

198. Widor: Toccata Nr.5

Backgrounds of S. Radic

5th Organ Symphony in F minor, op. 42 No. 1

by Charles-Marie Widor (1845-1937) is his most famous organ symphony. Her last movement, a Toccata, is one of the most famous works of organ music, alongside Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV 565.

Origin: Published by J. Hamelle in June 1879, first performed by the composer on the organ of the Trocadéro Hall on October 19, 1879. The first movement was performed in Paris on 27 February 1879 for the inauguration of the new organ by Saint-François-Xavier. **Cast:** French-late romantic grand organ.

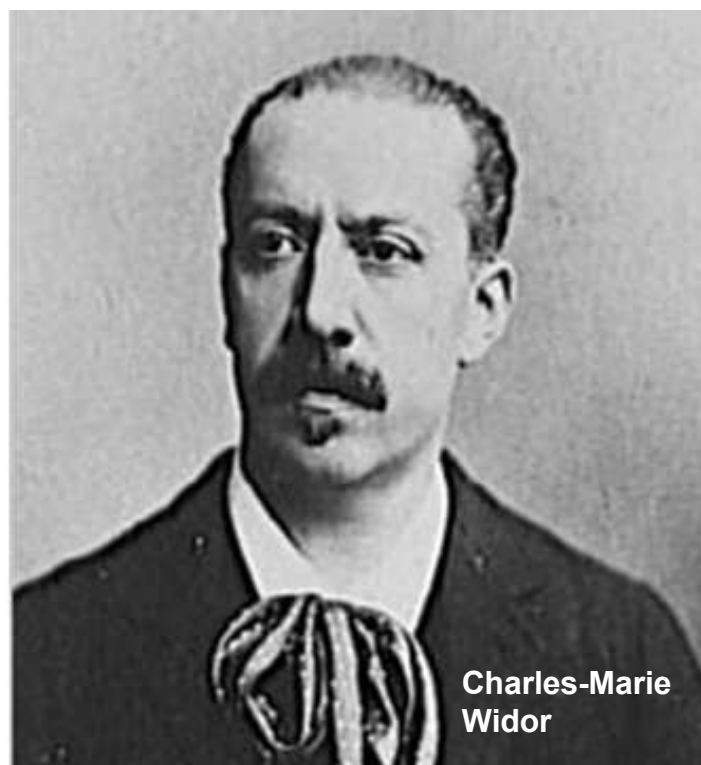
Toccata (Allegro). The fifth movement ends the symphony with a triumphant F major toccata in 4/2 time. This movement is one of the most famous organ compositions of all. Its harmonious and motivic material is simple. It begins with fast, high sixteenths in the manual, which, as perpetuum mobile, drive the movement forward incessantly. This movement is contrasted by striking chord repetitions in the left hand. After a first presentation of the theme, the pedal voice lies down in broad, tone by tone progressive dotted quarters and eights at intervals of two octaves below. The sixteenth motif of the right hand gradually loses volume until it is played by the left hand in the pp with the Récit sill closed. The recapitulation is preceded by a strong crescendo up to the organ's general tutti, until the theme reappears in thunderous 32' octaves in the pedal. Widor commented as follows:

"In this toccata I have given the manual pianos a figure of extremely fast and evenly flowing movement to make the broad triumphal chant of the double pedal in the repetition part even more impressive."

The position of the movement within organ literature is unique. All the technical innovations in organ building that made such a fast perpetuum-mobile motif and the flowing dynamic transitions possible in the first place are presented here.



The question of tempo is controversial: there is a recording by Widor from 1932 on the organ of St-Sulpice de Paris. Widor was 88 years old at the time of recording and played it at a tempo of about $1/4 = 94$; critics of the slow tempo point to the paralysis of Widor's arms and legs in his last years. In the first edition of the musical text the tempo was indicated only with allegro, in the second with $1/4 = 118$, in the third only with $1/4 = 100$. Widor's contemporaries point out that he attached great importance to the exact articulation of the sixteenth chords of the left hand and therefore probably chose a slower tempo than all the others.



Charles-Marie Widor

Tempo: 120
Auflösung: 4-4

Step-by-Step-Program.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Hi-Hat	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Tamb.	•		•		•		•		•		•		•		•	
Snare					•								•			
B-Drum	•				•				•				•			

Real-Time-Program.

Drums (Bass clef, common time): Musical notation for Hi-Hat, Snare, and B-Drum.

Break (Bass clef, common time): Musical notation for a break.

Chord (Treble clef, common time): Musical notation for a chord phrase.

Bass (Bass clef, common time): Musical notation for a bass line.

Programming instruction

This disco beat programming is an attempt to underpin a classical work with a suitable rhythm. In such projects one usually orientates oneself at some place in the original version, which shows rhythmic peculiarity. With Toccata No.5 you don't have to search long: it is the chord phrase of the accompaniment, in the otherwise completely "normal" 16th disco! This phrase takes over the tambourine in the drum area. This results in a very straight 16th beat with the syncopated chord/ tambourine accompaniment.