contrast until a codetta (*Molto tranquillo*) built on an earlier thematic fragment makes its way, *rallentando* and *ppp*, towards a final E major fermata. The *Prière* was performed in the vast Saengerhaus hall in Strasbourg near the end of 1910:

Our distinguished composer from Strasbourg, Mr. Marie-Joseph Erb, had on the programme his piece for organ and violin on the stanza ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ after the Pater Noster, which was very well received.³¹

³⁰ Dufourcq, *ibid.*, p. 81.

³¹ Oberdorfer, ‘De Strasbourg,’ *Le Ménestrel*, Vol. 76, No. 51, 17 December 1910, p. 407.

Karl Straub, the organist of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, contacted Erb about the work.

Of all the original compositions for these two instruments that I know, yours seems to me to be the best-organised and most interesting in terms of musical form and exploitation of thematic content. This judgement is certainly reinforced if one compares what has been composed for violin and organ in the last thirty years. [...] you needed to seek and find a different form of expression for a piece that is certainly conceived more in the spirit of Franz Liszt than that of Max Reger.³²

The *3ème Sonate Veni Creator* was published by Sénart of Paris in 1927 and dedicated to Charles-Marie Widor. This eventful work, at times very modern in its chromatic wandering (though the complete lack of time-signatures or bar-lines harks back to the Gregorian origins of the themes), is a mere ten minutes in length. Norman Dufourcq devoted some space to this work, too:

With the next work, written in 1927, Erb took a decisive step. A rigorous contrapuntist, a symphonist by dint of the emphasis he gives to this triptych (and he remains faithful to his peers in this respect), and a liturgist who does not hesitate to incorporate common Gregorian themes, such is the author of the Third Sonata, which takes its subjects from the *Veni Creator*, the *Verbum supernum* and the *Pange lingua*. Here all concern with the homophonic has vanished, and the tangle of horizontal lines is the only thing that counts. The melody of the plainsong imposes its presence everywhere; it reigns supreme, and Erb knows how to preserve its flexibility to the point where he has done away with bar-lines throughout. The composer has adopted an austere style, abandoning massive harmonies but convincingly employing imitation with delight and majesty, he sketches powerful canons between the bass and the soprano and achieves greatness through simplicity (*Veni Creator spiritus*) [*Allegro moderato*, ending in G major] [12]. The *Verbum supernum* [*Molto moderato* in G major] [13] evokes a gentle treatment where adoration evolves into supplication, and the *Pange lingua* (Tantum ergo) [14] is a concluding *Allegro* [*moderato*; modulatory, eventually E minor] in which the composer demonstrates his power and

³² Letter dated 28 July 1905, in *Un grand musicien français, op. cit.*, p. 105.

strength. A skilfully guided crescendo leads to the customary ‘grand jeu’, during which the author affirms the *cantus firmus* on the pedalboard in long values, while eloquent arabesques thread colourful harmonies around each note. In all, a triptych made up of solid writing that has the merit of never aiming for mere effect.³³

William Melton is the author of Humperdinck: A Life of the Composer of Hänsel und Gretel (Toccata Press, London, 2020) and The Wagner Tuba: A History (edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008) and was a contributor to The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia (2013). He did postgraduate studies in music history at the University of California at Los Angeles before a four-decade career as a horn-player with the Sinfonie Orchester Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). Further writings include articles on lesser-known Romantics including Felix Draeseke, Friedrich Gernsheim, Henri Kling and Friedrich Klose, and he has researched and edited the scores of the ‘Forgotten Romantics’ series for the publisher edition ebenos.

Dr **Jan Lehtola** is one the most successful and progressive Finnish organists of his generation. He has appeared with the BBC Philharmonic, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Tapiola Sinfonietta, the Lahti Symphony, Tampere Philharmonic and Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestras and the St Michel Strings. He has performed at many international festivals, including the Lahti Organ Festival, Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival, ‘Time of Music’ in Viitasaari, the Tampere Biennale, Musica nova Helsinki, the Turku, Mikkeli, Mänttä and Hauho Music Festivals and the annual Festival of New Organ Music in London. He has worked with conductors who include Juha Kangas, Ludovic Morlot, Kent Nagano, Sakari Oramo, Leif Segerstam, Muhai Tang and Osmo Vänskä, amongst others. He has also given recitals in leading European concert halls, among them the Gewandhaus in Leipzig



Photograph: Gianni Proietti

³³ Dufourcq, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81.

and Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg and cathedrals and churches such as Sainte Trinité in Paris, the Berlin, Riga and Tallinn Doms, the St Thomas Church in Leipzig and St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey in London.

Jan Lehtola collaborates regularly with composers and has given more than 180 world and regional premieres. He has had works written for him by Harri Ahmas, Kalevi Aho, Atso Almila, Adina Dumitrescu, Thierry Escaich, Naji Hakim, Matti and Paavo Heininen, Carita Holmström, Juha T. Koskinen, Olli Kortekangas, Juha Leinonen, Jouko and Jyrki Linjama, Jukka Linkola, Paola Livorsi, Pehr Henrik Nordgren, Axel Ruoff, Martin Stacey, Riikka Talvitie and Adam Vilagi. He was the Artistic Director of the Organo Novo Festival in Helsinki from 2007 to 2016 and Chairman of the Finnish Organum Society from 2009 to 2014. He is currently Chairman of the Helsinki Music Centre Organ Association.

He has recorded for the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) and can be heard on more than fifty commercial recordings (on the labels Alba, BIS, Fuga, IFO, Jubal, Ondine, Pilfink and Toccata Classics) in repertoire covering music by Johann Sebastian Bach, Wilhelm Humpreys Dayas, Marcel Dupré, Friedrich Lux, Felix Mendelssohn, Richard Stöhr, Eduard August Tod, Robert Schumann and Charles-Marie Widor. He has also released recordings of the complete organ works of Harri Ahmas, Kalevi Aho, Kaj-Erik Gustafsson, Paavo Heininen, Joonas Kokkonen, Olli Kortekangas, Jouko and Jaakko Linjama, Oskar Merikanto, Juhani Pohjanmies, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Axel Ruoff, Erkki Salmenhaara and Jean Sibelius.

Jan Lehtola studied the organ in Helsinki, Amsterdam, Stuttgart, Lyon and Paris. He graduated from the Church Music Department of the Sibelius Academy, gaining his diploma with distinction in 1998. In 2000 he gave his Sibelius Academy debut recital in Kallio Church, Helsinki, and in 2005 received a Doctorate for his dissertation on Oskar Merikanto as a transmitter of European influences to Finland. He has been a Lecturer of Organ (2007–17) and a University Lecturer since 2017 at the University of Arts, Sibelius Academy. He is also active as a lecturer and a teacher of master-classes.

www.janlehtola.com

Having studied at the Liminka Music Institute, the Oulu Conservatoire and the Sibelius Academy, the violinist **Anna-Leena Haikola** graduated with distinction as a pupil of Päivi Meller in 2003. She also studied with Pierre Menard and Mathias Tacke at Northern Illinois University and in master-classes with teachers including Hagai Shaham and Pinchas Zukerman. A versatile violinist, she is equally at home in classical, contemporary and lighter music. She has appeared at many music festivals both at home in Finland and abroad, has been a soloist with the Helsinki Philharmonic, Ostrobothnian Chamber and other orchestras, and frequently guest-leads different orchestras and ensembles. From 1995 she was a member of the Finnish National Opera Orchestra, thereafter transferring to the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra in 2003. Later that year, she was promoted to leader of the second violins. She is also a member of the Virtuosi di Kuhmo, the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra and other ensembles and leader of the Avanti! Quartet.



Photograph: Jaakko Paavola



Photograph: Tomi Wikström

Paula Malmivaara began to play oboe at the Espoo Music College as a student of Seidi Palonen. For her professional studies, she transferred to the Sibelius Academy, where she was taught by Sven-Erik Paananen, Jouko Teikari and Jorma Valjakka. During her exchange student year at the Malmö Academy of Music, she was taught by Ole-Henrik Dahl. Later, she completed her studies in Paris under Jacques Tys.

She started her orchestral career in the Vaasa City Orchestra in 2004, whence she moved to the Tampere Philharmonic in 2005. She took up her current position as the cor anglais player of the Helsinki City Orchestra in 2010.

She is also a member of the Savonlinna Opera Festival Orchestra and the Zagros Ensemble. She has

played chamber music in many different ensembles and at lots of festivals, among them the Naantali Music Festival, Korsholma Music Festival, Crusell Week and Oulunsalo Soi Festival. Her solo engagements have been with ensembles of the standing of the Joensuu City Orchestra, Oulu Sinfonia, Tampere Philharmonic and English Chamber Orchestra.

The Finnish cellist **Marko Ylönen** has performed in as many different roles as almost any other cellist from his generation: soloist, orchestral player and principal, string-quartet member, freelance player in duos and trios, and teacher. He has also been a prize-winner in major competitions and a prolific recording artist. Not surprisingly, his repertoire is broad, taking in a range of works by C. P. E. Bach, Boccherini, Vivaldi, Haydn, Chopin, Rachmaninov, Sibelius, Piazzolla and, especially, contemporary Finnish composers like Ralf Gothóni, Jouni Kaipainen, Joonas Kokkonen, Olli Mustonen, Pehr Henrik Nordgren and Einojuhani Rautavaara. He has concertised throughout Europe, the USA, Japan, China, Australia and New Zealand. He has recorded for several labels, including Ondine, Finlandia, Alba and BIS.

He studied with Csaba Szilvay, Erkki Rautio, Heikki Rautasalo and Heinrich Schiff. In 1990 he was awarded second prize at the Turku Scandinavian Cello Competition and later that year he became a finalist and a prize-winner in the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. In 1996 he won the first prize at the Concert Artist Guild Competition in New York.

He frequently plays as soloist with the major Finnish orchestras, and has also played with such leading orchestras as Camerata Salzburg, the English Chamber Orchestra, Prague Chamber Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Stavanger Symphony Orchestra and the Netherlands Chamber orchestra. Among the conductors he has worked with are Mosche Atzmon, Okko Kamu, Juha Kangas, Hannu Lintu, Klaus Mäkelä, Susanna Mälkki, Olli Mustonen, Sakari Oramo, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Heinrich Schiff, Leif Segerstam, John Storgårds, Alexander Vedernikov and Ben Wallfisch. He has given recitals in many major halls,



Photograph: Juna Puhakka

not least the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York and Concertgebouw Kleine Zaal in Amsterdam.

As chamber musician, Marko Ylönen has played in various ensembles with a large number of the world's leading musicians. He was also invited to serve as Artistic Director of Korsholm Music Festival in 2003, 2008 and 2010–12 and the LuostoClassic Festival in Finnish Lapland in 2014–17. From autumn 2009 he has been engaged as Professor of Chamber Music at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. He plays a Bartolomeo Cristofori cello from 1720s.
www.ylonen.info

The Main Organ of St Paul's Church in Helsinki, Finland

Kangasalan Urkutehdas, 1931

Veikko Virtanen Oy, 2005

*=from the 1931 organ

I C–a³

Principal 16'

Octava 8'

Flauto Major 8'

Quintatön 8'

Rohrflöte* 8'

Gamba 8'

Octava* 4'

Flöte* 4'

Quinta* 2 ⅔'

Octava 2'

Kornett* 3–4 f

Mixtur* 4–6 f 2 ⅔'

Fagott 16'

Trompete 8'

II C–a³

Quintadena* 16'

Geigen Principal* 8'

Flöte* 8'

Nachhorn* 8'

Gemshorn* 8'

Octava 4'

Querflöte* 4'

Piccolo* 2'

Sesquialtera* 2 f 2 ⅔'

Krummhorn* 8'

Singend regal* 4'

tremolo

III C-a³

Lieblich Gedact* 16'

Principal 8'

Fugara 8'

Spitzflöte* 8'

Gedact* 8'

Voix celeste* 2 f 8'

Flauto dolce* 4'

Viola d'amore 4'

Querpfefe* 2²/₃'

Flageolet* 2'

Terz* 1³/₅'

Harmonia aetheria 4 f 2²/₃'

Basson* 16'

Trompet harmonique 8'

Oboe 8'

Vox humana* 8'

Klarine 4'

tremolo

Pedal C-f¹

Grand Bordun 32' (octave transmission)

Violonbass 16'

Subbass* 16'

Echobass 16' (transmission)

Violoncello 8'

Flötenbass 8' (transmission)

Octava* 4'

Bombarde 16'

Trompete 8' (transmission)

Klarine 4' (transmission)

Couplers

II-I 8'

III-I 8'

III-II 8'

I, II, III-P 8'

III-I 16'

III 16'

II-I 4'

III-I 4'

III-II 4'

I, II, III-P 4'

General coupler 8'

General crescendo

Setzer





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Recording and editing: Antti Pohjola

Producer: Jan Lehtola

Artistic producer: Petri Komulainen [4]–[7] and Seppo Siirala [11]

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MARIE JOSEPH ERB Organ Works, Volume One

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Paula Malmivaara, cor anglais 4–6 8–10

Marko Ylönen, cello 7

Anna-Leena Haikola, violin 11

Jan Lehtola, organ of St Paul's Church, Helsinki

TT 73:56

*FIRST RECORDINGS