



Antennus

Bulletin of the Gregorian Institute of Canada

☞ *Report on Colloquium 2025.*

By Debra Laco te.

☞ Where five or six were gathered together, the chanting of matins began. Thankfully, these services of matins were not in the dark, in the middle of the night, as would have been usual in a medieval cathedral. Instead, they were grouped with lauds in the early morning in the typical custom of a parish church. This happened beginning at 7 a.m. at St. George’s Church in Hamilton each of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday for the GIC Colloquium.

After lauds each morning, we retreated to our “Chapter House,” a fellowship room down the hallway from the sanctuary, where William Renwick gave a daily lecture.



Delegates sing the Marian antiphon at compline before the altar of St. Mary.

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On Thursday, he explained what we would be doing in the next three days—that is, emulating the daily life of a clerical community in a parish following the Sarum tradition, with a special emphasis on the elements of the liturgical office. On Friday, he outlined the mass. On Saturday, he described the typical features of processions in the liturgy and provided PowerPoint images which prompted discussion about the architecture of medieval cathedrals and parish churches, and how their features served their communities. The snacks in the Chapter House were greatly appreciated after having sung already for two and a half hours! Each day, these were augmented with sandwiches, salads, and other treats for a social luncheon.

Since not all of us have the 150 psalms memorized, nor all the chants for three full days of the liturgical offices and masses, William Renwick and Brandon Wild prepared professionally typeset orders of services, that is, a spiral-bound book for each day, complete with some basic instructions, Latin chants in square notation, Latin psalm texts

with modes and recitation cues indicated, and lectionary lessons in English. These resources were essential as we navigated not only matins and lauds in the early morning, but also the “Little Hours” of prime, terce, sext, and none, with mass in between, followed by vespers and compline at the end of the day.

The sounds from the sanctuary were typically from soloists and the choir split into two halves. We sang antiphonally with each other and responsorially with the officiants, and though we sang hymns, responsories, introits, Kyries, antiphons, versicles and all other items required in the services, it was the psalm recitations, verse after verse (after verse, after verse) sung in alternation between the two halves of the choir that provided a convincing basis for the Opus Dei being a full-time job for those in monastic or clerical orders.

By midday Thursday, there were 14 peo-

ple chanting terce in the sanctuary, preparing for sext and the mass of the day. This was the feast dedicated to St. Christina, and the recited lessons in matins describing her harrowing ordeal (the only part of the services in English instead of Latin) are difficult to forget (and should probably have disclaimer warnings about their graphic nature!).

On Friday, we celebrated the Feast of St. James the Apostle. The day began with another early morning—already hot and humid outside, but cool and welcoming inside St. George’s. There were just four of us who made it to the church by 7 a.m.: the Priest, the Lecter, and one of us in each half of the choir! But, as the Office progressed, we could see the sanctuary being populated one-by-one by listeners. By the time of mass in the late morning, the community filled out with more than 20 participating. The choir was full on both sides and led by William Oates and William Renwick.

The Gregorian Institute of Canada.

Mission Statement.

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Brandon Wild officiated on Friday, while William Renwick led the Masses on Thursday and Saturday, all accompanied by acolytes.

Workshops and rehearsals on each of the three days allowed us to practice some of the chants, ask questions about the markings in the scores around the psalm and canticle recitations, and to more broadly discuss aspects of the liturgy of these feasts. These rehearsals were ably led by William Renwick and Brandon Wild, and along with the morning lectures by William Renwick they rounded out the instructional elements of the Colloquium.

Debra Lacoste was pleased to have a few minutes on Friday afternoon to introduce to the GIC the “SoundWalks” that are being mounted by the Digital Analysis of Chant Transmission project (DACT), based at Dalhousie University in Halifax. DACT is now overseeing and funding both the Cantus Database and the Cantus Index (which some of you will be familiar with), and along with these digital resources for chant researchers, the project’s public outreach includes “SoundWalks” where, through the magic of cell phones and GPS coordinates, recordings of the chants on fragments or pages from medieval manuscripts play automatically when in the vicinity of installations along the route. Download the DACT app to learn more about chant SoundWalks!

Saturday was the Feast of St. Anne, and it culminated with over 25 participants in the



Celebrating the mass of St. James.

sanctuary for vespers and compline. There were, of course, many recitations of psalm verses, but also some more familiar items, such as the introit *Gaudeamus omnes in Domino*, and the Marian antiphon *Salve regina*, this last item sung at the very end of the event in the side altar set up in the Chapter House.

Overall, it was an immersive experience: the sounds of bells, the choir, and the soloists; the scent of incense; visual elements of candles, processions, and ritual; learning at the lectures and workshops; and participating in three full days of worship services from early morning matins straight through to compline.

The final Colloquium event, a banquet at an Italian restaurant in Hamilton, was perhaps a fitting nod to Rome and its centuries of influential musical and liturgical traditions. 🍷

Debra Lacoste, July 2025.

☞ *Review: L'Orgue Mistique.*

By William Renwick

Richard Christopher Spotts. *Charles Tournemire's L'Orgue Mystique: La Haute Mission*. Colfax, North Carolina: The Leupold Foundation, 2024. (xxiii, 694 pp.)

☞ As a young organist I delighted in exploring any organ music that I could find. At that time, a friend of mine, Fr. Donald Nielson, showed me Charles Tournemire's suite for Pentecost from *L'Orgue Mystique (LOM)*. I was entranced. The music was exotic, bold, refined, challenging, mysterious. I ended up playing that suite on one of my organ recitals a couple of years later. I have dabbled in Tournemire ever since—from his early *Sortie* and his magnificent *Triple Chorale* through to his esoteric final pieces, such as the *Trois Poèmes* and *Symphonie sacrée*. But I have always come back to *LOM*, which I think perfectly sums up Tournemire's mystical vision. In those days it was not easy to come by Tournemire's music—and it was expensive—but now a large portion of it is available at no charge at IMSLP.

I was fascinated by Tournemire's musical language, which fused Gregorian modality with impressionist and modernist harmony. I was entranced by his endless imagination and enthusiasm. I was intrigued by his originality and by the seemingly bizarre notational practices that appeared in his scores, such as assigning the left hand the topmost staff and the right hand to the lower staff; his use of extravagantly looping slurs to high-

light passage work that alternated hands; and his avoidance of key signatures, choosing instead to write handfuls of sharps and flats and plenteous double sharps! At times I would become exasperated by the enormous challenges and puzzled by the seeming lack of coherence, and I would put his music away. But it always drew me back again, for it demanded my attention, and so over the past decade I have performed much of the music contained in the 51 five-movement suites of *LOM*.

Richard Spotts' new book is big. Besides being weighty, it is large in its scope and depth. As befits a monumental tome, Spotts' language itself is weighty, with challenging words on every page: prolegomenon, afflatus, enchiridion, proemial, emplotment... these alone appear on the first page of the introduction! At first they appear as an affectation, but as one enters the world of Tournemire, they seem increasingly apposite, challenging us to delve deeper into history, culture, environment, spirituality, and imagination.

Clearly, Spotts was captivated by Tournemire's music and felt compelled to explore and understand it, and more, to share it with the world. To that end, Part One of the book (some 228 pages) is an extensive cultural, political, musical, and religious history of France from the revolution to the great war, touching on a wide variety of intertwined topics: Romanticism; Gallicanism; the Paris Conservatoire; Ar-

istide Cavaillé-Coll's developments in organ design, and in particular the organ at St. Clothilde, where Cesar Franck and later Tournemire held sway; the use of popular music in churches; the re-establishment of monasticism at Solesmes Abbey; the restoration of Gregorian chant under the guidance of Dom Prosper Guéranger; the spiritual leadership of Pope Pius X; the metaphysics of Schopenhauer; the mysticism of Joséphin Péladan and the Symbolist movement; the re-establishment of a tradition of sacred organ music through the music of J. S. Bach, promoted by Adolphe Hesse, Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens, and others; and, the distinctive French traditions of improvisation and chant harmonization.

A dominating character in the story is Charles-Marie Widor, Tournemire's arch-rival. English-speaking organists tend to put all the French organ composers (Widor, Franck, Dupré, Vierne, Gigout, Tournemire, Duruflé, Messaien, *etc.*) into a single group. But this is not so. Most importantly for the understanding of *LOM*, Spotts outlines the opposing aesthetic stances of the two groups, the Widor-Dupré school and the Franck-Tournemire school.

At its most basic level, Widor and his music represent logic; Tournemire and his music represent spirit. An imprecise comparison would be between the Wagner and Brahms camps in the world of Germanic music. Widor emphasized throughout his work, in his teaching, his performance, and his

composition, order, consistency, precision, form, balance, proportion, and refinement. Fundamentally, Widor is a classicist; he was wont to say, "Ah, Mozart, the God of music."

Tournemire, on the other hand, is fundamentally a romantic. His true genius, reflected in *LOM*, was his inspired improvisations—the music that came directly from the spirit, that filled the church with transcendent passion, and echoed away again into silence. If Widor's art reflects the massy foundations, pillars, arches and vaults of the temple of God, Tournemire's reflects the manifold prayers and praises rising before the throne of God as the incense, shimmering in the brilliant rays that stream through its multicoloured stained-glass windows.

Only in Part Two of the book do we come to the plan and development of *LOM*. Spotts makes clear in this section that *LOM* derives from the 'Messe basse pour orgue' (low mass for organ), during which only the organ provided music, as opposed to the 'Grande messe', at which Gregorian chant was central. In the Messe basse it became the custom for the organist to provide a musical accompaniment to the mass, and it is this basis upon which *LOM* took shape. The five places in the Messe basse where organ music was normally used were the Entrance, the Offertory, the Elevation, the Communion, and the Sortie (Postlude). The nature of this music of course varied from church to church, and turned especially upon the sensibilities of the organist. *LOM*, thus, is

intended as music to accompany the mass throughout the year. Each suite is intended for a particular Sunday or feast of the church year, according to the liturgical year as it appears in the pre-Vatican II order. (Suite xvi, for the Easter Vigil, Holy Saturday, omits the prelude and the elevation.)

Certain other organist-composers had filled the need by publishing collections of short pieces. Alexandre Guilmant, for example, published 10 volumes of *L'Orgue liturgiste* (1886-1899) comprising 59 pieces founded on a variety of Gregorian themes, many of them hymn melodies. Guilmant's musical language, however, is based on common practice harmony rather than modality, and on standard practice rhythm and metre rather than the flexible rhythms of plainchant as it is generally understood today. Leon Boëlleman's *Heures Mystiques* (1896) is another important precursor of *LOM*. The collection comprises assorted pieces for manuals only, grouped as entrées, offertoires, elevations, communions, sorties, and versets. While these pieces do not have a basis in Gregorian chant, they do represent the establishment of the composed Messe basse for organ.

During this age of Romanticism it was the organ improvisations on the great Cavaille-Coll organs of the churches and basilicas of Paris that most strongly expressed the religious fervour of the time. Clearly great value was placed on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit at the moment that was seen

as the true religious experience. Franck encouraged imagination and spontaneity in his students' improvisations. This improvised music in response to the outpoured love of God becomes the nexus of transcendence. And it was the search for transcendent means of expression that led Tournemire above all to eschew traditional harmony and form, and to seek out new scales and combinations that would reflect this aesthetic.

However, flights of fancy, unbridled and unorganized, could easily degenerate into superficiality and excess, and this is where the genius of Tournemire is particularly notable, for Tournemire saw the employment of specifically chosen Gregorian chants as the controlling and motivating factors that would give his own music shape and meaning and integrity. It is worth noting that Spotts draws attention to the fact that not only the chants of the mass are used as melodic inspiration, but also chants from the Antiphonale. Principally the antiphons on Benedictus and Magnificat are used, and in particular for the elevation. This has its reasoning in that those antiphons are generally based on texts from the Gospel readings of the mass, and so they beautifully conjoin Word and sacrament at this climax of the mass.

Spotts does an excellent job of identifying and explaining the so-called 'Leitmotif chants', a small set of pieces that pervade and unify *LOM* as a whole. Two are very well known indeed, *Ave maris Stella*, and *Te Deum*. Two others, equally important, are,

surprisingly, the Tone V chant melody employed on Easter Day for *Venite, exsultemus Domino*, the invitatory psalm at matins, and the antiphon *Ego dormivi*, also from matins of Easter day. Interestingly, each employs a melodic figure that embodies the tritone: FACABA and AFACBG, giving them a distinctive and memorable character that is unequivocally modal.

Spotts also devotes a short chapter to the ‘Tournemire Chord’. While he says that it is comprised of notes of the octatonic scale, he does not specify its nature as a single identifiable set of intervals. It would perhaps have been better simply to argue that the octatonic scale is one among the many tonal resources that Tournemire employs.

Pages 283-293 contain a marvelously detailed discussion of the justly renowned organ of St. Clothilde, as it has been altered in various periods of its history. This understanding can be very useful in that it sheds light on the registrations indicated by Tournemire in his organ scores, as is illustrated by Spotts in the pages that follow.

As someone who has performed *LOM* extensively and over many years, Spotts is in a unique position to enlighten his readers concerning performance and interpretation of the music. This section of the book is excellent, as it encourages organists to a greater sensitivity to the texts (verbal and musical) and to a greater interpretive freedom in tempo and rubato than one is accustomed to employ, particularly in music that

has a modernistic look about it. Indeed this free approach lends performances an impression which is much closer to improvisation, and thus matches more closely the ideal at which Tournemire was aiming.

Spotts explains as clearly as possible the way in which Tournemire evokes the chant texts in the musical compositions. I am personally wary of reading into the music more than is actually present, but by making clear Tournemire’s close connection with the Symbolist aesthetic, Spotts makes a strong case that Tournemire was intentional in his portrayal of visual, verbal, and conceptual ideas through music. In any case this seems like a suitable and creative approach to the performance of *LOM*. I personally gravitate towards the overall impression of the music, in the way that Messiaen, for example describes Tournemire’s final pieces in a more general sense, “The final piece [of each suite] is the triumph of Tournemire’s art ... the fortissimo of the organ unfurls its splendour and prolongs time ... the immaterial fantasy of its rhythms, the sumptuousness of its harmonies, the changing gleams of its chameleon-like modes ... make it an artistic wonder of the most dazzling originality.” (Olivier Messiaen, in *La Sylinx* (1938): 26-27).

Predictably, the reception of *LOM* was not great. The technical complexities, the notational idiosyncrasies, the demands upon the performer and the listener were not matched by forthright aural satisfaction,

especially when compared to the gratifying music of his contemporaries, such as Widor, Vierne and Dupré, which was generally assured of a good reception. And in the aftermath, the abandonment of the Tridentine liturgy by the Roman Catholic Church—more or less banishing Gregorian chant—meant that the ideals for which Tournemire had sacrificed so much were no longer relevant to the church at large.

It is indeed a tragedy for Tournemire's music that the Second Vatican Council did away with the centuries old liturgical order and its appointed chants. When Tournemire was creating *LOM* the traditional mass and Gregorian chant were both flourishing. As Spotts points out, Tournemire took his principle inspiration from Dom Guéranger's *L'Année liturgique*, a multi-volume work which explores the meaning and importance of the chants and prayers assigned to each of the Sundays and principal feasts of the church year, and which portrays the liturgy as a whole as a continuing liturgical symphony.

In an effort to bring the public to a greater understanding of Tournemire's stunning achievement in *LOM*, Spotts devotes Part Three of his book to an assemblage of the liturgical texts and chant incipits associated with the pieces in each of the 51 suites, as well as relevant extracts from Guéranger's *L'Année liturgique*. No doubt, serious reflection upon these texts will help to bring about an understanding of Tournemire's interpret-

ive intentions in *LOM* and Spotts is thus to be commended for this work. And yet, I would say that intimate knowledge of these texts is not necessary for a satisfactory performance of much of the music, whether from a player's or from a listener's perspective. Whatever its theological inspirations, the music succeeds exceptionally well in pure musical terms, on account of its originality, its brilliance, and its aura of spiritual transcendence.

The Appendix to Part Three includes *précis* of 13 additional sets of office texts that were part of an early plan of *LOM* but were never composed, as well as useful *précis* of all of Tournemire's later organ works that employed or were inspired by Gregorian chant.

This book does not contain a movement by movement analysis of the whole of *LOM*. Such an analysis would take up a very large amount of space. There are, however, several resources to hand that complement Spotts' work. Elizabeth Anne Gotlund, 'A guide to chant in Charles Tournemire's *L'orgue mystique*.' (DMA thesis, University of Iowa, 2015) is a very useful study that indicates exactly which parts of each chant appear in each of the compositions.

Douglas O'Neill, *L'Orgue Mystique for Novus Ordo*, is a great resource for organists that are interested in linking Tournemire's music to the chants as re-organized in the Novus Ordo. This source also indicates the correct starting pitch for the chant, to be used when the organ music is performed in

connection with singing of the chant as well.

I would also refer readers to GIC's own publication, *Chant and Culture* (Institute of Medieval Music, 2014), which includes an excellent article by Jennifer Donelson, 'The Cultural Blossoming of the Twentieth-Century Chant Revival: Gregorian Chant in Charles Tournemire's *L'Orgue Mystique* (pp. 207-231). In this essay Donelson provides a detailed analysis of the suite for Advent 3, detailing Tournemire's employment of chant phrases throughout the movements. Would that some ambitious person were willing and able to carry this sort of analysis through the whole of *LOM*!

For readers who wish to become more familiar with the music, I would certainly recommend Georges Delvallée's complete recording, *Tournemire: L'Orgue Mystique integral* (Accord Records, 1999). There are also many fine performances available on the internet. And I would also like to pay tribute to Tom Walker, a British artist who during the 1980s created visual impressions of each of the suites of *LOM*. These brilliant mystical works can be viewed at the [artist's website](#).

One aspect, which I would say is of great importance for us today, is Spotts' observation that Tournemire found everything necessary for the performance of *LOM* on his home organ of just nine ranks, comprising strings, flutes, and nazard on the swell; montre, flute, and salicet on the great; and, a 16' soubasse on the pedal. This should be taken seriously as an encouragement to or-

ganists to experiment very freely with registration so as to make the pieces work on whatever instrument is available. I myself have performed many pieces of *LOM* during the liturgy on a 14-rank tracker organ. One tip that I would suggest is taking the opportunity of playing passages an octave below where they are written, seeing that so much of Tournemire's organ music is written in the high register. I would also suggest that judicious cuts can be made in many of the final movements, making them more suitable to particular liturgical contexts. Indeed, the episodic nature of the music facilitates making such cuts.

This magnificent book is not to be absorbed in a single sitting. It is a book to be read and re-read, and to be referred to often; to be absorbed, and to be gradually integrated into one's thinking and understanding of the historical, political, aesthetic and intellectual currents and countercurrents of the period of the great French organ composers, of the rise and fall of the Gregorian movement, of liturgy in general, and of *LOM* in particular. Congratulations to Richard Spotts on this worthy achievement. ♡

William Renwick, April 2025.

¶ *Collaborative SoundWalk: A Mi'kmaw Perspective.*

☞ A new Mi'kmaw SoundWalk featuring storyteller and singer Graham Marshall and singer Walter Denny Jr. is set to launch on

Tuesday, September 30, to mark Truth and Reconciliation Day.

The app-based SoundWalk has been developed in collaboration with Dalhousie University's Jennifer Bain and Cape Breton University's Marcia Oštashewski and the Centre for Sound Communities.

Membertou's dynamic singer and storyteller, Graham Marshall, guides users through the streets of downtown Kijipuktuk/Halifax, presenting nine sites through the lens of Mi'kmaw memory and culture. The self-guided walk (with a map included in the app) begins at the Treaty Truckhouse on the Waterfront, and then proceeds to the Wave, and to the Dockyard Clock at the bottom of George Street. Graham then leads us up the hill to the Lorne Julien mural in the brand-new Granville Park, to Province House and to Grand Parade, and continues along Barrington to Spring Garden with stops at the Basilica, Grafton Park at the old Memorial Library, ending at the main gates to the Public Gardens.

Graham Marshall emphasizes that interactive learning is central to this project. Mi'kmaw heritage month, he says, is an opportunity for all treaty people to "walk to-

gether in peace and friendship and truly to get to know one another."

Co-producer Jennifer Bain is excited about the creative mix of innovative technology and traditional knowledge. "The app uses GPS technology to trigger a recording of Graham sharing Mi'kmaw stories and songs relevant to each site." Interacting with images and texts in the app, listeners will hear Graham speaking or singing about the importance of the ocean to the Mi'kmaw way of life, about Kitpu (the eagle), about the love of samqwan (water), and about treaties, sacred ground and the Ancestors. At the Basilica site, Walter Denny Jr. shares a Mi'kmaw Catholic chant for St. Anne.

The app can be downloaded by accessing the Digital Analysis of Chant Transmission app: <https://situate.io/daçt/> (Note: select "yes" when prompted to check for new content).

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