

C-A Franck
(1822 - 1890)

Chorale no. 3 for Organ
(op. posth.)

arranged for Brass Quintet
(Trumpets in D & B^b/optional Cornet)
by Toby Miller (2015 / 2022)



The composer in his organ loft at the church of Ste Clotilde in Paris, as painted by
Jeanne Rongier in 1885

On 8th November 1890 César Franck died, a viral infection having turned to pleurisy. He had been ill since July, after suffering a head injury in a collision of horse-drawn vehicles on a Paris street. By his bed were the manuscripts of three Chorales, to which he was putting the finishing touches of the organ registrations. This partly explains why these pieces are considered a musical testament, but there is something in the music itself: listen before playing, if you can. (I can highly recommend the Youtube performance by Olivier Latry, currently organist at Notre Dame in Paris.)

Franck's was a life of constant hard work (a standard working day during term was from 6am to 10pm, of which only a couple of hours was for his own composition). His first and biggest battle was to live up to his father's expectations. Nicolas-Joseph was a bank clerk in Liège, whose ambitions were expressed through his children right from birth: he saddled his eldest son with the name César-Auguste-Jean-Guillaume-Hubert. A name more inappropriate for this meek child is hard to imagine: Liszt, who made strenuous efforts on Franck's behalf, later wrote in a letter of introduction "he has the problem of being called César-Auguste, and besides, seems not to me to possess that fortunate social sense that opens all doors". I hazard a guess that, if born today, César would have been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome.

Once father found that sons did have musical talent, exploiting it for financial reward became his lifelong focus (think Leopold Mozart, only far worse). In 1834, aged 11, César played before the first King of the new Belgian nation (also Leopold). The family moved to Paris and took French nationality so that César could enter the Conservatoire, then moved back again in 1842 before he completed the course, possibly because study was reducing the time he could devote to concerts and teaching. Two years later this was not producing the desired results and they were back in Paris, where his father attempted to prevent him spending time with a pupil, his future wife, by emotional blackmail ('his mother would be the one to suffer' from loss of income). As soon as he was 25 and able to marry without parental consent, César left home with a note vowing to pay off every penny of his father's 11,000-franc debt.

Three successive church organist posts helped César both pay his way and avoid the limelight. Organ-playing was in an astonishing Dark Age in France. Baroque music was rarely heard, instruments and playing technique so poor that pedals were mostly unused or not available, their use even forgotten (re-demonstrated by a German organist at a Paris concert in 1844). Despite never fully mastering pedal skills himself (he bought a Pleyel pedal-board for home practice), Franck gradually became, with his friend the great organ-builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, founder of a new school of French organ-playing – including the art of improvisation, long dormant in France, where his powers astonished his contemporaries and drew many listeners.

1872 was a turning point in his life. Thanks to whom, nobody was sure either then or now, Franck was appointed organ professor at the Conservatoire. Here, despite his unsystematic teaching, his virtuosity, passion for his subject and his sincerity attracted a growing number of pupil fans, who became known as 'la bande à Franck': d'Indy (their leader), Chausson, Duparc, Vierne and others. This, and Franck's habit of teaching composition in his organ classes, aroused other professors' jealousy.

Franck heard Wagner's 'Tristan' Prelude for the first time in 1874; chromaticism and constant modulation became hallmarks of his own style. Franck also now seems for the first time to have found something personal to compose about: a real passion, apparently quite at odds with his serene and almost childlike character, suddenly emerges in his Piano Quintet. After its première in 1879, pianist and dedicatee Saint-Saëns walked out in protest at the music's naked emotion: Franck may have had his Irish pupil Augusta Holmes (who was apparently lusted after by 'everybody' at the Conservatoire) in mind. Franck's wife was also outraged. There is no evidence of any transgressions of his firm Catholic faith, but "much of Franck's behaviour, his lengthy work day, his working holidays, his unconscious use of sensual harmonies and consciously amatory creations like *Psyché*, speak of a man whose marriage was not fulfilling." (Chris Dench, reviewing the excellent recent biography by R J Stove). If Franck was on the autistic spectrum, perhaps he simply didn't really grow up emotionally until his fifties. That may also help explain his failure to understand the politics at the Conservatoire, and his ability to ignore general critical hostility and often limited public enthusiasm for his music.

Franck's interest in the Baroque, and skill in fugal and canonic writing, go back to his first teacher in Paris, Anton Reicha: former pupil in Vienna of organist and counterpoint expert Albrechtsberger, and also a rebel at the Conservatoire. Franck's dated exercises survive with Reicha's corrections (+ cryptic annotations perhaps by Erik Satie), showing how hard Reicha worked his 13-year-old pupil. Franck later expected no less.

The three Chorales share an overt homage to Bach, as Liszt saw in earlier organ works. No. 1 is perhaps closest to a Chorale, with a towering climax; no. 2 is a Passacaglia with interlude, or theme & variations; no. 3 is a Toccata with virtuoso and recitative passages which build suspense, and a beautiful central tune in the major (B major for Trumpet in B^b, sorry... I have split this tune across both trumpets, but cued it all in the B^b part in case a Cornet is available, to pay homage to the orchestration of Franck's Symphony). There is no shortage of virtuoso work for brass quintet, but I hope this superb Romantic piece may fill a style gap in the repertoire.

Chorale #3 in A minor for Organ, arr. for Brass Quintet by Toby Miller

Score (instrumental pitch)

Op. posth.

Franck

Quasi allegro [~ ♩ = 96]

Trumpet 1 in D

Trumpet 2 in Bb & optional Cornet

Horn in F

Trombone

Tuba

ff

ff

ff

4

Largamente [Tempo 2 ~half speed, ♩ = 48] Tempo 1

G P G P A

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

ff

ff

ff

9

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

12 **G P** **Largamente**

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

ff

16 **G P** **G P** **Più largamente** **B** **Tempo 1**

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

21 **Tuba to fore**

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

f

f

f

f

sempre ff

24 **Rit.** **C**

Tbn to fore Tuba to fore Tp2 to fore

mf *mf* *mf* *ff* *f* *mf*

34

(Tuba to fore) (Tp1) (Tuba) (Tp2) (Tp1)

ppp *mf* *pp* *mp* *mf* *pp* *p* *pp* *mf* *pp* *mp* *mf* *pp* *mf* *p* *mf* *pp* *mp* *p* *mf* *pp* *mp*

46 **D** **Tempo 1**

pp *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *p* *p* *p*

50

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

mf

mf

f

mp

mf

mf

mf

mf

65

(Tbn) (Tp1) (Tp2) (Tp1)

T1(D)

pp *p sempre* *pp* *molto cresc. f*

T2(Bb)

pp *pp* *p* *molto cresc. mf*

Hn(F)

pp *pp* *pp* *molto cresc. mf*

Tbn

p *pp* *molto cresc. mf*

Tuba

pp *pp* *pp* *molto cresc. f*

66

76 [F] [Tempo 1]

(Tuba)

T1(D) *dim. [molto] pp*

T2(Bb) *dim. [molto] pp*

Hn(F) *dim. [molto] pp*

Tbn *dim. [molto] pp*

Tuba *dim. [molto] pp*

p

81

T1(D) *mp*

T2(Bb) *p*

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

84

T1(D) *p cresc.*

T2(Bb) *cresc.*

Hn(F)

Tbn *cresc.*

Tuba *cresc.*

87 **G**

T1(D) *f* *dim.* *pp*

T2(Bb) *f* *mp dim.* *pp*

Hn(F) *pp*

Tbn *pp*

Tuba *pp*

90 [Moderato ~ ♩ = 72] [rall.]

T1(D) *rf* *rf*

T2(Bb) *rf* *rf*

Hn(F) *rf* *rf*

Tbn *p* *mp < mf*

Tuba *p* *mp < mf*

96 **H** Adagio [Tempo 2 ~ ♩ = 48]

colla parte (Tp2)

T1(D) *rf* *pp* *mf dolce espress.*

T2(Bb) *rf* *mp dolce espress.* ** Opt: Tp2 play whole tune on cornet inc. Tp1 part (cued) till K **

Hn(F) *mf* *pp* *mp*

Tbn *mf* *pp* *mp*

Tuba *mf* *pp* *mp*

101

I

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

mf

p

104

molto espress. e dolce

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

pp

molto cresc.-----f

pp

pp

mp

f

pp

pp

f

p

pp

pp

f

pp

107

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

pp

pp

mf

110

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

cresc. *mf* *pp*

f *più f*

mp *mf*

mp *f*

mf *f*

rall. *a tempo* [a little faster ~ ♩ = 60]

114

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

p *mp*

(cued for Tp1 if Tp2 playing tune)

mp *pp* *p*

p *p*

p *p*

p *p*

p *p*

118

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

pp *mp*

pp *p*

pp *p*

mf *p*

p *mp*

122

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

pp

mp

ppp

pp

pp

mf

mp

p

126

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

mf

p

mp

p

mp

mp

mp

129

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

pp

mp

pp

mp

p

p

p

L

132

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

p

pp

p

pp

135

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

pp

mf

pp

pp

sempre cresc.

sempre cresc.

sempre cresc.

138

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

(cresc.)

f

f

(cresc.)

rf

f

(cresc.)

f (separate)

(cresc.)

141 **molto rit. molto slargando** -----

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

(cresc.) **f** **mf** **ff** **V**

Le double plus vite
[M] (mouvement du commencement)
 [faster, quasi Presto ~ = 112]

146

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

pp **pp** **pp** **pp** **pp**

150

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

153

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

V

156

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

N

mp

mp

158

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

mp

pp

V

160

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

mp

mf

mf

163

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

pp

pp

pp

pp

p

166

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

p

mp

p

169 O

T1(D) *p* *molto cresc.*

T2(Bb) *molto cresc.*

Hn(F) *mp*

Tbn *molto cresc.*

Tuba *mp* *molto cresc.*

172 **[Maestoso, poco meno mosso]**
(Tp1 to fore)

T1(D) *mf* *ff*

T2(Bb) *(cresc.)* *f*

Hn(F) *f*

Tbn *(cresc.)* *f*

Tuba *(cresc.)* *f*

175

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

178

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

f

mf

mf

mf

181

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

(Tp2 top line)

f

ff

ff

184

P

T1(D)

T2(Bb)

Hn(F)

Tbn

Tuba

ff

187 (Tp1) Rit.

T1(D) *ff* *fff*

T2(Bb) *f* *ff* *fff*

Hn(F) *f* *ff* *fff*

Tbn *fff*

Tuba *fff* *ff*

191 Tuba to fore

T1(D) *rfz*

T2(Bb) *rfz*

Hn(F) *rfz*

Tbn *ff* *fff* *rf* *rf*

Tuba *fff* *simile*

197 [rall.] [molto rall.]

T1(D) *rfz*

T2(Bb) *rfz*

Hn(F) *rfz*

Tbn *rf*

Tuba *rf*