

Louis Vierne - 24 Pieces de Fantaisie (1999)

Written by bluesever

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CD 1 Pièces de fantaisie, for organ, Suite 1, Op. 51 (1926) 1. *Prélude* 2. *Andantino* 3. *Caprice* 4. *Intermezzo* 5. *Requiem aeternam* 6. *Marche nuptiale*

Pièces de fantaisie, for organ, Suite 3, Op. 54 (1927)

7. *Dédicace* 8. *Impromptu* 9. *Étoile Du Soir* 10. *Fantômes* 11. *Sur le Rhin* 12. *Carillon de Westminster*

CD 2 Pièces de fantaisie, for organ, Suite 2, Op. 53 (1926)

1. *Lamento* 2. *Sicilienne* 3. *Hymne au soleil* 4. *Feux follets* 5. *Clair de lune* 6. *Toccata*

Pièces de fantaisie, for organ, Suite 4, Op. 55 (1927)

7. *Aubade* 8. *Résignation* 9. *Cathédrales* 10. *Naïades* 11. *Gargouilles et Chimères* 12. *Les cloches de Hinckley*

Ben van Oosten - organ

This very well-filled two-CD set (seventy and eighty minutes long, respectively) presents an exceptional performance of one of the major sets of organ music of the twentieth century.

Ben van Oosten, the organist, is one of Holland's leading players and scholars of the "king of instruments," and is a particular specialist in the French Romantic organ school. He is the author of a major biography of Charles-Marie Widor (Vierne's teacher and mentor), and has recorded the complete organ music of Widor, Guilmant's complete organ sonatas, and the six organ symphonies of Vierne.

He is matched with one of the world's most famous instruments, Aristide Cavallé-Coll's last creation, the 1888-1890 organ of the Church of St.-Ouen in Rouen, France, a thirteenth- to fifteenth-century abbey church. Widor, who inaugurated it, proclaimed the instrument a "Michelangelo organ."

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The recording, produced and engineered in 1998 by Reimund Grimm, nicely balances the direct sound of the organ and the ambience of the church. Grimm seems to realize well that it is not improper for the reverberation of the great church to build, as the organ increases in power and speed, even to the point of threatening to blur the direct sound. He achieves this effect, as well as great tonal and dynamic range, without overwhelming the passage-work.

The performances are authoritative and understanding. There is a vast amount of contrast in this set of twenty-four works spread over four six-movement suites. van Osten tips the performances toward making each suite an individual, overall composition, which is the way this set should be listened to. The notes, which are by van Osten, run to seventeen pages, include much valuable biographical and musical detail, and are a model of work of this sort. Highly recommended. ---Joseph Stevenson, AllMusic Review

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