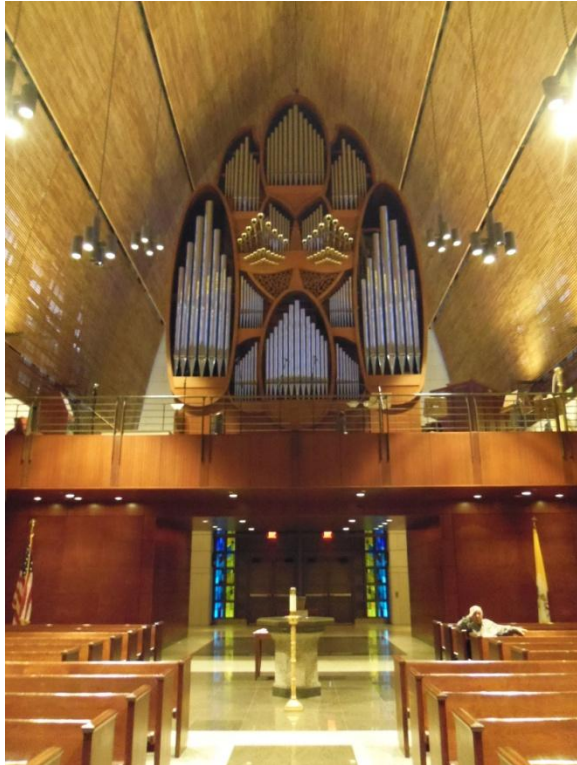


Gregorian Chant and Modern Composition for the Catholic Liturgy: Charles Tournemire's *L'Orgue Mystique* as Guide

Conference Summary

From February 1-3, 2012, performers and scholars from across the U.S. and five foreign countries gathered for a symposium on Charles Tournemire, sponsored by the [Church Music Association of America](#), [Nova Southeastern University](#) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the [Church of the Epiphany](#) in Miami, Florida, and the [Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter](#).



A new initiative of the CMAA, organized by [Dr. Jennifer Donelson](#) of [Nova Southeastern University](#), the aim of the [conference](#) was to explore the aesthetic, liturgical, and compositional principles of *L'Orgue Mystique*, the implications of the work for modern compositions inspired by Gregorian chant, and the role of modern compositions and the organ in the Catholic liturgy.

The opening recital of the conference was given at the Church of the Epiphany in South Miami by [Mr. Jonathan Ryan](#), First Prize Winner of the Jordan International Organ Competition and Visiting Artist at St. James Cathedral (Episcopal) in Chicago. In the model of recitals given by Tournemire himself, Ryan presented a delightful snapshot of the modal and chorale-based tradition to which Tournemire claimed not only compositional lineage, but also artistic allegiance. Versets by de Grigny and excerpts from

Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* opened the program in a colorful display of the variety offered by the liturgical organ repertoire of the 17th century. The *Paraphrase-Carillon* from Tournemire's office from *L'Orgue Mystique* for the Assumption marked the center place in the program, and the melodic wealth of Tournemire's use of Marian chants was highlighted by Ryan's supple sense of rhythm and phrasing. Three tune-based compositions by Buxtehude (Chorale Prelude on *Komm Heiliger Geist*), Sweelinck (Variations on *Puer nobis nascitur*) and Böhm (Chorale Prelude on *Vater Unser im Himmelreich*) followed, itself an ingenious Trinitarian prelude to the masterpiece of Trinitarian symbolism, the "St. Anne" Prelude and Fugue by Bach. Ryan's exhilarating playing highlighted the immense diversity of sound in the organ repertoire to which Tournemire was drawn, and the fantastic possibilities opened up when playing the repertoire on an organ of symphonic scope.





The second day of the conference was marked by a series of recitals at the Church of the Epiphany in South Miami, organized with the generous assistance and support of Mr. Thomas Schuster, Director of Music and Organist at Epiphany. The first recital of the day was given by [Dr. Crista Miller of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Houston](#) who framed her program with two works by Naji Hakim (*Embrace of Fire* and the *Te Deum*). The ferocity and rhythmic vigor of Miller's playing of the Hakim was contrasted with the sweet repose offered by the interior of

the program – the sublime *Soleil du Soir* from Langlais' 1983 *Cinq Soleils* and Tournemire's anguished and introspective office from *L'Orgue Mystique* for the Feast of the Sacred Heart. A recital of three of Tournemire's *pièces terminales* from *L'Orgue Mystique* followed, given by Mr. [Richard Spotts](#) of Doylestown, PA. The recital, just one of a multiple-year series given by Spotts which will culminate in the playing of the complete *L'Orgue Mystique*, featured the offices of Pentecost, the Third Sunday after Epiphany, and the feast of St. Joseph. Spotts' sensitive and thoughtful playing reflected the depth of his understanding of the repertoire offered by his extensive work with the cycle.



The third program in the morning series of recitals was a premiere of two works by Christendom College (Front Royal, VA) faculty member, [Dr. Kurt Poterack](#) played by [Mr. Matthew Steynor](#) of Trinity Cathedral (Episcopal) in Miami. Both of the works featured the prominent use of Gregorian chants, the *Eucharistic Suite* employing *Ave verum*, *Jesu dulcis memoria*, and *Ecce panis angelorum*, and his *Meditation on the Glorious Mysteries* employing mostly the introits of the Masses connected to each mystery. Of special note were the variations on *Ecce panis*

angelorum in the final movement of the *Eucharistic Suite* – a delightfully varied salute to both the tune and the French 20th-century tradition of chant-based compositions.

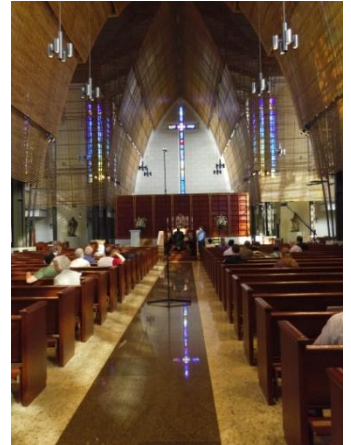
The morning concluded with an insightful lecture by [Dr. Ann Labounsky](#) (Duquesne University) replete with pertinent quotes from Tournemire's own writings on improvisation, especially from his *Précis d'exécution de registration et d'improvisation à l'orgue*. Labounsky's lecture focused on Tournemire's work as a teacher of improvisation, and her recital of works by Franck, Tournemire, and Langlais following the lecture illustrated Tournemire's work specifically within the Ste. Clotilde tradition as well as her own astute and well-deserved place in this lineage of players and pedagogues.





The first recital of the afternoon was an ambitious and imaginative project – a chronology of improvisations in the French style by [Dr. Bogusław Raba](#) (Musicology University of Wrocław, Poland.) Working his way from Titelouze and a Baroque organ Mass through the styles of Franck, Widor, Guilmant, and Vierne to those of Duruflé, Dupré, Langlais, and Messiaen, Raba displayed an impressive command of disparate styles. The afternoon

concluded with a pair of recitals featuring new music, the first given by [Timothy Tikker](#) (University of Michigan) which included one of his compositions based on the *Te Deum*, along with three pieces from Tournemire’s offices for Epiphany, the Third Sunday of Advent, and the Most Holy Trinity. Tikker’s perceptive handling of the diversity of texture and structural flow of Tournemire’s works, especially of the *Toccata* from Advent III, was particularly noteworthy. The second recital in the pair feature the *Hildegard Organ Cycle* by [Frank Ferko](#) and was performed by [Dr. Chad](#)



[Winterfeldt](#) (Gustavus Adolphus College), assisted by [Mrs. Lisa Knutson](#) (Cathedral of St. Joseph, Sioux Falls) who sang the chants upon which the selected movements were based. The effect of the barrage of tone clusters in the fifth movement (*Places of Purification*) when released into the reverberant acoustic at Epiphany at the conclusion of the movement was profoundly striking, as was Winterfeldt’s luminous registration of the fourth movement (*Articulation of the Body.*)



The final recital of the evening was given by [Dr. Ronald Prowse](#) (Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit). His selections (Dupré’s variation on *Ave maris stella* from his Op. 18, Peeters *Toccata, Fugue and Hymn* on the same, and the *pièce terminale* of Tournemire’s office for the Immaculate Conception) proved to be an outstanding preparation for the Mass of the Marian feast day which immediately followed, aided especially by Prowse’s technically brilliant delivery of the Dupré as well as a profoundly meditative performance of the Tournemire.

Thursday, February 2 concluded with a Solemn Pontifical Mass in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite (*Missale Romanum* of 1962) celebrated by His Excellency, [Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami](#), the first such Mass celebrated in nearly 50 years in the Archdiocese of Miami. Organized through the generous efforts of [Fr. Brian Austin \(FSSP\)](#) and the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter working in conjunction with the Archdiocese, the Mass drew a crowd of [approximately 1300 worshippers](#). The musical highlights of the Mass included Tournemire’s office from *L’Orgue Mystique* for the day (*Purificatio B. Mariæ Virginis*), played by [Mr. Thomas Shuster](#) (Epiphany Church, Miami) a *Missa Brevis* by [Zachary Wadsworth](#), and a

commissioned motet on the *Nunc dimittis* by [Dr. Paul Weber](#), both performed by the [Florida Schola Cantorum](#) under the direction of [Dr. Edward Schaefer](#). The Gregorian chant propers of the Mass were sung by a women's schola cantorum, consisting largely of the [Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary](#) who form the *schola cantorum* at [St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Miami](#), under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Donelson. The assistant clerics were Very Rev. Msgr. Andrew Wadsworth (Westminster, England), Rev. Fr. Guy Nicholls (Birmingham Oratory), Rev. Fr. Richard Vigoa, Very Rev. Fr. Christopher Marino, Rev. Fr. Joseph Fishwick and Very Rev. Msgr. Jude O'Doherty (Archdiocese of Miami), Rev. Fr. Christian Saenz (Society of Jesus), Rev. Fr. James Fryar, Rev. Fr. Justin Nolan and Rev. Fr. Brian Austin (Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter). Servers and other ministers were drawn from [St. John Vianney College Seminary](#), the Church of the Epiphany, and the [Mission of Sts. Francis and Clare in Miami](#).



(Photo courtesy of Ana Rodriguez-Soto, *Florida Catholic*)

A complete video of the Mass, courtesy of the Fr. James Fryar (FSSP) at www.livemass.net can be viewed by [clicking here](#). Also, a story produced by the Archdiocesan newspaper, complete with more photos of the event is available by [clicking here](#).

The events of Friday, February 3 took place in the [Performing and Visual Arts Division](#) at the main campus of [Nova Southeastern University](#) in Davie, FL. The first panel of papers began with a presentation by [Msgr. Andrew Wadsworth \(Executive Director, ICEL\)](#) who drew upon magisterial documents, liturgical praxis, and first-hand experience to craft a snapshot of the role of the organ in liturgy:

“There is something about the sound of the organ - its ability to produce every dynamic level from inaudible to deafening, and every frequency from too low to hear to too high to hear, which gives it a cosmic character, and it is only really improvisation that can explore to the full, the dimensions available in a particular space and for a particular liturgical moment. Such music is being created for that space, that organ and that liturgy in real time. An improvisation at the end of Mass in particular, can be seen as offering a response to the the liturgy on behalf of the people - a huge wordless but musical *Deo gratias*. Such moments, in the hands of a good player, give the organ an oratorical power – in a very real sense, it can preach to the people.”

The presentation which followed, given by [Dr. Edward Schaefer](#), drew together an enormous body of liturgical documents and organ repertoire from 16th and 17th century Italy, and 17th and 18th century France to examine the place of Tournemire’s *L’Orgue Mystique* within the organ Mass tradition. Of particular note were Schaefer’s speculations about the potential use of Tournemire’s work at either low or high Mass, based on French liturgical practices immediately preceding the appearance of *L’Orgue Mystique*, as well as the observations of Tournemire students about his playing at the low Mass at Ste. Clotilde.



[Dr. Susan Treacy's](#) presentation on the role of Joseph Bonnet in the Gregorian revival in Paris was particularly useful in situating Tournemire's work in the broader context of sacred music revival in early 20th-century France (and Paris in particular.) Also of great interest was her exploration of Bonnet's fascinating and far-reaching work as a whole, a little-explored topic, particularly in English-language scholarship. She drew together quotes from various writings of Bonnet, linking him in a vital way not only to the revival of chant at Solesmes, but also to the sacred music renewal happening in the U.S. through the hands of people like Mrs. Justine Ward.



The early morning session concluded with a rousing account of [Dr. Robert Sutherland Lord's](#) lifetime of experience with Tournemire's manuscripts, personal affects, and friendship with Mme. Tournemire. Scholars of Tournemire's *L'Orgue Mystique* are well-acquainted with Dr.



Lord's work on the cycle, particularly his [1984 *Organ Yearbook* article](#) on the work. Lord's as-of-yet uncompleted work which was the focus of his presentation, however, is the compilation of a catalogue for the 1300 page rough draft of *L'Orgue Mystique* left to the *Bibliothèque Nationale* by Tournemire's student, Daniel-Lesur, a manuscript not included in Joel-Marie Fauquet's catalogue of Tournemire's works. His discussion of the manuscript explored its role as an important bridge between Tournemire's "plan" for LOM and the final form of the work.

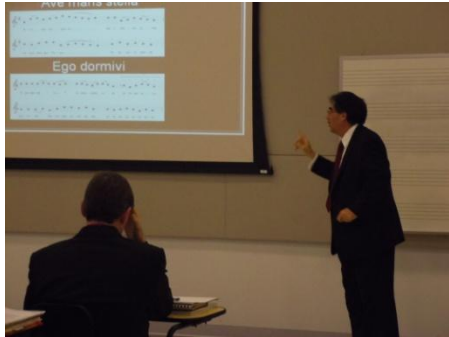
(Photo courtesy of Richard Spotts.)

The second session of the morning began with a paper by [Elisabeth Kappel](#) (University of Music and Performing Arts, Graz, Austria) which documented Tournemire's methods for chant paraphrase in the first four movements of the offices of *L'Orgue Mystique* for the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Christmas, Epiphany, and the Purification of the B.V.M., drawing together some general trends in Tournemire's methods.

The second paper of the session by [Dr. Bogusław Raba](#) (Musicology University, Wrocław, Poland) explored the harmonic language of *L'Orgue Mystique* as a whole, setting up a dialectic between pandiatonicism and chromaticism wherein pandiatonicism functions as a static and mystical element, and chromaticism serves as a dynamic and transformative language. Raba pointed to the synthesis arising from this dialectic as particularly suited towards a truly sacred music which is, by definition, both transcendental and immanent, eternal and temporal.

The presentation given by [Timothy Tikker](#) (University of Michigan) which followed was an exploration of performance practice issues connected with *L'Orgue Mystique*. Tikker's presentation focused on rhythmic elements, including the use of rubato and suppleness of phrasing in melodic lines. He presented a number of recording excerpts illustrative of Tournemire's own sense of rubato, as well as Tournemire's comments on the performance of Franck, etc.

The morning sessions concluded with a presentation by [Dr. Ronald Prowse](#) (Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit) which compared Tournemire's improvisations with his compositions. By way of illustration, Prowse focused on the Postlude from Tournemire's office for the Immaculate Conception and Tournemire's 1931 improvisation on *Ave maris stella*. Tournemire's approach was then contrasted with the improvisational approach of Dupré, allowing a portrait of an inspired Tournemire to emerge.



The keynote address, given by [Dr. Stephen Schloesser](#) (Loyola University, Chicago), focused on the vital connection between text and music in *L'Orgue Mystique*,

situating the work in the symbolist movement in general, and Tournemire's symbolist tendencies throughout his *oeuvre*. Schloesser discussed the importance of the texts not only of the chant, but also of Guéranger's meditations on them in his multi-volume *Liturgical Year*, demonstrating that Tournemire intended a sort of textual exegesis in his compositions. Comparing the presentation (in published form) of Tournemire's work with that of a highly-texted (and more successful) Messiaen, Schloesser argued not only that Tournemire might have been more successful in achieving recognition and appreciation of *L'Orgue Mystique* had he included relevant quotations from the chants with each movement, but also that Tournemire himself perhaps saw his mistake in not doing so as evidenced by subsequent publications which prominently displayed textual references, as well as concert program(s) of LOM which did likewise.



The final session of papers focused on teacher and student relationships to Tournemire, beginning with two papers on Messiaen and Tournemire. Elizabeth McLain (University of Michigan) focused her discussion of the relationship between the two on an analysis of Tournemire's influence on Messiaen's *L'Ascension*. McLain compared Tournemire and Messiaen's use of chant, noting their similar penchant for paraphrase technique, but distinguishing the practice thereof most particularly through Messiaen's reworking and abstraction of chant melodies into his own musical language. Through various musical examples drawn from the orchestral version of Messiaen's work, McLain demonstrated the effective combination of new techniques with those adopted and adapted from Tournemire in an effective portrayal of the subject matter.

The second paper on Messiaen, given by [Dr. Jennifer Donelson](#) (Nova Southeastern University), compared Tournemire and Messiaen's notions of sacred music, focusing on the composers' common inspiration in Ernest Hello. Situating the study of art in the realm of man working with matter and apart from aesthetics, Hello's writings focused on the embodiment of artistic inspiration, through individual style, in the well-executed work of art, noting the impossibility of complete attainment of the ideal in the work of art itself. The striving for the ideal and the lack of complete fulfillment in art



provided a poetically philosophical encapsulation of the eschatological element in sacred music for both composers. Through his understanding of Aquinas, Messiaen pushed this shared insight further, noting the bedazzling effect of God’s truth on the intellect and striving for an analogical bedazzlement in his own works. The relationship of the *oeuvres* Messiaen and Tournemire to the liturgy and concert hall was also explored.



The relationship of Tournemire to his *cher Maître*, César Franck, was probed in a paper by [R.J. Stove](#) (Organ Australia, Melbourne) on Tournemire’s biography of Franck. Stove’s discussion of the biography demonstrated the success in the volume at stating more about Tournemire than about Franck, given its often high tone and scope. Stove noted that a person reading the biographies of Franck written by both d’Indy and Tournemire would never have suspected that Tournemire studied with Franck for a much

shorter period than d’Indy, since Tournemire’s biography desperately attempts to point to the very mind and soul of Franck’s compositions and teaching in a manner that eclipses d’Indy’s efforts. Stove pointed out however, that the biography does serve as an effective means of understanding the enormous impact of Franck on Tournemire.

The final paper of the conference was given by [Dr. Crista Miller](#) (Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston) on the work of Najj Hakim as a successor to the Ste-Clotilde tradition of chant-based compositions. After first discussing the general characteristics of Hakim’s compositions (the use of Maronite chant, maqam and Arab scales, eastern instrumental effects, etc.), Miller drew fascinating comparisons between Hakim and Tournemire’s settings of chants for the feast of the Sacred Heart in *Embrace of Fire* and the office for the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus respectively. Of particular



note was Miller’s discussion of the history of the evolution of the propers for the feast of the Sacred Heart near the point of composition/publication of *L’Orgue Mystique* and Tournemire’s use of the superseded propers, thus making his office for the feast day “outdated” from the moment of its publishing.



The conference concluded with a recital by [Dr. Rudy de Vos](#), Organist and Director of Music at the Cathedral of Christ the Light (Oakland, CA.) Bookending the first section of the recital were works by Tournemire – first, the transcription of Tournemire’s improvisation on *Victimae paschali laudes*, and then, fittingly, the last office of the liturgical year and the last composed of *L’Orgue Mystique*, the office for the 23rd Sunday

after Pentecost, issuing an emphatic *Deo gratias* in its prominent use of the *Te Deum*. Placed between the works by Tournemire were Vierne's lyrical *Méditation* (from *Trois Improvisations*), the relentlessly creative *Fugue and Caprice* No. 9 of Roberday and the wide-ranging *Grand Dialogue* of Marchand, at times majestically exuberant and at others delicately lyrical. The crown jewel of de Vos's playing on Friday evening, however, was his masterful treatment of Franck's 2nd *Chorale*. The recital concluded with a delightful *Toccata* by Marcel Lanquetuit.



Plans are forthcoming for the publication of a volume including the conference papers, as well as the creation of a repository for some of the recordings of recitals from the conference. For updates on the progress of these endeavors, visit www.musicasacra.com/tournemire.

Pictured above: Tom Schuster, Jonathan Ryan, Jennifer Donelson, Rudy de Vos



Pictured left: Ann Labounsky, Kevin Faulkner, Richard Spotts, Robert Lord, Steven Anisko (Photo courtesy of Richard Spotts)

Pictured right: Kurt Poterack, Susan Treacy, Richard Spotts, Alan Bowman, Maria LeRose, Glenn Osborne (Photo courtesy of Richard Spotts)





Pictured left: Fr. Guy Nicholls,
Steven Anisko