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**Improvising in the French Romantic Style at  
the Organ**

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Degree Project, Master of Fine Arts in Music,  
Organ and related keyboard instrument  
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## ABSTRACT

“Improvising in the French romantic style at the organ” has two important areas of focus. The first is the contextualization of César Franck in nineteenth-century France as musician and organ performer. I have chosen to study César Franck due to the fact that I feel related to his music because of its great expressivity and the emotion it transmits to those who come closer and get involved in his works. The second focus of my thesis is Improvisation in the French Romantic Style. In this part of the work I have documented the development of my own improvisation in context of the history of improvisation, and I also show the great value this art had in France during the second half of the nineteenth century. In conclusion, I present my own improvisation in the form of a romantic symphony with the theme of The Passion of St. Luke.

Table of Contents	Pages
Abstract.....	2
Introduction .....	6
Personal Background.....	8
Biography of César Franck.....	9
Topics Explored.....	10
Methods Used.....	10
1. The French Romantic Organ Style.....	11
1.1 César Franck and the French Nineteenth-Century Panorama.....	12
1.3 César Franck, Man, Organist, Composer and Teacher.....	12
1.4 General Characteristics of His Music.....	16
2. Improvisation in the French Romantic Style at the Organ.....	20
2.1 The Concept of Improvisation.....	20
2.2 Origins of Improvisation .....	21
2.3 Improvisation in France during the Nineteenth Century.....	24
2.4 Improvisation as common practice in France During Nineteenth Century.....	25
2.5 My Improvisation.....	26
2.6 Explanation and orientation of the Passion of Luke as a Text for Improvisation.....	29
2.6.1 The Passion of Luke.....	29
2.6.2 Comments on my improvisation over paraphrases on the Passion texts according to St. Luke.....	30
2.6.3 The Supper of Love.....	31
2.6.4 Agony.....	33
2.6.5 The Death of Jesus on The Cross.....	34
2.6.6 Resurrection.....	35
3. Analysis and Structure of my Improvisation in the form of a Symphony in paraphrase style based on the St. Luke Passion.....	37
3.1 Allegro Maestoso.....	37
3.2 Andante.....	39
3.3 Adágio.....	41

3.4 Final .....	43
3.5 Concert Exam done on 12 December 2014 .....	46
Conclusion .....	48
Acknowledgements .....	49
Bibliography .....	50



## **Improvising in the French Romantic Style at the Organ**

### Introduction

When trying to write a Master's Thesis in order to satisfy an Academic assessment it is a good idea to write about a new theme and which it is the choice of the interested. In order to do that, I chose as a theme, "*improvising in the French Romantic Style at the Organ.*"

This is a huge theme but with rich musical heritage and of great relevance for me.

The work of my thesis is divided into two parts: The first deals with the Romantic French style organ, having as a main focus the great composer, organist and improviser César Franck. The second part is the main theme of the thesis, improvising in the French Romantic Style at the Organ.

In the first part of the work, I defend the importance of the Romantic French style, which was influenced by the History of the organ in France from the nineteenth century until now. I shall also try to set César Franck in the society of the nineteenth century, and I will study in what ways he was influenced by and was responsible for influencing the musicians of his period, having a German side and a Belgian side. Furthermore, in this study we should also include an historical approach about the man, the organist, the composer and the teacher.

On the other hand, the second part of the project is exclusively dedicated to improvisation. In order to achieve that, I shall make a brief historic contextualization of its appearance, as well as the definition of the concept of improvisation and its relevance as a practice in France, in the nineteenth century. In addition to this I hope to use my study of Franck to influence my own improvisational style. That is the reason why I shall describe my experiences with improvisation. I am going to mention some considerations with more relevance about my improvisations which I intend to play in my exam concert.

This project consists of my improvisation through texts from the Holy Bible.

The principal theme of my improvisation is The Passion of the Saint Luke working not only with the ideas and influence of César Franck's music, but also some of the ideas of other French organists of nineteenth century. This Symphony, as well as being a personal achievement, is also a tribute to César Franck.

In the exam concert, I intend to play two organ repertoire pieces: Prelude Fugue and Variation op. 18 and Passacaglia and Fugue BWV 582; I also I am going to play my improvisation: The Passion of Saint Luke. My work on this improvisation includes analysis and interpretation of works.

I have always given great importance to improvisation as creating and transforming is something so noble and powerful that there is no explanation possible.

In my short recitals, which have taken place in Madeira, even with my limitations and capacities, I have always given emphasis to this artistic attitude. While improvising certain theme or creating something new, for me represents an encounter with the Creator.

What made me chose this theme "Improvisation in the French Romanticism" was the great interest I have for the work of César Franck.

After having read his biography and after having done some research I noticed that Franck was a distinguished improviser. His incredible improvisations enchanted those who went to St. Clotilde's church, in Paris.

César Franck was considered the most important improviser of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in France.

It was very important for me to have chosen this theme, not only for the music of César Franck, but also for the fact that I have a special tendency to appreciate the Romantic symphonic music.

During the preparation for my University Degree in Portugal, I studied improvisation for two years, but I felt this was not enough for my needs. As I have mentioned above, this practice is not very common in Portugal.

Once I had decided that I needed more knowledge and improve my musical performance, I applied for a place at your University to continue my studies.

## Personal background

I was born in Funchal, Madeira where I started my music studies in piano, at the Conservatory of Music, now called Escola Profissional das Artes da Madeira.

In the same Conservatory I did the Complimentary Course of organ which was concluded in 2003-2004.

After that I took a degree in organ at the Escola Superior de Música de Lisboa, under the supervision of Professor Dr João Vaz. In order to improve my capacities in organ he participated in various Master Classes with the following Professors: Franz Josef Stoiber, Hans-Ola Ericsson, José Oriol, Joris Verdin, Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, Andrea Marcon and António Esteireiro.

In England I studied improvisation in various Master Classes with these Professors: Duncan Middleton, and Ronny Krippner. In Germany he studied with Otto M. Kraemer.

Later I did a Post-Graduation in organ interpretation at the University of Évora, Portugal, under the supervision of Professor Dr. João Vaz.

So far I has been developing his musical career for about twenty years and during this period I has dedicated a lot of his time to liturgical services as an organist, playing in various churches in Funchal and Lisbon. Presently I is the titular organist at St. John the Evangelist's College Church in Funchal. During the year 2010/12 I did a series of organ recitals mainly in improvisation and Chamber Music.

At the moment I am finishing my Master's Degree in Organ and related keyboard instruments under the supervision of Dr. Joel Speerstra, at the Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg.



## Biography of César Franck

César Franck was born in Liège in 1822 and died in 1890. Franck had already received the premiere prix for solfège and piano at the conservatory of his native city by 1834. Pushed by his father to become a piano virtuoso- a career to which the mild-mannered Franck proved spectacularly unsuited - he continued his piano studies in Paris and took lessons in harmony and counterpoint from Reicha (the teacher of Berlioz, Liszt and Gounod).

He was enrolled in the Paris Conservatory in 1837, and soon won premiers prix for piano and counterpoint and (in the class of Benoist) second prix for organ. By 1844 the family had settled permanently in Paris (where Franck would remain until his death in 1890). Disagreements over the course of his career led the young man to a break with his father, and he began to support himself by teaching – both privately and in various schools and religious institutions – and by playing the organ.

His first appointment in the latter capacity was at the church of Notre Dame de Lorette, followed by tenure at St. Jean - St. François. In 1858 he was named organist of the new church of St. Clotilde, where he played one of Cavallé-Coll's masterpieces from its inauguration I December 1859 until his death.

From 1872 he was professor of organ at the Conservatoire.

Twelve major pieces, all products of the composer's maturity, Franck's composition for organ appeared in three collections: Six pieces, 1860-2, Trois pieces, 1878, and Trois chorals, 1890. Inspired by the St. Clotilde instrument, these works represented a radically new approach to writing for the organ.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Guillou, *César Franck, Complete organ works* (Paris: St. Eustache, 1989), 2.

## Methodology

Topics I explore in this work:

In the first part:

César Franck and the French nineteenth century Panorama

- César Franck, Man, Organist, Composer and Teacher
- General Characteristics of His Music

In the second part:

- The concept of improvisation
- Origins of Improvisation
- Improvisation in France during the Nineteenth Century
- Improvisation as common practice in France during nineteenth century
- My Improvisation, include my sketches, analyses and interpretations of works
- Considerations about my project and final exam concert

### **Methods I use:**

In this project for the thesis, I intend to understand the History of Improvisation and importance of the French Romantic style as a relevant factor for the organists of the Nineteenth Century up to now.

For that reason I chose to talk about César Franck, a great organist, improvisator and composer who was considered one of the biggest improvisers in second half of the Nineteenth Century, who contributed to the development of that precious art and consequently having left a great mark in the History and as well as influence in the coming (posterior) musicians. It is also my intention to show my improvisation using specific forms of Romantic music to differentiate the improvisations.

Following this idea, I intend to interpret some of César Franck's works/pieces, as well as my improvisations, alternating one piece and one improvisation until the end. As for my improvisations, I 'm going to play My Symphony: The Passion of Luke in Romantic French style.

Meanwhile I had the necessity to change my initial plan which I had established when I entered this University due to the fact that I had new ideas and changes which were accepted after conversations with the organ Professor who is also my orientator/tutor. Nowadays I am following a plan which is closer to my own style of playing.

As a methodology of investigation, which I have been using for my project, I have read and listened to a lot of improvisation recordings. The idea of the aural work is to understand the main ideas of the composers, so that I can also lay my improvisations.

This is basically my plan for the final concert.

## Part One

### 1. The French Romantic Organ Style

The French Romantic style for organ was a new style which was developed in the French repertoire for organ in the second half of the Nineteenth Century in France. This was all due to the famous organ constructor Cavaillé-Coll, as well as important organists who contributed to its development.<sup>2</sup>

The Nineteenth Century revolutionized the organ according to N. Duforcq who says that after the creation of a new symphonic instrument, the organists gave impulse to arrival of a new language and to the formation of a new style which is distinguished by the clarity of sonority and language.<sup>3</sup>

During the second half of the nineteenth century, we can see the progressive development of what became the construction of a school. This school introduced gradually a new approach to the building of organs and consequently creating a new language and style, inspired directly by the German school and with crescent references to the past and constructed on technical solid bases and well established.

The organists who contributed to the development of that new school and language were: César Franck, Lemmens and Clement Loret; Thus we can say that the founders of the French School of organ in France were these three Belgian musicians.<sup>4</sup>

In the period when the constructor appeared, the building of organs in France was still recovering from the consequences of the revolution of 1789. The damaged instruments had already been repaired as better as possible and some organ builders had begun to build new instruments in a style that possibly reflects more traditions of the old regime rather than the spirit of the new generation; best of all, some new sonorities were developed such as the introduction of the celestial voice, from the gamba viola to the cello, harmonic flute, registration of solos, etc.<sup>5</sup>

A new tendency took place which consisted in the placement of registration, by the new solo sounds and the replacement of the “mixtures”.

Cavaillé-Coll was lucky to have known of the pneumatic machine which the British Barker had invented in 1839, and was intelligent enough to use this new technological innovation immediately to overcome the difficulty of the weight of the big instruments.

Many of the innovations introduced in the Cavaillé-Coll's instruments are the result of simple observations which lead to the construction of simple solutions.<sup>6</sup>

It was in an organ built by Cavaillé-Coll for the cathedral of Carcassonne that César Franck gave a concert on 30th of August 1856.

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<sup>2</sup> Manuel Valença, *O Órgão na História E na Arte* (Braga, 1987), 228.

<sup>3</sup> Valença, *Órgão*, 228.

<sup>4</sup> Joris Verdin, *César Franck and Aristide Cavaillé-coll* (Orgues de Rouen, San Sebastian and Azkoita, Setembro, 1998), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Valença, *Órgão*, 229.

<sup>6</sup> Joris Verdin, *César Franck and Aristide Cavaillé-coll* (Orgues de Rouen: San Sebastian and Azkoita, Setembro, 1998), 6.

## 1.2 César Franck and the French nineteenth century Panorama

The French romanticism, both in the first and second half of the Nineteenth Century will counteract the formalistic canons of classicism that prevailed from Boileau.

At the time, German literature, influenced by the feeling of Nature, will exert a strong upward in France. This motion was introduced by François René de Chateaubriand <sup>7</sup>.

In downtown Paris, was in vogue comic opera and operetta which was the musical entertainment and occupation of the population. This musical hit consisted more at ease and in awe of what the artistic depth.<sup>8</sup>

This kind of music was in force, especially in the decade from 1835 to 1845. This date corresponds to the formative years of César Franck. The great events of this period were marked by lyrical creations.

This great musician was influenced by new cultures, the social and political turns of this century and also in turn influenced French music for organ<sup>9</sup>. Franck was considered one of the leading French composers of the second half of the nineteenth century.

Housed in a romantic turning point for the post - romanticism, his works followed the rapid changes that have come to Europe and contributed to a kind of renaissance of French instrumental music.<sup>10</sup>

He was the creator of the modern French school renewal of classical forms for the renewal of cyclically even by musical chromaticism.<sup>11</sup>

The artist was responsible for the statement of the cyclical formula - a melody that develops and reappears in different ways.

This method was already used by Berlioz and Wagner and then recycled by César Franck, the first composer to use it in the sonata and symphony.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3 César Franck, Man, Organist, Composer and Teacher

#### The Man

Franck began his musical studies in Liège at the age of five. During his adolescence he left his country and moved to France with his family, where he received the French influence in all fields.

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<sup>7</sup> Hans H. Hofstatatter and Hannes Pixa, *História universal Comparada* (Resomnia Editores, 1987), 181.

<sup>8</sup> Louis Girard, *Collection d'Histoire* (Bordas, 1961), 104.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Chausse, *César Franck* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1980), 26.

<sup>10</sup> Norman Demuth, *César Franck* (Kessinger Publishing, 2008), 208.

<sup>11</sup> *Infopédia Musical online, César Franck. cited from <http://www.infopedia.pt>* (Porto Editora, 2003-2014), 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Infopédia Musical online, César Franck, 2.*

Paris was seen as the only European capital of musical consecration. Many composers such as Paganini, Liszt, Hummel, Chopin and others acquired fame, glory, prestige and wealth there, in which the young Franck also flourished for his triumph.<sup>13</sup>

In the winter of 1835-36, Franck family settled in Paris and during the process of naturalization, this young man continued studying piano and composition with Zimmerman and harmony with Reicha. The second teacher marked him deeply. With Reicha, César Franck learned how to write a good fugue; also it is probable that the gentle mysticism Franck later developed in his religious compositions “Redemption” and “Les Beatitudes” was direct influence from this teacher.

The years of 1836 and half of 1837 were dedicated to the exclusive study of composition.<sup>14</sup>

Their existence was not always a bed of roses, because his life was obscure for 10 years. At this time, he felt the need to teach in order to survive. He lived modestly with a low salary as a teacher from the school, despite the fact that the Duke of Montpensier considered him virtuoso celebrated for his extraordinary triumph of the Conservatory.

## The Organist



César Franck had a greater reputation in his time as organist rather than as a composer.<sup>15</sup>

During his studies at the Conservatory, his skills as an improviser in the class of Benoist Francisco were much appreciated.

At the age of 25 he was an organist, hoping to become Kapellmeister.

In 1853 he was appointed organist of the church in Saint Juan-Francisco de Maria and in this church, Franck was considered the best improviser.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Norman Demuth, *César Franck* (Kessinger Publishing, 2008), 14.

<sup>14</sup> Clause, *Franck*, 17-35.

<sup>15</sup> Rollin Smith, *Towards an Authentic Interpretation of the organ of César Franck* (Pendragon Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Jean Clause, *César Franck* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1980), 40.

The first pieces for organ yet timid were published in 1857, the year he took possession of another more sumptuous orchestral instrument, the Santa Clotilde.

As a teacher, he had to do private tutoring and teach in private schools and to earn his keep. Only in 1872 is it officially became a professor at the Paris Conservatoire.

The students themselves were not familiar with his compositions.

As a composer Franck only reached a level of maturity when it came to their 50s, and as organist was already considerable since he was 30, well-known from inaugural recitals of almost all relevant organs in the French capital.

In August 1856, César Franck played the organ for the cathedral of Saint Michael's in Carcassonne, in the workshop of the construction of the Cavaillé-Coll organs.

The French Musical Revue et Gazette of Paris stressed that César Franck was: an excellent organist highlighted all the capabilities and tonal features, first through its implementation excels pure music, of his own and then through brilliant improvisations.<sup>17</sup>

In 1857, April 25, César Franck played the organ above, in a program with school students at a school called Niedermeyer. That same year, Cavaillé-Coll suggested that Franck was appointed organist of Saint-Roch, which in fact, did not come true.

In December 1857, César Franck took over as chapel master and organist of the church of Santa Clotilde.

For the presentation of the organ, Franck played two works of his own, one of which was the 1st version of Final piece Op. 21 and the other a grand improvisation, followed by Bach Prelude and Fugue in e –minor.

With Franck's musical prestige in November 1862 he was invited to inaugurate the organ built by Hippolyte Loret. In 1863, the organ of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, rebuilt by Cavaillé-Coll, was opened by several organists including the celebrated César Franck.

In November 1864, Franck gave a concert with his compositions, including the Six Pièces that were developed between 1860 and the year 1862. Which included: Fantaisie in C Major, Op.16 (dedicated to Alexis Chauvent), Grand Pièce Symphonique, op.17 (dedicated to Charles - Valentin Alkan), the Prélude, fugue et Variations, Op.18 (dedicated to Camille Saint - Saens), the Pastorale, Op.19 (dedicated to the artist Cavaillé - Coll), the Prière, Op.20 (dedicated to François Benoist) and finally the Final, Op. 21 (dedicated to A, Lefébure - Wely).

In 1866, the composer gave a recital that included the presence of his great friend and organist Franz Liszt. It is assumed that this was the concert master Weimar exclaimed: These poems have their place beside the masterpieces of Sebastian Bach.<sup>18</sup>

As time went by, his celebrity was gaining reputation. In 1867, Franck inaugurated the organ of the church of Saint-Germain.

According to some chroniclers Franck gave an outstanding performance with the pieces written and a wonderful inspiration in their improvisations.

His Brilliant career as organist lasted until his death.

Vicent D'Indy summarizing the art of Franck regarding organists of his time, wrote that he was a genius of improvisation and that no modern organist, without excluding the more prominent performers, could be compared with Franck.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Franck*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Franck*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Franck*, 23.

Frank's performance was of such quality that J.Guy Ropartz considered him remarkable organist, full of love for his instrument.

Franck himself told the critics how serious his style was. He said: "I am sorry not to please everyone, but I play the organ my way".<sup>20</sup>

Louis Vierne postulates:

"I have never heard anything that could compare with Franck's improvisations from the Standpoint of purely musical invention. At church it took him a while to get started – a few attempts, a little experiment- then, once under way, a prodigality of invention that was miraculous: a polyphony of incomparable richness in which melody, harmony, and form competed in originality and emotional conception, traversed by flashes of manifest genius. Never any calculated combinations, never any feats of skill customary among the acrobats playing to the gallery; instead, the constant concern for the dignity of his art, for the nobility of his mission, and for the fervent sincerity of his sermon in sound. Joys or melancholy, solemn or mystic, powerful or ethereal: Franck was all those at Sainte – Clotilde, and mere technical skills such as contrapuntal artifices, canons, superimposition of themes, etc; would never appear except when justified by the expression of whose criteria was essentially emotion and depth".<sup>21</sup>

## The Composer

If as noble as a man, he was just as noble as an organist and as well as a composer despite the belated recognition.

César Franck's composition output was comparatively small, but he wrote with quality. He composed Masses and some pieces for organ and harmonium, besides the operatic repertoire of three operas.

His composition was most notable in sacred music (Panis Angelicus, 1872, Redemption, 1871-72 and the Beatitudes, in 1879).

However, he wrote symphonic poems, the Symphony in D minor, in 1881, Chamber Music as the famous Sonata for piano and violin in 1886 and String Quartet in D major, in 1889, the six pieces to large organ, 1860 - 1862 and above all the famous three Corals for organ in 1890.

The content of his works reveals a mystical atmosphere and melancholic, dramatic and emotional. Franck imposed himself with extraordinary magnificence and beauty in the performance of his pieces when using the romantic organ.

The November 30, 1857, was inaugurated the famous Basilica of Sainte Clotilde where César Franck was exhibited for the first time.

César Franck wrote his pieces according to the characteristics of the organ of Sainte Clotilde.

Once built by the artist, Cavallé-Coll, it was inaugurated in the Basilica of Sainte Clotilde.

Franck made his long waited dream come true as expected, and would become the main organist. The new instrument was considered a masterpiece. It had three keyboards with 56 stops and records 16, 15 pedals combo and especially the beauty of the background records.

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<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Franck*, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *Franck*, 23.

The mystery of the keyboard recitative, authentic poetry of the clarinet, the sharpness of a trumpet never reproduced elsewhere, the clarity of the set, his wealth and his cordial nature was magnificent for its opening, December 19, of 1859<sup>22</sup>.

Some chroniclers and journals claim the great organist, favorite of everyone, who is able to mimic the improvisations cataracts of heaven, and the noise of gunpowder ... the noises subside a delicious symphony of heart. Voices are heard celestial angels are a divine covenant.<sup>23</sup> The first works of the illustrious composer were fantasy piano sonatas, two concertos, two trios' melodies and a symphony for large orchestra.

## The Professor

The circumstances that led to appointment of César Franck as professor of organ at the Paris Conservatory in 1872 are uncertain. Three months after the triumphs of Ruth and the trio work in the national society, the Minister of Fine Arts, Jules Simon entrusts César Franck a professorship at the conservatory.<sup>24</sup>

It is also believed that Cavaille – Coll influenced the appointment of César Franck as professor, despite the fact that their relationships had been the closest.

César Franck had a very organized work method and discipline. There are three of Franck's ideas as professor that deserves to be mentioned:

- 1- Do not try to produce much, but try to do well, even though very little is produced.
- 2- Bring me the results of many attempts you can honestly show and represent the best you can do.
- 3- Do not expect to learn anything from my correction of errors of which you are aware unless you make yourself, all the effort to correct them.<sup>25</sup>

In his classes, Franck showed the different ways to harmonize or to present a topic, a theme to follow a trail, and in free improvisation classes, all students had to apply that knowledge acquired.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Smith, *Franck*, 23.

<sup>23</sup> Clause, *Franck*, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Clause, *Franck*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *Franck*, 40.

<sup>26</sup> Clause, *Franck*, 59.



## 1.4 General Characteristics of His Music

It is customary to consider the works in detail before making an assessment. With Franck, a composer highly stylized, I mean, it is not possible to examine the general characteristics of your music without first consider his works.

Any composer with individuality has certain salient features of his technique, and the particular way of expressing himself. However, the real personality and genius of a composer are noticed in his music.<sup>27</sup>

Some critics believe that being Belgian, César Franck, may have influenced the character of his music and his musical training. As a student, Franck, participated and attended the concerts that were held at the Conservatory, which were generally rule to be present. They usually performed works of Handel, Hayden, Mozart, Bach, Mendelssohn and French composers, such as: Couperan, Rameau, Méhul, Lully and Cherubini who was the director of the conservatory and president of the society concert Conservatoire de Paris.

Over time, Franck showed enthusiasm for the work of Wagner, but never allowed his individuality to be absorbed.<sup>28</sup>

The component parts of the technique of César Franck consist of: A warm harmony towards a free counterpoint in its context and rhythmic vitality; we may refer that Liszt immortalized the diminished Liszt's seventh and Brahms's sixth. Franck had the same role in relation to the dominant ninth, although it is Debussy, Franck's pupil, who gets credit for it.

It was Franck and not Debussy that formulated and practiced the theory that in order to obtain free style music, each chord should be considered "pure", meaning satisfactory, should be its own entity in itself.

Debussy, Franck's pupil, never fully followed the teacher whose insistence in modulating used to upset him. "Modular, modular" exclaimed César Franck excited to Debussy, whenever he improvised. But why? Replied the student when "I am feeling so well in this tone." Franck was not a teacher of those who say to their students: if that's what you want, then it is fine.<sup>29</sup>

Franck applied the term "Impressionism" to classical harmony, which Debussy avoided because it did not interest him. However, his first fantasy for piano and orchestra showed a César Franck emerged influence of both harmonically and formally. For this reason he repudiated this work. Nevertheless, he understood that in Franck he could find his own solutions and in his writings speaks of Franck with the utmost respect and admiration.<sup>30</sup>

The harmonic sense of César Franck was limited, but its chromaticism is always present and is almost always sentimental. His insistence on the pitch, at any price, was dictated by the thought that when he wanted to be brilliant he would choose high notes and when he was sad he would play in minor keys and bass.

César Franck's admirers have always had the habit of seeing hostility in any review less favorable. In fact, all these statements present facts but not criticism.

César Franck had much appreciation for the latest works of Beethoven: quartets and sonatas. Méhul, Bach, Beethoven and Schubert, were his ideals. As for Handel, César considered him

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<sup>27</sup> Norman Demuth, *César Franck* (New York: Philosophical Library, 2008), 44.

<sup>28</sup> Demuth, *Franck*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Demuth, *Franck*, 47.

<sup>30</sup> Demuth, *Franck*, 47.

pompous and great eloquent. From the Belgian organist - Lemmens, Franck showed interest and got some inspiration for the development of some works and vast improvisations.<sup>31</sup>

Liszt was one of his contemporaries for whom César had more admiration, consideration, and friendship. Franck always wanted to hear him in concert but it was never possible. However, in 1866 Liszt himself played for César one of his works for organ, perhaps the best known - a prelude and fugue in Bach's name and while listening, he was merely impressed by the beautiful interpretation.<sup>32</sup>

In 1862, Franck concluded the 6 pieces for organ, a true musical testament where it is possible to see the first realization of the genius called César Franck who showed the wisdom of the composer and which anticipate major future works.<sup>33</sup>

When Liszt listened to them in Saint Clotilde's add he exclaimed:

"These Poems have their place beside the masterpieces of Sebastian Bach".<sup>34</sup>

Liszt's work as mentioned above, had a major impact on César Franck as an example in his symphony in D minor (written in 1888), mainly in the use of recurring melodic material (cyclically) or in hybrid form, uniting an idea with an expressive dramatic instrumental music in the spirit of the symphonic poem which Liszt was one of the precursors.

César Franck had great appreciation for the work "Tristan and Isolde" by Wagner, though he never allowed himself to be influenced by extreme Wagnerian.

There is a student who spoke very highly to César Franck about Tristan and Isolde and César Franck replied agreeing that it was a beautiful piece and said: "Do me a favor now! After Tristan, read my partiture of Beatitudes. What Wagner did in relation to human love, I did for the Divine."<sup>35</sup>

Franck will always be associated with the cyclic formula, however this was not his invention, but that was him who gave more emphasis on the use of some of his works mentioned above.

Franck, his students and Liszt were not the only ones to use this system. Brahms also used it in his first piano duos and 3rd movement of the 2nd Symphony. However, this form is the mark of tradition of César Franck and brings with it certain principles that cannot be denied.

The greater one is the clarity in all its aspects.

There is yet another way in which César Franck was excellent and whose constituent elements were not too far removed from the essence and cyclic formula; it is the variation on a theme.

The dominance of variation is clearly visible in all the works that Franck composed, either in the variation of a theme, or in total material appearing systematically.<sup>36</sup>

This is one of the reasons for asserting that the legacy of Bach and Beethoven continued in his work, but it does not imply, however, that Frank's music is as wide as theirs. As Franck mentions: "I wrote little, but with quality."<sup>37</sup>

Franck inherited the high aesthetic ideals and fervent sincerity of these two great German composers. The greatness of Bach and Beethoven is their infinite variety; César Franck, on the other hand, was rather more limited in expression and technique.

To Franck there was no such a strong tradition in French music, upon which he could rely on.

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<sup>31</sup> John Tyrrell, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2 nd edition, 178.

<sup>32</sup> Guilles Cantagrel, *Guide de La Musique D'Orgue* (Fayard, 1991), 357.

<sup>33</sup> Demuth, *Franck*, 48.

<sup>34</sup> Demuth, *Franck*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Demuth, *Franck*, 52.

<sup>36</sup> Demuth, *Franck*, 52.

<sup>37</sup> Demuth, *Franck*, 59.

Of all the schools and musical traditions, the German school was worldwide the most important for all musicians until the Nineteenth Century. It not only revolutionized music French but also French composers. César Franck, of Belgian origin and German tradition justifies his psychology and behavior in all aspects of his personality. Also due to other factors that influence, he gained through that influence from the virtuous and famous musicians, having Bach and Beethoven as a model, as it can be seen in their choirs for organ, the latest work and maximum exponent of Franck, featuring its mysticism with God.

## Part Two

### 2. Improvising in the French Romantic Style at the Organ

#### 2.1 The concept of Improvisation

The concept, or act of improvisation, has always been, to a certain point, linked to the art of the composition. Despite the fact that this symbiosis is not always perceptible/evident in the analysis of a written piece, where the elements of the musical speech are determined, the most precise possible according to the musical notation conventionalized, the separation of these two acts – compose/improvise - is frankly reduced in the works where the conceptual idea is precisely the idea of improvisation. So, it is possible to find works composed in the style of improvisation, as well as possible to observe the opposite phenomenon in planned improvisations with proprieties of fixed musical forms.

Improvisation has always been and will continue to be the most common musical practices, and specifically in erudite/skillful music for keyboard which was constantly present during the Baroque period, through for example, the resolution and interpretation of the low continuous, as well as in the cadences of concerts for piano during the Classical and Romantic period. In spite of being considered a spontaneous act, in the cases mentioned above, as well as in others, improvisation is canalized and delineated by one or more musical presumptions/purposes.

In the case of cadences for example, the improvisation is based on the musical themes and ideas present in the time or work to be played (obviously in the cadences which were noted and preserved in physical support by the composers and even by some interpreters).

The other example, the resolution on the low continuous, it is a form of accompaniment where only the harmonic sequence was defined by a melodic line in the low (executed with the left hand and/or the cello or viola de gamba) and a system of keys of cords which defines the harmony to be executed with the right hand, giving the musician an important role, due to the fact that he was already allowed to improvise. It is a fact and it is documented that a lot of great composers, in the History of music, were fine improvisers, as it is the example of César Franck amongst others. For that reason, it supports the fact that the art of composing can be strongly supported by a natural capacity to improvise. According to Bach “it is possible that someone has studied composition with great success (...) without having a natural capacity to improvisation. On the other hand, a good future in composition can be securely predicted for someone who is capable of improvising, providing that he writes abundantly and that not start very late.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> C. P. E. Bach, *Versuch uber die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Henning, 1753), 430.

For obvious reasons, the moments of improvisation of composers such as L. Couperin, J. S. Bach, W. A. Mozart, F. Chopin, F. Liszt, Franck amongst others, did not reach us. It is for the ephemerality of the act itself that it is difficult to investigate it.

The biggest support for analysis of this matter is the codification of the element of sound in these works, where the intention of passing on the ideas of the creation of music in the moment of the performance is obvious. Arnold Hauser defends the idea that “...*chances only favor those who are prepared for them.*”<sup>39</sup>

Improvisation is never pure. The performer cannot “escape” his school, his time, his technical skills, or the instrument he is playing. What I intend to say is that there are always restrictions and so, nothing more is invented. What we do is, somehow in a new irreverent way, stroll in impassable roads. The truth is that the artist is, in his nature, a provoker.

All works of art are challenges and being so, artist and work of art are facing each other while one creates and the other is created; unsophisticatedly they look for a fusion in a way that one overcomes the other, in an ecstasy that is beyond the real concrete and elevates itself so high in obscure/unknown worlds teasing those who will have the pleasure of admiring the work of art produced and which is also equipped with a set of values, which do not always match with those of the producer.

Thus, there is not what we could call pure improvisation. Only the great ones dare to improvise, but we all know that to reach their status, where their instantaneous catharsis are accepted and applauded by a society, they had to struggle a long and hard way.

The great improviser does hardly find the other unprepared. The listener is already expecting the deambulation /digression as well as the panoramic trips, and it is in this expectation that he unites the original and the new. Both reach that perfect symbiosis which enriches as far as the limit of taste, and make an aesthetical judgment possible. No one can, own the rights to exclusivity of the pleasure of aesthetical contemplation of a work of art: neither the artist, while he is creating and improvising, nor the beneficiary with the beauty of the work of art. Taste is always shared.

## **2.2 Origins of the Improvisation**

If we analyze the History of Music, before the invention of writing, we can admit that music was first executed by oral tradition. The first manifestation of that creation was improvised music: the primitive man, through the clashing of stones, wood and bones reproduced sounds and, through various percussive gestures and imitations, began to improvise, which later led to collective improvisation and became a social and religious rites.

Improvisation was the basis of all types of music and always existed, even music considered as belonging to the domains of the erudite music.

In The Middle Ages it is possible to identify the beginning of the practice of improvisation through the melisma of the Gregorian chants. These are clearly the result of well-obtained improvisations and thus registered.

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<sup>39</sup> Dário Cunha, *A improvisação na génese de Formas Musicais para Instrumentos de tecla* ( PhD diss., Universidade de Castelo Branco, 2011), 2.

Later, during the Renaissance Period, as soon as the writing of music was codified, both in the sense of notation and composition, improvisation was practiced in precise but restricted situations.

During this period improvisation began to have some small functions.

In a certain melody line, small phrases began to develop which are ornamented through improvisation. Variations with small improvisations also appeared in the line of the low as in the example of certain pieces for keyboard such as Folia, The Romanesca, The Songs. The same happened in the Iberian music, mainly in certain pieces for organ, especially the pieces of Meio Registo (Half Register) for left hand and some Kyrie's and Tientos, where at the end of the cadence the organist was forced to improvise.

During the Baroque Period with the tonal development, improvisation gains great relevance again. Great composers and interpreters such as Bach and Couperin will appear and begin to use an excessive musical ornamentation where they developed new techniques and consequently could show their ideas through their virtuosity and improvisation in their works of art.

Music of the Baroque Period, nowadays known as antique music, is full of improvisations and ornamentations which are carried out during the performance. This characteristic is explained by the function of the musician of that Period, which was in most cases composer and interpreter.

This unified vision of the musical activity gave the interpreter the possibility of recreating his work each time he performed, ornamenting the melodic lines, making rhythmical modifications, using different instrumentation amongst other processes. Good musicians dominated the rules of composing and improving, which obviously made it possible to define the final part of a piece of work each time it was performed.

This approach to the piece of work contributed to the development of various theoretic writings which normalized the forms of improvising during the performance, varying according to the instrument used, the geographical region and the social function the music belonged to, either being for religious purposes, for social use in the palace, for street or tavern performances, or simply for a family evening concert/family soirée.

It was also during this period that the low continuo appeared. It was a practice associated to improvisation.

It is a type of musical notation used to indicate the intervals, the accords and the enharmonic, in relation to a note of the low, which can or not be figurative, showing the performer the harmony to be played and improvised. This was very important during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and only began to lose importance in the end of the eighteenth century.

According to C. Ph. E. Bach: "The Basso continuo is the fundamental structure of the music and it is executed/played with both hands so that the left hand can play the written notes and the right hand can play the consonant or dissonant notes to the others. This must form/create a pleasurable harmony for the Glory of God and the comfort/tranquility of the spirit."<sup>40</sup>

Another definition of a German composer about the importance of this practice: Johann David Heinichen (1683-1729), in his work /book *Through - Bass Accompaniment* (1728): "No musician can deny that the low continuous one of the fundamental and important points of musical knowledge after composition. Sometimes the low continuous mixes with the musical

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<sup>40</sup> C. P. E. Bach, *Versuch uber die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Berlin: Friedrich Henning, 1753), 430.

composition. The execution of the low continuo is nothing more than a composition of four voices from a given low.”<sup>41</sup>

Going through a short analysis of the definitions, we can conclude that the second approaches the continuo in a more practical way and does not give much relevance to ornamentation. On the other hand, the first definition shows an important aspect of the musical education (all the great composers of the Baroque, Classical and even Romantic Period had the Basso continuo as a base of their musical studies). Bach has a definition associated to the theory of affects, a more philosophical view which was predominant in the Baroque Period (“*relax the spirit*”).<sup>42</sup> The Basso continuo is very important for me to make improvisations of the Baroque Period. By memorizing some ciphers and following the rules of harmony we can innovate and create new pieces according to the capacity of each organ player.

During the Romantic Period it is the piano which will be the leader of improvisation.

It is through this instrument which the history of improvisation will continue. Great composers became famous for improvisation such as: Beethoven, Schubert, Liszt, Brahms and Schumann.

As for the organ, it is mainly played by pianists especially in the first half of the nineteenth century. After the French Revolution there was a certain decline in the teaching of this instrument in the conservatory of music.

During the second half of the nineteenth century there is a big transformation in the organ with significant innovations. Thanks to the great contributions of one of the most famous French organ constructors Aristide Cavaillé – Coll, the new instruments tend to imitate the sound of a symphonic orchestra. The introduction of the box of the expressive which permits to make crescendos and decrescendos and the origins of new registration, are the biggest news which stimulates great musicians to compose and improvise for these huge instruments.

César Franck is one of the first prominent figures who distinguished this period not only as a composer, but also as an interpreter and especially in the magnificent improvisations which he produced during the religious celebrations. Franck made way for other great organists and composers such as Widor and Vierne to write with a new language for this instrument. The three of them were all brilliant improvisers.

Marcel Dupré wrote in 1927 a treaty of improvisation for organ. For him improvisation was above all a brain/intelligence art. A musician who wants to improvise should already have a rich theoretical base. “To be a good improviser the musician should not only have acquired a flexible and trustful technique, but should also dominate the harmony, the counterpoint and the fugue. Besides this, he should neither forget the Basso continuo, nor the composition and the orchestration.”<sup>43</sup>

According to Dupré improvisation demands specific work totally separated from the organ repertoire. In order to improvise, it is necessary to memorization, technique and feelings. As an example of the exceptional capacities of the composer, we have his famous “Symphony Passion” which was improvise during a tour to the United States of America. Dupré left a great influence to his students as it is the example of Maurice Duruflé who renewed the improvisation and his compositions with the Gregorian modality. Pierre Cochereau as improviser contributed mainly to the popularity of the organ and Olivier Messiaen gave color to improvement, through the more exotic modes and rhythms

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<sup>41</sup> C. P. E. Bach, *Versuch*, 430.

<sup>42</sup> C. P. E. Bach, *Essay*, 430.

<sup>43</sup> Marcel Dupré, *Cours Complet d'Improvisation à L'Orgue* (Paris: Éditions Musicales, 1925), 1.

Nowadays, the different methods of improvisation open way to a variety of specializations. There are improvising organ players who have a tendency to follow their masters, being faithful to their school and tradition. However, there are others who try to escape traditional methods to create something new.

As a humble organ player, I have a special taste for improvisation. I started improvising since an early stage without following rules. It has never been a compulsory practice in the music studies at the Conservatory of Music in Portugal. However, I have developed a special tendency for this prodigious art and I have been practicing it in liturgical services in church.

### **2.3 Improvisation in France during the nineteenth century**

Socio-cultural and musical context in the eighteenth-century in France:

The eighteenth century European society was characterized by a series of political, economic and social mutations, as well as for determined historical, cultural and musical tendencies. We witnessed the collapse of the Old Regime as well as the old principles which ruled the same society. The establishment and fighting for position and power suffered a fatal blow and, consequently some civil wars and other conflicts appeared, as the result of establishing new liberal movements. With this panorama/scenery a new era will take place with new mentalities, habits, culture and civilization.

The empire of Reason with the Illuminism / Enlightenment will open way to the domains of science and scientific and technological innovations. Together with this new paradigm, there was a great industrial expansion throughout Europe and the economy started to flow intensely due to the systems of monopoly which also originated strikes, unions, laws and social doctrines.

During this period, the liberal revolutions and democracies began to open up and follow the paths of freedom. Thus, monarchies were threatened and the first republics came into existence.<sup>44</sup> The idea of Nation surged in the nineteenth century with the national feelings of belonging that is nationalism, individualism and atheism.<sup>45</sup>

Culture and Music could not escape this *statu quo* and will also try new patterns of change. The canons which ruled the society of the eighteenth century will be changed.

The French Revolution originated all these changes and it is the symbol of these contradictions. In this historical context, Paris was seen as the city of poets, artists and music. Consequently, Paris gained a new supremacy in Literature, Painting and Music.<sup>46</sup>

This was a really new moment of cultural transformation, based on a revolution of the human conscience, of a new way of thinking and a new way of creating, compared to the Italian Renaissance.

As a consequence of this artistic transformation a new symphonic art was created and which was going to determine a new period in the history of music which was going to be called Romanticism.

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<sup>44</sup> René Remond, *L'Ancien Regime et la Revolution* (Editions du Seuil, 1974), 90.

<sup>45</sup> Remond, *la Revolution*, 90.

<sup>46</sup> Remond, *la Revolution*, 90.



## 2.4 Improvisation as a common practice in France during the nineteenth century

Improvisation emerged in France in the second half of the nineteenth century due to the contribution of the new symphonic organ by Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, as well as the famous organists César Franck, Camille and Saint-Saens. Aristide Cavaillé-Coll created the symphonic and orchestral French organ which made it possible to play great works and notable improvisations. César Franck was the first organist to accomplish his majestic and famous improvisations, as well as to perform his own compositions.

This new Cavaillé-Coll organ built in 1859 for the church of St. Clotilde, offered different possibilities to perform new types of music, by imitating a symphonic orchestra with a lot of coloring and dynamics. It was considered the key instrument to performing of compositions for organ by the famous César Franck; not only because the composer gave the exact indications to use the adequate registration, and the instructions based on the possibilities of this great instrument, but also because the characteristics of construction of this grand instrument, also play an important role in his music for organ.<sup>47</sup>

The taste for the art of improvisation first surged for César Franck in 1840, when he joined the class of organ of François Benoist. The curriculum for the organ class was delineated to prepare the student for the annual competition of the first prize in organ.<sup>48</sup> An improvisation for accompaniment was introduced in low continuo and an improvisation of a fugue for four voices. The performing of pieces for organ was not part of the curriculum, as three quarters of the studying was dedicated only to improvising.

A lot of students were really brilliant composers. The value of improvising to exercise and stimulate the creative mind has always had great relevance in France.

Saint-Saens who was also a great improviser and composer wrote about the importance of this art for the organist, the following:

“Formerly, Improvisation was the basis of organist’s talent; his virtuosity was slight – music written for organ with independent pedal was beyond his powers... It is improvisation alone that permits one to employ all the resources of a large instrument, and to adapt one’s self to the infinite variety of organs; only improvisation can follow the service perfectly, pieces written for this purpose being almost too short or too slow. Finally, the practice of improvisation frequently develops faculties of invention which, without it, would have remained latent”.<sup>49</sup>

Extra musical considerations such as church liturgical demanding needed the studies of improvisations. Joseph Bonnet described the practical value of this art in France:

“No one may keep a position in any catholic church in France without being a very able improviser. The part the organ plays in the French Roman ritual is so elaborate that the organist is relieved of any accompaniment of the choir. In addition to the grand orgue, generally placed in the west gallery, there is always a chancel organ, and another organist or

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<sup>47</sup> Gunther Kaunzinger, César Franck, *Trois chorals pour Grand Orgue* (Wien: Urtex Edition, 1999), 12.

<sup>48</sup> Rollin Smith, *Towards An Authentic Interpretation of the organ works of César Franck* (Pendragon Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, *Franck*, 2.

choirmaster is in charge of the choir. On the grand orgue are played not only the preludes, offertories, and postludes, which may be taken from written music, but also a great number of more or less developed interludes for which only improvisation is possible.

Take vespers, for example: it includes the singing of five psalms a hymn, and the Magnificat. At the end of each psalm, after repeating the antiphon, the organist improvises an interlude based on the melody of the psalm or of the antiphon. Between verses of the hymn and of the Magnificat the same procedure is followed. Now, you could hardly make any choirmaster give you the keys in which these chants will be sung. They may vary in pitch from half a tone to one-and-a-half tones. Most of the time the choirmaster plays his accompaniments to the Gregorian chants extempore. Furthermore, during the Magnificat, the priest, deacon, and sub-deacon produced to the incensing of the altar, of the clergy in the sanctuary and, afterwards, of the congregation. The length of this ritual may vary and the organist must see that the singing of the Doxology, which comes at the end of the incensing, is accord with the singing of the choir. In view of this, one must realize the great necessity for fluent improvisation.”<sup>50</sup>

The art of improvisation was essential for the French organists. Saint-Saens was also famous for his improvisations. They used to say that his genius was a splendor impossible to describe.

## 2.5 My Improvisation

My biggest enthusiasm and which brought me to this University was to follow my studies of the Degree I had taken in Lisbon. My main objective is to develop my improvisation at a higher level and thus creating a new musical language, and the second objective is to improve my musical performance in all aspects as an organist.

Improvisation has always fascinated me ever since I started my musical studies as a child at the Conservatório de Música da Madeira (The School of Arts).

My piano teacher motivated me for improvisation, due to the fact that he usually gave me a lot of freedom to improvise a short piece of ten minutes in almost every lesson. Since then I have always had a big enthusiasm for this art and I began to use it in the religious services, especially when the service was over.

The first improvisations were very simple due to the fact that at the time I lacked some basic knowledge such as harmony and counterpoint. I became self-sufficient in this area as well as in the religious chants for a while. Later I gained that knowledge when I studied improvisation during the organ studies/degree in Lisbon (Escola Superior de Música).

In the beginning I had some difficulties because I did not have enough technic in the rules of harmony. Back then, I had to make a lot of effort to understand certain things that later would be very valuable.

Following my effort in the intense studies and after having studied Gregorian chants for two years, I felt a bigger evolution in all the aspects.

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<sup>50</sup> Smith, *Franck*, 4.

I have always preferred free improvisation due to the fact that there I had great freedom to make longer improvisations, even excessive. I do recall having used baroque and modern style in my improvisations. Sometimes I used to mix them and consequently I was creating my own style and language. This lasted for a while.

As a consequence of my Gregorian studies I started using the Gregorian modes in the improvisation with well-known themes from the *Gradual Roman Triplex*, mainly in more important religious services.

In order to achieve a deeper knowledge about improvisation I attended several Master Classes in different styles.

In England I studied improvisation in master classes with these Professors: Duncan Middleton, and Ronny Krippner. In Germany he studied with Otto M. Kraemer.

In Madeira I also had the opportunity to give a series of concerts, which lasted thirty minutes, once a week, at twelve o'clock and which lasted for a year, especially for tourists who visited the island. Then I used my imagination and I developed something very interesting with improvisation. In fact, I explored the organ to its maximum.

In the concert programmes I always did three improvisations and interpreted three small pieces which sometimes were accompanied with a voice or a quartet.

In what concerns improvisation, I did them in all the styles, despite the fact that the organ was modern, but especially built to interpret baroque and Iberian music. It limits the repertoire, but I tried to give more colour life and creativity to my concerts.

One of the concerts which left a mark on me was the Easter Concert. I improvised The Passion of Christ. It was not easy. I had to read the Three Gospels from the Bible in order to understand things better and then to pass to music the most important parts of The Passion of Christ, from the Calvary to His death. It was a very exciting work for me. In a near future I would like to do it again but written. In other words, written for organ. It is one of my dreams. My last concerts were mainly improvisation. When I finished this project in Madeira, I decided to continue my studies. As a matter of fact I felt the necessity to study music again because it is very important for the formation of an organist. That was when I decided to apply for a Master's Degree at this University. I was very flattered to study improvisation and repertoire of the organ again.

After having started my studies here, I have felt a lot of improvement in various aspects.

In Improvisation I am working on the nineteenth century and the contemporary and in the Organ I am interpreting some pieces from the Romantic Period.

It is very important for me to develop new techniques and create a new musical language. I am doing everything I can to do my best. I have been through difficult moments, which is also normal during a course. At the moment, in Improvisation I am developing a project which has gone through some changes to the original project. These changes were necessary.

This project includes my improvisation not only in the ideas and influence of the music of César Franck, but also includes some ideas of other French organists. In order to develop this project, I have been listening to a lot of recordings of improvisation of different organists as Marcel Dupré and Pierre Cochereau and I have also been using Marcel Dupré and Lionel Rogg's handbook/manual. Listening to these recordings I am able to follow some ideas of the composers mentioned above.

Thus, I intend to interpret, in the final concert, two pieces of organ repertoire and four improvisations.

The time of my improvisations it's The Passion of the Lord, second Saint Luke, in form symphony, with four movements, one attribute to César Franck.

Organ Repertoire:

The Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor of Bach  
Prelude, Fugue et variation, in B minor Op. 18

Improvisations:

1. **The Supper of Love**
2. **The Agony in the Olive Garden**
3. **The way to Calvary and Jesus`s death on the Cross**
4. **Resurrection**

This is a way of presenting my music in my own genre and according to my style and language. Last summer in the end of August I attended a Master class here in French improvisation with Professor Frederic Blank, important organist in France.

I spoke to him about César Franck`s style of improvisation and he told me the “...that they are considered the most elaborated and difficult to make due to the fact that the composer uses his own language and also very rich at melodic and harmonic level. This makes things more difficult to copy his ideas.”<sup>51</sup> I share the same opinion, because it is really necessary to have a strong musical knowledge to compare to Franck.

In order to be able to improvise a bit of his style, I have been studying some of his more popular pieces such as Pièce Heroique, as well as the Prelude and Fudge and Variations, which are the most popular pieces of this composer and also my favorites. They are very exciting pieces and especially very expressive.

In my improvisations I may explain that I have some influence of César Franks`s improvisations because I identify myself with them, as well some organists of the nineteenth century.

This was a discovery in my new musical language after an intensive study of improvisation which I have been doing at this University.

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<sup>51</sup> Organist of Notre Dame (France), 2014.

## **2.6 Explanation and orientation of Passion of Luke for improvisation of Literary Texts**

**Symphony in C minor with four movements in Paraphrase Style of the texts from the  
Passion of Luke**

**(Homage to César Franck)**

**The Passion of Luke**

**Movements:**

**1° Allegro Maestoso in C minor**

**2° Andante in G minor**

**3° Adagio in C minor**

**4° Finale in F Major**

### **2.6.1 The Passion Of Luke**

In this part, which I consider the most important, I present an improvisation through literary texts, in four movement symphonic form. I also try to explain its meanings at literary and musical levels.

The theme chosen for my Symphony in Romantic style was The Passion of Christ. It was taken from the Bible, more specifically from the book of Gospel by St Luke.

I decided to choose this wonderful theme due to the fact that it represents a personal achievement in which I can find a bit of my personal history, somehow identical to César Franck's, symbolizing deep states of the soul, suffering, melancholy and joyfulness.

In this improvisation with four movements I try to demonstrate a bit of what I have just said and, at the musical level I used the forms of Romanticism.

This symphony is dedicated to Christ, in the first place, and secondly it is also homage to César Franck, due to the fact that all this work for my thesis is dedicated to his personality and to the French music in Romantic Style.

**Principal themes of the Passion of Saint Luke which I develop in prose poem:**

1. **The Supper of Love (The Last Supper)**
2. **The Agony in the Olive Garden**
3. **The way to Calvary and Jesus`s death on the Cross**
4. **Resurrection**

### **2.6.2 Comments on my improvisation in paraphrase style of the texts of The Passion according to St. Luke.**

I made a paraphrase of texts from the Passion of St. Luke taken from the Bible. I had to make a translation from Portuguese to English since these texts were in Portuguese and I could not get them in English.

I decided to make my improvisation of the Passion of Luke in paraphrase, on symphonic form. It is an improvisational style that I developed by myself and which I have already used in my concerts held in Portugal.

By using this type of improvisation, I expose all my possible creativity and imagination. Sometimes I transmit this art with great emotion, or sometimes more aggressively according to my inner or psychological state. To me it is a creative way to show the literary art of music as if it was real. I have always improvised this way due to the fact that it makes me feel that I have accomplished something.

This form of improvisation is traditionally used in France by the great masters of improvisation.

From the Passion of St. Luke I used for my improvisations, in the style of symphonic paraphrase, the four main chapters representing the Passion of Christ.

The first "The Supper of Love" (Lk 22: 14-38); the second "Agony" (Lc.22: 39-53); the third "The Death of Jesus on the Cross" (Lc.23: 26-49).And finally the "resurrection" (Luke 24.1-49).

For the First, Second and Fourth movement I chose ABA` tripartite structure, because it is the structure which is more commonly used in French romantics symphonies for organ.

The first theme, "The supper of Love" is my first movement of Symphony in C m.

I chose this theme "The Supper of love" in C m because to me it represents the Passover (22.14-38). It is first of all, the farewell dinner, where Jesus manifests His trust in God and gives the ultimate instructions to His disciples. It is also the prophetic act by which the sense of his martyr's death is expressed: the inauguration of the New Alliance.

The second chapter "Agony" (Luke 22: 39-53) is the second movement of my symphony. This movement is in Gm.

I chose this theme to improvise because to me it represents the decisive moment when Jesus comes out as the winner of the power of evil. New Elijah is comforted by God, plunges into the night of passion, quiet, entirely abandoned to the will of the Father.

The third chapter "The Death of Jesus on the Cross" (Luke 23: 26-49) is the third movement of my symphony.

This movement is in C m. In this movement I do not use the tripartite structure. I simply make three variations of the main theme and I try to represent, in the improvisation, the great suffering of Christ dying on the cross.

I chose this St. Luke's theme "The Death of Jesus on the Cross", because to me it represents the greatest suffering of Jesus dying on the cross for the salvation of mankind. Jesus declares his innocence to the weeping women and consoles them. Then He asks the Father to forgive those who hurt him without being aware of that, shows the way to paradise to the thief, who has confidence enough to call him by His real name, and dies in peace in the hands of the Father.

My last improvisation is the Fourth chapter of Luke. "Resurrection" (Luke 24:1-49). This is my last movement of this symphony in F Major.

I chose this movement because to me it represents the victory over evil. It is the resurrection of Christ, His passage from death to life. That is the reason why in the improvisation I try to show that joy, the rebirth which is the greatest gift of life.

### 2.6.3 The Supper of Love (Lc.22:14-38)

- My prose paraphrase of the Supper love:

"Before the Easter Feast, and Jesus knowing that his hour had come..." (22:14-38).<sup>52</sup>

The (Last) Supper is the manifestation of the amazing love of Christ who, before returning to the Father, decided to stay with us forever, instituting the Eucharist: "This is my Body and this is my Blood".<sup>53</sup> A wide and infinite love, betrayed by Judas; Jesus washes the disciples' feet showing humility and unconditional service to humanity, with the offer of His life! Atmosphere of light, serene joy, intimacy and peace; Jesus promises the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist instituted by Jesus on that night is the gift of excellence, the greatest treasure of the Church and the memorial of the wonders of God, instituted by Jesus on the Last Supper. We are surprised by the immensity of the Love of Christ, who voluntarily gave Himself up to death for love of us and at the same time wanted to stay forever with us in the Eucharist.

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<sup>52</sup> Etienne Charpentier, *Biblia Sagrada* (Porto : Ed. Perpétuo socorro, 1986), 87.

<sup>53</sup> Charpentier, *Biblia Sagrada*, 87.

## Original Bible text.<sup>54</sup> (Lc.22:14-38)

### Institution of the Lord's Supper

**14** And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. **15** And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. **16** For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." **17** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. **18** For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." **19** And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **20** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. **21** But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. **22** For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" **23** And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

### Who Is the Greatest?

**24** A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. **25** And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. **26** But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. **27** For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. **28** "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, **29** and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, **30** that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

### Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

**31** "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat, **32** but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." **33** Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." **34** Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

### Scripture Must Be Fulfilled in Jesus

**35** And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." **36** He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. **37** For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." **38** And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."

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<sup>54</sup> *Biblia Online*, New International version. Cited from <http://www.bibliaonline.com>,br/acf/Lc/22.



## 2.6.4 AGONY (Lc.22:39-53).

My prose paraphrase of the Agony of Jesus:

Jesus prayed to the Father all His life. Now, moments before His death he prays again, asking for light on his way. It is an intense prayer, and His agonizing prayer turns into agony, which makes His blood run from His body to the ground. It is a prayer of intimacy and filial trust before death. It was a cry for attention which was not understood by the apostles.

**Original Bible text** <sup>55</sup> (Lc.22:39-53).

### **Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives**

**39** And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. **40** And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." **41** And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, **42** saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." **43** And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. **44** And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. **45** And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, **46** and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

### **Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus**

**47** While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, **48** but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" **49** And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" **50** And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. **51** But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. **52** Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? **53** When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

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<sup>55</sup> *Biblia Online*, New International version. <http://www.bibliaonline.com.br/acf/Lc/22>.

## 2.6.5 THE DEATH OF JESUS ON THE CROSS (Lc 23:26-49)

- My prose paraphrase of The Death of Jesus On the Cross

The journey to Calvary and Christ's suffering on the cross until His death, can only be explained by the immensity of the Father's love for humanity. Christ bore this pain and suffered death to provide a light for humanity and give us new direction. His side wounded by the soldier's spear was left forever opened, offering us Blood and Water as a sign of His Love and the gift of Life in abundance

### Original Bible text <sup>56</sup> ( Lc.23:26-49)

#### **On the way to the cross**

**26** As they led Jesus away, they grabbed Simon, a man from Cyrene, who was coming in from the countryside. They put the cross on his back and made him carry it behind Jesus. **27** A huge crowd of people followed Jesus, including women, who were mourning and wailing for him. **28** Jesus turned to the women and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me. Rather, cry for yourselves and your children. **29** The time will come when they will say, 'Happy are those who are unable to become pregnant, the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed a child.' **30** Then *they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'* **31** If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

#### **Jesus on the cross**

**32** They also led two other criminals to be executed with Jesus. **33** When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. **34** Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." They drew lots as a way of dividing up his clothing. **35** The people were standing around watching, but the leaders sneered at him, saying, "He saved others. Let him save himself if he really is the Christ sent from God, the chosen one." **36** The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him, offering him sour wine **37** and saying, "If you really are the king of the Jews, save yourself." **38** Above his head was a notice of the formal charge against him. It read "This is the king of the Jews. **39** One of the criminals hanging next to Jesus insulted him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" **40** Responding, the other criminal spoke harshly to him, "Don't you fear God, seeing that you've also been sentenced to die? **41** We are rightly condemned, for we are receiving the appropriate sentence for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong." **42** Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when

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<sup>56</sup> *Biblia Online*, New International version. <http://www.bibliaonline.com.br/acf/Lc/23>.

you come into your kingdom." 43 Jesus replied, "I assure you that today you will be with me in paradise."

### **Jesus' death**

44 It was now about noon, and darkness covered the whole earth until about three o'clock, 45 while the sun stopped shining. Then the curtain in the sanctuary tore down the middle. 46 Crying out in a loud voice, Jesus said, "Father, *into your hands I entrust my life.*" After he said this, he breathed for the last time. 47 When the centurion saw what happened, he praised God, saying, "It's really true: this man was righteous." 48 All the crowds who had come together to see this event returned to their homes beating their chests after seeing what had happened. 49 And everyone who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance observing these things.

## 2.6.6 RESURRECTION (Lc.24:1-49)

- My prose paraphrase of the Resurrection of Jesus:

With the resurrection of Jesus, hope dawned once more and a new light brightened the suffering, life and death. The Cross is the other side of Love and Resurrection. The Light that sprang from the tomb and performed the amazing miracle of life is the ultimate answer of the eternal Love of the Father for every man and every woman. It is Jesus's sure triumph over death and His triumphant entrance into the Father's glory.

Christ, our Easter and our Hope, accompanies us along the path of life, illuminating the night, as well as the drama of human history

### **Original Bible text**<sup>57</sup> (Lc.1- 49).

#### **Resurrection Morning**

24 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they<sup>[a]</sup> came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared.<sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. <sup>3</sup> They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup> While they were perplexed about this,

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<sup>57</sup> Holman Christian standard Bible (HCSB) <https://www.biblegateway.com>, Luke, 24.

suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes. <sup>5</sup> So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground.<sup>[b]</sup>

“Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men. <sup>6</sup> “He is not here, but He has been resurrected! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup> saying, ‘The Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day?’” <sup>8</sup> And they remembered His words.

<sup>9</sup> Returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the Eleven and to all the rest.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them were telling the apostles these things. <sup>11</sup> But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women. <sup>12</sup> Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. When he stooped to look in, he saw only the linen cloths.[c] So he went home, amazed at what had happened.

### The Emmaus Disciples

<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were on their way to a village called<sup>[d]</sup> Emmaus, which was about seven miles<sup>[e]</sup> from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> Together they were discussing everything that had taken place. <sup>15</sup> And while they were discussing and arguing, Jesus Himself came near and began to walk along with them. <sup>16</sup> But they<sup>[f]</sup> were prevented from recognizing Him. <sup>17</sup> Then He asked them, “What is this dispute that you’re having<sup>[g]</sup> with each other as you are walking?” And they stopped walking and looked discouraged.

<sup>18</sup> The one named Cleopas answered Him, “Are You the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that happened there in these days?”

<sup>19</sup> “What things?” He asked them.

So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a Prophet powerful in action and speech before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him. <sup>21</sup> But we were hoping that He was the One who was about to redeem Israel. Besides all this, it’s the third day since these things happened. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women from our group astounded us. They arrived early at the tomb, <sup>23</sup> and when they didn’t find His body, they came and reported that they had seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. <sup>24</sup> Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they didn’t see Him.”

<sup>25</sup> He said to them, “How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Didn’t the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?” <sup>27</sup> Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

<sup>28</sup> They came near the village where they were going, and He gave the impression that He was going farther. <sup>29</sup> But they urged Him: “Stay with us, because it’s almost evening, and now the day is almost over.” So He went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup> It was as He reclined at the table with them that He took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him, but He disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> So they said to each other, “Weren’t our hearts ablaze within us while He was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?” <sup>33</sup> That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and those with them gathered together, <sup>34</sup> who said,<sup>[h]</sup> “The Lord has certainly been raised, and has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup> Then they began to describe what had happened on the road and how He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

### The Reality of the Risen Jesus

<sup>36</sup> And as they were saying these things, He Himself stood among them. He said to them, “Peace to you!” <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. <sup>38</sup> “Why are you troubled?” He asked them. “And why do doubts arise in your hearts?” <sup>39</sup> Look at My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself! Touch Me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” <sup>40</sup> Having said this, He showed them His hands and feet. <sup>41</sup> But while they still were amazed and unbelieving because of their joy, He asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” <sup>42</sup> So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish,<sup>[i]</sup> <sup>43</sup> and He took it and ate in their presence.

<sup>44</sup> Then He told them, “These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He also said to them, “This is what is written:<sup>[i]</sup> The Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for<sup>[k]</sup> forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And look, I am sending you<sup>[l]</sup> what My Father promised. As for you, stay in the city<sup>[m]</sup> until you are empowered<sup>[n]</sup> from on high.”

### **The Ascension of Jesus**

<sup>50</sup> Then He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands He blessed them. <sup>51</sup> And while He was blessing them, He left them and was carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> After worshiping Him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they were continually in the temple complex praising God.<sup>[o]</sup>

## **3. Analysis and Structure or my Improvisation in the form of a Symphony in paraphrase style based on the St. Luke Passion**

### **I**

#### **3.1 Allegro Maestoso in C minor**

##### **The first Movement is an Allegro Maestoso in C minor.**

I decided to start this movement with my theme in allegro but with much sentiment because it represents the opening of my symphony in C minor – The Passion of Lord.

In this little improvisation, I play using the musical structure A-B A` and I use the chords of C minor and related keys.

In this first movement, despite its being a C minor allegro, I improvise with sentiment and joy following my literary text, The Supper of Love.

In the exposition, part A, I present the theme in C minor using stops with character Forte with ex: (Flute Harmonique 8` flute octave, Basson et Hautobois 8, Trompette Harmonic...) I use the first manual of the organ (Grande Orgue); The development follows as part B. In this part, I develop the theme using the second manual of organ (positif). I use stops less strong ex: (viole da Gambe...) of dynamic to make a contrast between the first part. In this part, I make a crescendo and diminuendo using little variations of the principal theme.

In the recapitulation- A` I use the GO and the stops with character Forte again. In this part, the principal melodic theme appears again but with some little differences (See Example 1).

A-B-A`

A-The exposition in C m (GO):

A-B-A`

**Example:**

A-The exposition in C m (GO):

Improvisation  
First Movement of my Symphony  
C m

theme

E

Li

GM, Cm, GM, Cm, Fm, Cm, GM (...)

In the second part of the development it's in G Major as in Example 3



Example 3: Theme in the development.

- I use GM, CM, GM, CM, FM, CM (...)
- A` - Represent the recapitulation in Cm (GO)

## II

### 3.2 Andante

This second movement in G minor is a very expressive Andante in ternary form. I chose this theme of César Franck because for me it is a simple melody, sad and “dark”, excellent for a movement which symbolises the Agony of Jesus.

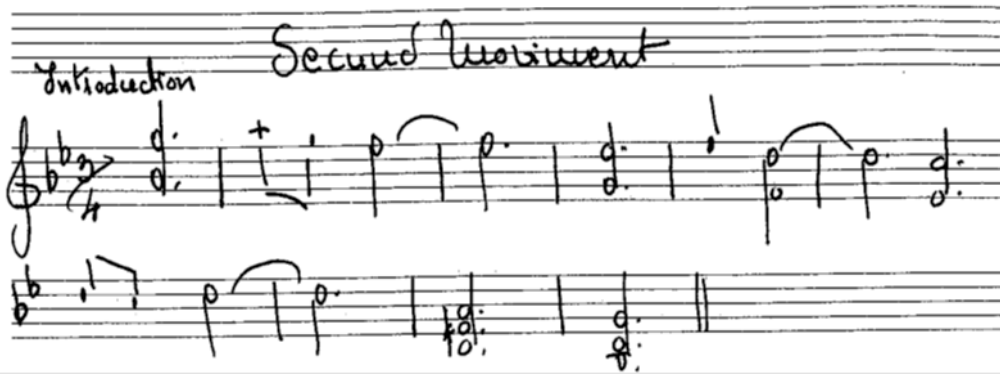
This movement is divided into three parts: A- B -A

Section A begins with a brief introduction in organ- positif, before I develop the principal theme in recit. I use very discreet stops with the objective of creating a melancholic atmosphere in the style of the nineteenth century.

In part A, the theme of César Franck in G minor appears in soprano but with little differences that I improvise.

In the development, part B, I play in Positif with the objective of making dynamics and different color. I created a little variation of the principal theme and I develop this until I return to the principal theme of part A.

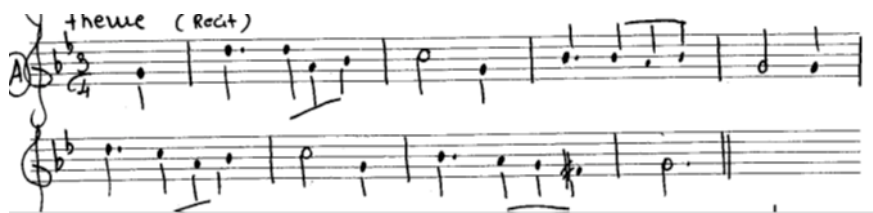
Finally in part A, I play the theme in Recit as it appeared in the first part.



Example 4: Introduction to Movement 2.  
Musical Example 2: Movement 2.

In the Introduction I use these chords:

Gm, Dm, Cm, Bm, Cm, Gm(...)



Example 5: Principal Theme of César Franck in G m.

In part A, In Gm, I use some Chords:

Gm, Cm DM, Gm, Cm (...)



Example 6: part B - Variation

In variation, I use some chords:



FM, BM, Cm, FM, BM, Cm (...)



Example 7: Recapitulation of the Principal Theme.

In recapitulation – A, represent the theme principal. In this parte I'm going back to Gm. I use Gm, Cm DM, G m, C m (...)

Example 8: Original theme in G Minor of César Franck.<sup>58</sup>

### III

#### 3.3 Adagio

In this movement, I will interpret the theme of prelude in C minor of Chopin. I chose this prelude because for me it symbolizes sadness and is ideal to represent my text.

In this movement, I use the principal theme in triple metre and I am playing in adagio, in form of a very slow dance with a dismal and dolorous character. In this movement I play three variations. This represents the Death of Jesus on the Cross from my Passion text.

In this Movement, as I mentioned, I changed the metre of the theme of Chopin's Prelude.

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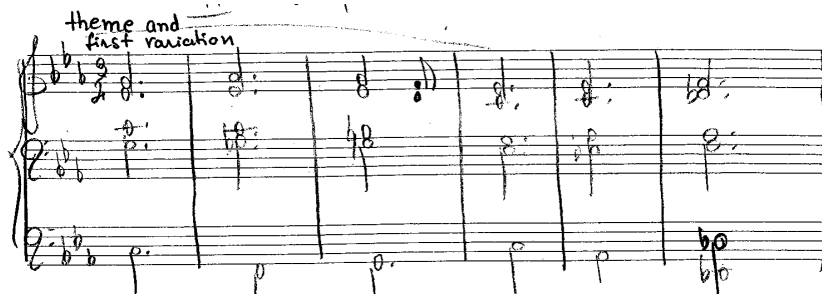
<sup>58</sup> Pierre Guoin, *Franck, L'Organiste* (Montréal: Les Éditions Outremontaises, 2009), 95.

I play the theme in very slow ternary metre in (GO) of organ with stops graves and dark (Fute harmonic, Salacional, Flaute Travess...) I make a diminuendo in this movement. I start *Mf* in (GO) then *P* in (positive) and finish *PP* in (recit) with stops very very discrets (Vox Celeste...)

I chose this sequence because it represents the three sighs that Jesus Christ gave before His death on the Cross.

I find this movement most tragic and hard to play because it interferes with my artistic sensibility due my great emotion when I play organ.

I play three variations in c minor.



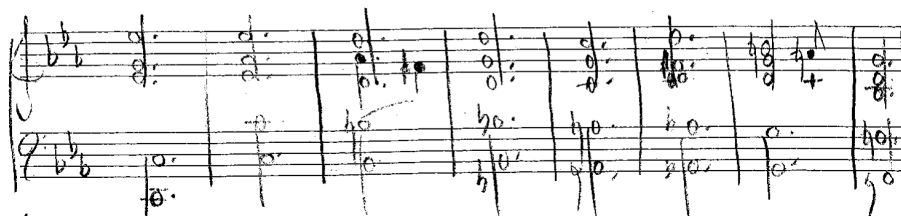
Example 9: Principal Theme for my first variation in (Go):

Musical Example 3: Movement 3.

Cm, Fm, Gm7, Cm (...)

## 2- Second Variation in (Positif):

2<sup>o</sup> variation



Example 10: Second variation in (Positif):

In this variation I use, Dm, Fm, GM, Dm (...)

Largo.

20.

Example 11: Original theme in C Minor, Prelude of Chopin.<sup>59</sup>

#### IV

### 3.4 Finale

#### Allegro in F Major

This movement represents the principal idea of this symphony. I play in F major with vigor, energy and brilliant character. I using the musical structure A-B A`.

I chose to play this final movement in allegro because it is the final improvisation of my symphony and it symbolizes the Resurrection of Jesus.

In this improvisation in C Major, I start with a little introduction in (GO) : the theme of this introduction is taken from the Fantasia in C major of César Franck.

After, I develop the improvisation with my theme in (positif) in F Major, D minor, F Major using softer stops for dynamic differences between the introduction and development. Finally I return to F major in the final Coda in (Go) with stronger stops. I make a crescendo using more stops to make a tutti in organ (FF). I chose to play this form because it is my personal preference. Many organists of the nineteenth century in France used this method in their music, for example Charles Marie – Widor and Louis Vierne in their symphonies for organ.

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<sup>59</sup> Karl Klindwort, Oevres completes de Frédéric Chopin (Berlin: Bote et Bock, 1880), 189.

Examples:

*Allegro* *A Monument Symphony*  
(Passion of Lord) *F Major*

Example 12: Introduction in C major, theme of César Franck<sup>60</sup> (Go):  
Musical Example 4: Movement 4.

A: Theme in F Major (in Positif):

I use this chords: FM, DM, Gm, CM C7 FM(...)

*Allegro*

Example 13: Development in D m (positif and recit).

<sup>60</sup> Otto Barban, César Franck, Fantaisie (Leipzig: C.F.Peters, 1919) 11.

Example 14: development, part B

Here I use Dm, A7, Dm, Bm, AM, Gm, Cm, FM, BM(...)

A': Recapitulation of theme in F Major (Go):

Example 15: recapitulation of theme A

In recapitulation of theme in A' I use, FM, CM, Dm, GM, Cm, C7, FM, DM GM, CM (...)  
Bm, Gm, CM(...)

In Coda Final I use:

FM, Dm, Am, BM, Gm, C7, FM (...)

Franck - Fantaisie in C Major

**Quasi lento**

R. Fonds de 8 pieds Hautbois et Jeux d'Anches.  
P. Fonds de 8 et 16  
G.O. Fonds de 8 et 16  
PFD. Fonds de 8 et 16  
Claviers accouplés  
Tirasses.

Example 16: Original theme of Fantasia by Cesar Franck in C Major.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.5 Concert Exam done on 12 December 2014

The concert exam I did on 12 December 2014 was, for me, one of my best performances, professionally and personally.

In the first case, I concluded the Master's Degree in "Organ And Related Keyboard Instruments" with a great deal of effort and dedication. It was an extremely important step in my growth as a musician, organist and improviser.

In the second case, I achieved my dream of improvising a work that made a deep impression on me.

This work, improvised in the style of a paraphrase, is entitled "*The Passion of St. Luke*".

I chose this Biblical theme because to me it represents experiencing musically and deeply the Passion of Christ.

The improvised work of four movements, which I performed at the concert exam, was a little different from the version recorded for the thesis.

These artistic alterations are due to various factors:

My improvisations as a whole respect the structure of the work, although I make some modifications on the spur of the moment, according to my inspiration.

In the concert, I tried to follow my written improvisations, but I did make small changes, slightly different from the previous recording.

When the recording was made, there was no audience, except the organ professor, and it was therefore more serene. In the concert, I felt more anxious and responsible.

In that state, I tried approaching the path that leads me to perfection, but it is not always possible to achieve that desired goal.

Sometimes the audience can be a conditioning factor on the organist's action, but I let myself be carried by emotion and expressivity.

I was profoundly moved as I experienced the great mystery of the Passion of Christ.

As I improvised in the style of a paraphrase, I described in music the events from the Lord's Supper to the Resurrection.

In producing this Biblical musical work, I visualised, lived, and for a few moments felt the pain and the joy of the Pascal mystery as if they were real.

The expression of these feelings was even greater when played on a great symphonic organ – a copy of a French Cavaillé-Coll. This grand instrument "The French Symphonic Organ at Artisten" has an enormous diversity of stops, identical to those of the organs on which the great César Franck improvised in the French capital.

It was a unique experience for me, because it was the first time I had the opportunity to play a large symphonic romantic instrument in the Masters programme in "Organ and related Keyboards Instruments", which I concluded.

This instrument is my favourite organ, because it allowed me to make the most of the musical dynamics and expressivity.

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<sup>61</sup>César Franck, *Fantaisie* (Leipzig: C.F.Peters, 1919), 11.

The characteristics of dynamics and expressivity mark the main brands of French romantic organs.

Basing myself on these properties, I was able to play my improvisations with emotion, using the different stops and various dynamics.

During the performance of the concert, I wondered whether it would be able to please the audience and fulfil my dream.

In the course of the concert exam, I used the artistic properties of drama, beauty and elevation as characteristics of aesthetics in evoking emotions.

In this artistic process, I used philosophical order, dynamics and criticism. Aesthetics and philosophy complement each other, mutually adding interiority, beauty and sublimity.

The attributes of a sad and joyous character that I imprinted on my improvisation are part of a context that dignifies musical aesthetics and philosophy.

The association of images, figures and facts linked to the music can also reveal aesthetics and philosophy.

The narration of these events followed an order, connected so as to give the audience a better sense of understanding.

Musical philosophy begins to exist when the creative act of improvisation begins and progresses in a continuous aesthetic until the execution of the work is finished.

In this way, I sought to connect the Biblical theme in a sequential line of improvisation, revealing the emotions and expressivity within the canons of musical aesthetics and philosophy.

## CONCLUSION

While I was doing this thesis project, “Improvising in the French Romantic Style at the organ”, I came across several investigation difficulties. The biggest difficulty I came across was the treatment of information about improvisation in Romantic Style according to César Franck’s ideas. In fact, there are no books about Improvisation which can explain how to improvise in César’s style. So, in order to continue my investigation, I had to read some documents and articles which are presented in the bibliography about the life of this famous composer called César Franck.

I also described in my work that the big genius of improvisation and of rich sensibility, was misunderstood many times during his period of production.

César’s music describes sweet and tragic moments. His improvisations, according to critics as well as students, were too long and majestic. This was due to the fact that, many times, while César was improvising during the church service, normally forgot about time or counting hours, and of course, besides the divine beauty that he offered to his listeners, he also created small conflicts with the clergymen, but nothing relevant.

As for my project, it suffered several alterations during the two years I have been preparing for the Master’s Degree.

According to the instructions of my supervisor, we created a new project, a bit more related to my music and style. Thus, this new project is called “Improvising in the French Romantic Style” and it is divided into two parts. The first is related to the importance of César Franck’s during the period of his professional lifetime and a second part which is dedicated to the main theme of my thesis, “Improvising in the French Romantic Style”.

In the first part of the work, I enhanced in general terms, the greatness of César Franck, not only as a man, but also as an organ player and pedagogue. Besides this I also included César Franck in the nineteenth-century society and enhanced how he influenced the organ players of his time. To add to this I also enhanced some aspects which influenced César Franck as a musician and later, how Franck impressed and left his legacy to other organ players.

The second part of my work, already mentioned above, is dedicated to my improvisation and to an analysis of one of César Franck’s works. For the music analysis I chose the famous piece by César Franck called “Pièce Heroïque”, which I am going to interpret in my recital. Consequently, in this part which I consider the most important, I present an improvisation through literary texts, in the form of symphony, with four movements. I also try to explain its meanings at literary and musical levels.

The theme chosen for my Symphony in Romantic style was The Passion of Christ/Jesus. It was taken from the Bible, more specifically from the book of Gospel by St Lucas. I decided to choose this wonderful theme due to the fact that it represents a personal achievement in which I can find a bit of my personal history, somehow identical to César Franck’s, symbolizing deep states of the soul, suffering, melancholy and joyfulness.

In this improvisation with four movements I try to demonstrate a bit of what I have just said and, at the musical level I used the forms of Romanticism.

This symphony is dedicated to Christ, in the first place, and secondly it is also a homage to César Franck, due to the fact that all this work for my thesis is dedicated to his personality and to the French music in Romantic Style.

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In my lectures I went through good and difficult moments due to certain difficulties that I felt. I had to work very hard to improve my musical performance as well as my goals. Despite this, the atmosphere helped me to overcome the hardest parts and to continue my struggle.

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