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Franck after Franck: the composer's posthumous fortunes

CÉSAR FRANCK DIED IN PARIS ON 8 NOVEMBER 1890, and proceeded almost at once to disprove one of musicology's hoariest clichés, that an eminent composer's reputation fades just after his death. Not so with Franck, however, any more than with Britten or Alfred Schnittke. We might almost say that the memorial card's phrase 'born into eternal life' can be applied to Franck's own posthumous destiny.

Paris being still a singularly village-like capital in 1890, news of Franck's death spread fast. It devastated one of his youngest organ students, the 20-year-old Louis Vierne, who admitted subsequently to having felt

as though I had been struck by a thunderbolt – crushed, annihilated. I adored that man who had shown me such tender kindness, who had sustained and encouraged me, inspired in me a profound love of music, and aroused my greatest hopes. And now, suddenly, he was only a shadow, only a memory! I had the horrible feeling of having lost my father a second time.¹

Others adopted a rather more callous attitude to the tidings. Within 24 hours of the breath leaving Franck's body, Eugène Gigout of the Saint-Augustin church jotted a note to his old teacher Saint-Saëns: 'Mon cher Maître et ami, Do you think that I might be of service as head of the organ class at the [Paris] Conservatoire?'² Charles-Marie Widor proved equally enterprising, and launched – via a letter to the Conservatoire's director Ambroise Thomas – his own campaign for Franck's professorship on the same day as Gigout's epistle.³

The funeral occurred at Sainte-Clotilde, where Franck had been chief organist since 1858, on 12 November. Thomas, 79 years of age and perhaps fearful of catching a cold,⁴ remained at home. He thus gave a certain amount of offence: especially to Franck's most vigorous disciple Vincent d'Indy, who accused Thomas of having delivered 'all his life [...] commonplace dithyrambs [*dithyrambiques lieux-communs*] upon less dignified tombs', and who went on to charge 'other important professors' with opportunistically pleading illness rather than attending the interment.⁵ One suspects a certain attempt on d'Indy's part at retrospective exorcism of his own guilt here, because he himself stayed away from the service (he had a prior conducting commitment at Valence, in the south-east of the country) and asked his old friend Emmanuel Chabrier to deputise for him.⁶ Of the four pallbearers, one – Dr Félix Féréol – came from the family of Franck's wife; the others

1. Rollin Smith: *Louis Vierne: organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral* (Hillsdale, 1999), p.49; Léon Vallas: *La véritable histoire de César Franck* (Paris, 1955), p.207.

2. Rollin Smith: *Playing the organ works of César Franck* (Stuyvesant, 1997), p.50.

3. Orpha Ochse: *Organists and organ-playing in nineteenth-century France and Belgium* (Bloomington, 1994), p.183.

4. Vallas: *La véritable histoire*, pp.29–95; Smith (*Louis Vierne*, p.50) incorrectly gives Thomas's age in 1890 as 84.

5. Vincent d'Indy: *César Franck* (Paris, 1906), p.34.

6. Rollo Myers: *Emmanuel Chabrier and his circle* (London, 1969), p.141.

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were Saint-Saëns, Samuel Rousseau (who had been the church's maître de chapelle, on and off, since 1877), and the student Henri Dallier. Also present: Vierne, Widor, Fauré, Lalo, Delibes, Alfred Bruneau, Alexandre Guilmant, André Messager, and Augusta Holmès, this last the former Franck pupil who allegedly aroused in him most unspiritual desires at the time he worked on his Piano Quintet. The veteran Canon Gardey eulogised Franck in his sermon. Vierne found the whole experience shattering. 'Going to Sainte-Clotilde,' he wrote,

I was as limp as a rag. My poor mother entrusted me to my comrades, Bouval [Jules Bouval, organist and minor composer] and Henri Büsser [another Franck organ pupil], in case I should faint during the service. As if in a dream, I heard the 'Marche Funèbre' from Holmès's *Irlande*, the 'Kyrie' from Franck's Mass, the 'Adagietto' from Bizet's *L'Arlesienne*, Samuel Rousseau's 'Liberia', and the Allegretto from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony in A. Unbearable distress seized us when, at the Offertory, we heard coming from the *grand orgue tribune* the maître's *Cantabile*, played too fast and without expression. We had thought that on that day the organ, draped in black, would have remained silent. During the pauses, heavy sighs could be heard from the entire congregation and several women were sobbing. I never heard such weeping as at that funeral. The church was filled to capacity.⁷

Widor gave the identity of the *Cantabile* culprit: Gigout, whose status as Widor's competitor for Franck's job had probably come to Widor's ears. In one suave sentence, Widor polished off his competitor: 'The grand orgue which, draped in black, should have remained silent, was heard to everyone's surprise, under the fingers of Monsieur Gigout, whom no one had asked to play.'⁸

After the cortège had made its way to Montrouge Cemetery, Chabrier spoke at the graveside:

Farewell, master, and thank you, for you have done well! It's one of the greatest artists of the century whom we salute in you; it's also the incomparable professor whose marvellous teaching has furnished a whole generation of forceful musicians, thoughtful and reflective, armed with all weapons for severe and often hard-fought combats; it's also the upright and just man, so human and so disinterested, who only ever uttered sure counsel and kind words. Farewell [...!] (Adieu, maître, et merci, car vous avez bien fait! C'est un des plus grands artistes de ce siècle que nous saluons en vous; c'est aussi le professeur incomparable dont les merveilleux enseignement a fait éclore toute une génération des musiciens robustes, croyants et réfléchis, armés de toutes pièces pour les combats sévères souvent longtemps disputés; c'est aussi l'homme juste et droit, si humain et si désintéressé qui ne donna jamais que le sûr conseil et la bonne parole. Adieu [...!])⁹

The growth of Franck's fame, which had been so gratifying and unlikely a feature of his very last years, continued in the two decades after his interment. On 15 June 1891 his oratorio *Les Béatitudes* was given – for the first time with full orchestra – by amateurs at Dijon, directed by a certain Abbé Maître; the same forces gave repeat performances one and three days later. (These events go unmentioned by d'Indy, presumably because of

7. Smith: *Louis Vierne*, p.49.

8. Smith: *ibid.*, p.48.

9. d'Indy: *César Franck*, p.35.

their amateur status, though they can hardly have fared worse than what usually passed for 'professional' 19th-century renditions of Franck's choral and orchestral music.) A better-known conductor than Maître, namely Édouard Colonne of Concerts Colonne fame – who had done so much to wreck the 1873 première of Franck's oratorio *Rédemption* – partially redeemed himself exactly 20 years later by conducting the first unabridged professional rendition of *Les Béatitudes*. D'Indy commented that Colonne directed the work 'with great care and a real concern for the artistic result [...] The effect of it was devastating [*L'effet en fût foudroyant*]'.¹⁰ (Considering d'Indy's white-hot anger at the 1873 fiasco, one might have expected him to consign Colonne permanently to outer darkness. That he could pay Colonne this compliment indicates not only the conductor's determination to redeem himself, but an eventual mellowing on d'Indy's part: very different from the attitude he voiced in a note on 19 November 1890, where he had condemned Colonne as 'Judas'.¹¹) The next appearance of *Les Béatitudes*, at Franck's native Liège, followed in April 1894; its third and fourth professional performances occurred at Utrecht in, respectively, June and December of the same year. Paris – combining, as in Berlioz's day, a reputation for boundless creative adventure with severe reluctance to put this reputation into practice – waited until 1904 before mounting the piece. Yet by then the work was already renowned. As for Franck's own wider fame, a writer for the *Journal des Débats*, André Hallays, raved about the revised *Rédemption* (having heard it at the Concerts Colonne in December 1896) and took his fellow authors to task:

Whose fault is it if glory was, for the great musician [Franck], so long in coming? The true culprits were the writers who did nothing to overcome the apathy of conductors and to stimulate the public's attention. (A qui donc le faute si la gloire fut, pour le grand musicien, si longue à venir? Les vrais coupables furent les écrivains qui ne firent rien pour secouer l'apathie des chefs d'orchestre et pour stimuler l'attention du public.)¹²

A revival of Franck's 1846 oratorio *Ruth* had occurred at Rouen's Chapel of Saint-Louis in 1892, this performance being notable above all for the starring non-musical role which it accorded to a local boy who soon made spectacularly good: the very young Marcel Dupré. 'My role,' he subsequently recollected with unconcealed triumph, 'was brilliant! I had to go on stage in a beautiful new suit to offer a bouquet of flowers to the leading singer. I was six years old, and was a great success!'¹³

Meanwhile Franck's belief in his own theatrical gifts – a belief as little warranted by the truth as that of Henry James – had resulted in not one but two unperformed operas surviving him: *Hulda* and *Ghisèle*. At least *Hulda* had reached a stageable form during his lifetime (he penned its final pages during 1886), but although he had finished *Ghisèle*'s piano score in September 1889, he never got around to orchestrating more of *Ghisèle* than

10. d'Indy: *ibid.*, p.26.

11. Andrew Thomson: *Vincent d'Indy and his world* (Oxford, 1997), p.78.

12. Vallas: *La véritable histoire*, p.186.

13. Marcel Dupré: *Recollections*, trans. Ralph Kneeream (Melville, 1975), p.12.

its first act. As with Puccini's *Turandot*, so with *Ghisèle*: personal animosities played no less important a part in the process of completion than did purely musical factors.

The composer's son, Georges Franck, by this time in his mid-forties and forever vowing to write a biography of his father which never actually materialised, had always detested d'Indy and most of *la bande à Franck* in general. One of the few members of *la bande* whom Georges tolerated was Arthur Coquard, whom, accordingly, he sought out, urging him to accept the task of making *Ghisèle* performable. Coquard assured Georges that he lacked the time to do so single-handed, and this raised for Georges the alarming spectre of d'Indy intervening. 'Now, if Vincent d'Indy were to collaborate', Georges complained in a letter to Coquard, 'he would think himself indispensable and say so. In spite of all he could do to restrict his assistance to an appropriate part, he would find a way of creating a current.'¹⁴ Somehow Georges concluded that d'Indy had deliberately sabotaged plans for Brussels' Théâtre de la Monnaie to mount *Hulda*, although anyone less likely to engage in such underhanded ruses than the blisteringly indiscreet d'Indy it is difficult to imagine; but the failure of both Coquard and Samuel Rousseau to finish *Ghisèle* by themselves meant that d'Indy had to be called in after all, in the teeth of Georges's opposition. Pierre de Bréville, yet another ally of Coquard and Rousseau, recommended that d'Indy be approached. D'Indy, with characteristic conscientiousness, postponed his other commitments in order to make *Ghisèle* viable in time for its scheduled first performance. This took place at the Opéra de Monte-Carlo on 30 March 1896, with the American-born, Paris-based diva Emma Eames in the title role; the same theatre had also witnessed *Hulda*'s earliest rendition, on 8 March 1894. Georges Servières, eventual biographer of both Saint-Saëns and Fauré, expressed his amazement at the venue's inappropriateness for anyone of Franck's character:

Those two words, one would swear, would never be coupled: Franck and Monte Carlo! The productions of the most disinterested musician, the musician most opposed to intrigue, that there has been in our century, serving for the acclaim of an impresario maintained by a gaming-house! (Ces deux mots ne jurent-ils pas d'être accouplés, Franck et Monte-Carlo! Les productions du musicien le plus désintéressé et le plus ennemi de l'intrigue qu'il y ait eu dans notre siècle, servant de réclame à l'impresario d'un théâtre entretenu par une maison de jeu!.)¹⁵

Neither *Hulda* nor *Ghisèle* attracted serious interest after their dutifully devised initial stagings until the second half of the 20th century, and even then they would remain museum-pieces. (*Hulda*'s first complete performance anywhere – without the Monegasque cuts – took place only in 1978, when Reading University Opera mounted the piece. There had, nonetheless, been in 1960 a studio rendition of the opera for Italy's RAI broadcasting network,

14. Thomson: *Vincent d'Indy*, p.79.

15. Georges Servières: *La Musique française moderne* (Paris, 1897), p.52.

conducted by Rossini specialist Vittorio Gui, and with the libretto translated into Italian by Gui himself. The Melodram label issued this rendition in 1981 on three LP discs.) With Franck's organ oeuvre, on the other hand, a recognisable tradition began within a decade of the composer's passing. The 31-year-old blind player Albert Mahaut, at Paris's Trocadéro in 1898, became the first person ever to give all 12 of Franck's major organ works in concert. Mahaut had cherished Franck ever since student days at the Institut des Jeunes Aveugles, where, each year, Franck would adjudicate at musical competitions:

He announced the prizes in his deep voice. Franck's voice! How beautiful it sounded. How it moved us, we blind, so sensitive to inflections of the voice. [...] He counselled us and we listened enraptured. He spoke little, in short phrases, but immediately we fathomed the depth of his soul, his grandeur, his strength, and at the same time his kindness. Sometimes he sat at the organ and improvised. Those were feast days of which we spoke long afterwards.¹⁶

Meanwhile the desire for a more permanent Franck memorial than the mere testimony of admirers could not be thwarted. In 1892 Augusta Holmès and Ernest Chausson arranged for no less an artist than Rodin to design a medallion depicting Franck, this medallion being meant to adorn the composer's new tomb; Franck's remains had been translated that year from Montrouge to the Cimetière de Montparnasse. Rodin reported that the portrait 'has cost me a good deal of effort',¹⁷ and though at one stage both Chausson and fellow Franckist Henri Duparc abandoned the idea of a likeness entirely (in favour of a mere block of stone with nothing but Franck's name on it), Mlle Holmès persuaded them to revert to their initial plan.

All sorts of self-proclaimed Franck adherents had started to emerge from the woodwork in the period between Franck's demise and Dukas's accolade. These Johnny-come-latelies d'Indy viewed with that fine aristocratic disparagement which came so readily to him:

Numbers of composers who would have believed themselves compromised in going to ask him for advice, found, as if by magic, that they had been his pupils. ([N]ombres de compositeurs qui auraient cru se compromettre en allant lui demander des conseils, se trouvèrent, comme par enchantement, avoir été ses élèves.)¹⁸

Elsewhere d'Indy's mockery took a New Testament form:

I knew the time when many a young composer who had ventured to the Boulevard Saint-Michel and had asked, just to see, for some advice from the Master, would have hidden his face if one had questioned him on his dealings with the organist of Sainte-Clotilde and would have willingly responded, like Saint Peter before the high priest: 'I know nothing of this man!' (J'ai connu le temps où tel jeune compositeur qui s'était aventuré boulevard Saint-Michel et avait demandé, pour voir, quelques conseils au maître, se fût voilé la face si on l'avait questionné sur les rapports avec l'organiste de Sainte-Clotilde et eût volontiers répondu, comme saint-Pierre chez le grand-prêtre: 'Je ne connais point cet homme!')¹⁹

16. Rollin Smith: *Toward an authentic interpretation of the organ works of César Franck* (Hillsdale, 2002), p.187.

17. Thomson: *Vincent d'Indy*, p.79.

18. d'Indy: *César Franck*, p.36.

19. d'Indy: *ibid*, p.233.

The same letter where Colonne had been called 'Judas' showed d'Indy at his most intemperate. He raged to his Brussels-based impresario friend Octave Maus – with, at the very least, extreme tactlessness, given Maus's Jewish lineage – that 'there's any amount of filth piling up on poor Father Franck's tomb which is barely sealed, it stabs me to the heart – oh! Artistic TRADESMEN, Jews and others!!! they would count their francs on their fathers' coffins!'²⁰ (D'Indy's pupil and eventual biographer Léon Vallas emphasised: '[s]a passion musicale était plus forte que son antisémitisme.'²¹) As if to pre-empt these 'tradesmen', d'Indy himself conducted several of Franck's compositions in various Belgian cities, Brussels included, during February 1891.²² He also arranged for Maus's own Cercle XX to organise a Brussels commemorative concert, the centrepiece of which was Franck's String Quartet, played by an ensemble which Eugène Ysaÿe led.

At the turn of the century, thanks partly to two short books, *L'oeuvre lyrique de César Franck* (by journalist Louis Destranges, 1896) and a biography (by philosophy professor Gustave Derepas, 1897), the *bande à Franck* had grown influential enough to justify a spectacular monument to its hero in the courtyard of Sainte-Clotilde. This monument, the creation of sculptor Alfred Lenoir, was unveiled on 22 October 1904. The relevant ceremony attracted not only a large crowd of ordinary music-lovers, but also Théodore Dubois – the Conservatoire's director since Thomas's death in 1896 – and Henry Marcel, the head of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Marcel (whose son, the existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel, would himself go on to call one of his numerous essays on music 'L'idée musicale chez César Franck'²³) told the assembly:

And now, there he [Franck] is in his place, in the choir of immortal geniuses who will be our hostages through future ages and who constitute, perhaps, after all, the reason for our existence and the justification of humanity in this world. (Et maintenant, le voilà à sa place, dans le chœur des génies immortels qui seront nos répondants auprès des âges futurs et constituent, peut-être, après tout, la raison d'être et la justification de l'humanité en ce monde.)²⁴

Paul Dukas, for all his notorious constraint in terms of productivity as a composer, proved himself the reverse of constrained in his *éloge* on the same occasion. With a generous spirit (and, in his anti-Wagnerism, a somewhat premonitory one), Dukas observed:

I have said what a great part must be attributed to Franck's influence on the direction that a section of contemporary French music has taken since his time. Together with those of Saint-Saëns and Édouard Lalo, his name denotes an epoch. Every purely musical development which has followed him until the present has its origins in his influence, and it is thanks to the traditions that it established, while the influence of Wagnerian music grew, that most of our musicians of today have been able to shake off have been able to shake off the humiliating servility which this influence brought in its train. (J'ai dit quelle grande part on doit attribuer à l'influence de Franck sur la direction qu'a prise, depuis

20. Thomson: *Vincent d'Indy*, p.78.

21. Vallas: *Vincent d'Indy*, vol.2 (Paris, 1950), p.43.

22. Manuela Schwartz, ed.: *Vincent d'Indy et son temps* (Sprimont, 2006), p.336.

23. Gabriel Marcel: *Music and philosophy*, trans. Stephen Maddux & Robert E. Wood (Milwaukee, 2005), pp.71-83.

24. d'Indy: *César Franck*, p.238.

lui, une partie de la musique française contemporaine. Avec celui de M. Saint-Saëns et d'Édouard Lalo, son nom désigne une époque. Toute l'éclosion de musique purement musicale qui l'a suivie jusqu'à présent prend en elle son origine, et c'est grâce aux traditions qu'elle a fait prévaloir, tandis que grandissait l'influence de la musique wagnérienne, que la plupart de nos musiciens d'aujourd'hui a dû d'être affranchie du servilisme humiliant que cette influence entraînait avec elle.)²⁵

Alas, the curse of atrocious ill-luck which seemed to lie on Franck nearly all his life had, by 1904, removed five of his champions: four by death, the fifth by serious illness. In the same year that Franck died, the pianistic career of Léontine Bordes-Pène (who had given the premiere of Franck's *Prelude, aria and finale*, as well as participating in that of his Violin Sonata) came to a tragic halt. Mme Bordes-Pène, sister-in-law of d'Indy's colleague Charles Bordes, suffered – like a better-known keyboard great, Solomon, almost 70 years later – a cerebral haemorrhage which failed to kill, but which inflicted partial paralysis and ended her hopes of continuing to perform.²⁶ Unlike Solomon, she at least managed to keep giving lessons until her death, which occurred in Rouen on 24 January 1924. Three decades previously, on 13 September 1894, the hitherto irrepressible Chabrier, also partially paralysed, had succumbed to tertiary syphilis.

As for Guillaume Lekeu, one of Franck's last and by any measure most gifted pupils, physical and mental overstrain seemed to be twin souls warring within his breast. Living on his nerve-endings, Lekeu reported to his violinist friend Louis Kéfer that

(Vincent d'Indy (whose acquaintance I was fortunate enough to make) urges me in the friendliest spirit to work a lot; he asks me at each meeting if I have something new to show him and I do not despair of being seized again by that fever for work which gripped me all last year. (Vincent d'Indy (dont fort heureusement, j'ai pu faire la connaissance) me pousse très amicalement à beaucoup travailler; me demande, à chaque rencontre, si j'ai quelque chose de nouveau à lui montrer et je ne désespère pas de rentrer bientôt dans la fièvre du travail qui m'a tenu toute l'année dernière.)

25. d'Indy: *ibid.*, pp.237–38.

26. Michel Stockhem: 'La Sonate de César Franck: interpretation et tradition', in *Revue Belge de Musicologie*, 1991, pp.145–52, 146, 148.

27. Martin Cooper: *French music from the death of Berlioz to the death of Fauré* (Oxford, 1951), p.56; Antoine Ysaÿe & Bertram Ratcliffe: *Ysaÿe: his life, work and influence* (London, 1947), p.188.

28. Luc Verdebout, ed.: *Guillaume Lekeu: correspondance* (Liège, 1993), p.304.

But this improvement in his health and spirits proved as brief as Kéfer must have feared it would be. Lekeu could not forget having fainted during *Tristan* at Bayreuth,²⁷ and despised anyone whose emotional responses to art were less fervent than his own. 'I'm killing myself in putting my whole soul into my music' [*Je me tue à mettre dans ma musique toute mon âme*],²⁸ he told his mother in an 1893 missive; the phrase serves both as his motto and as his epitaph. In January 1894 he ate a sherbet whose ice had been made from contaminated water. From this he contracted typhoid, which so quickly overcame what little natural stamina he possessed that he died on the 21st, only a day after turning 24. His last words, addressed to his parents, make painful reading in their determined and baseless hopes for the future:

Father, is it you? I was very sick, it was typhus, wasn't it? That's better. I've had such beautiful dreams! [...] We'll go to Brussels. I've have lots of students. I'll enrich my life

greatly. I've thought of my class. I'll arrange it in little tables, one for each young girl, thus, they'll be more attentive and that will be very good. And then [...] you'll both of you come with me, we'll live together and we'll be very happy. (Père, c'est toi? j'ai été bien malade; c'était le typhus, n'est-ce pas? Ça va mieux. J'ai fait de si beaux rêves! [...] Nous irons à Bruxelles. J'aurai beaucoup d'élèves. Je gagnerai largement ma vie. J'ai pensé à ma classe. Je l'arrangerai par petites tables, une pour chaque jeune fille; ainsi, elles seront plus attentives ce sera très bien. Et puis [...] vous viendrez tous les deux avec moi; nous vivrons ensemble et nous serons très heureux.)²⁹

An even greater loss to music than Lekeu's fatal illness, because it ruthlessly truncated a life which had displayed partial fulfilment as well as Lekeu's vast early promise, was Chausson's violent end. On 10 June 1899, while riding his bicycle – along a path he had many times travelled – on his own estate at Limay, outside Paris, the 44-year-old Chausson ran into a wall and broke his skull. Debussy expert Edward Lockspeiser insisted that in Chausson's decease 'there may well have been a suicidal element';³⁰ this is implausible, given both Chausson's strict religious faith and the unpredictable manner of his end. Ralph Scott Grover, the composer's most recent biographer in English, has flatly stated that '[u]nless and until overwhelming evidence presents itself'³¹ to show that Chausson intended to take his own life, we may rest content with the verdict of French musicologist Jean Gallois, who called the crash 'ce stupide accident'.³² Gallois elsewhere quoted Chausson's own poignantly phrased artistic aim: 'to write one page that enters the heart [*écrire une page qui entre dans le coeur*]'.³³

The year which saw Chausson's death also witnessed Aristide Cavallé-Coll's, on 13 October. Aged 88 at the time of his death, the great organ manufacturer had spent his later years in financially embarrassed circumstances (d'Indy refers to him as 'inventeur qui mourut pauvre',³⁴ the 1910 translator of d'Indy's book having curiously rendered these last two words as 'died young'). Devoid of a business sense to match his mechanical genius, Cavallé-Coll always refused to lower his organ-building standards by poor materials or hasty craftsmanship. Around 1890 Widor suggested to former Prime Minister Jules Ferry that the French Government give Cavallé-Coll 50,000 francs, to spare him the disgrace of being summoned before the bankruptcy court. Given Ferry's anticlericalism, it was an inauspicious approach; and the shrewd politician treated Widor's proposal with open impatience. 'Musicians', he responded, 'are charming dreamers. Where do you think I can find 50,000 francs for the worthy Cavallé-Coll? [...] I can do absolutely nothing'.³⁵ Mercifully, total financial disaster was averted when the old man's son-in-law, Charles Mutin, bought him out. It remained a sad end to Cavallé-Coll's long and useful life. (He is now buried, like Chabrier, not far from Franck at Montparnasse.)

With Lekeu, Chabrier, Chausson and Cavallé-Coll all gone, with Duparc still too mistrustful of his own creative powers to publish a note, d'Indy alone

29. M. Lorrain: *Lekeu: sa correspondance, sa vie et son oeuvre* (Liège, 1923), pp.358–59.

30. Edward Lockspeiser: *Debussy: his life and mind*, vol.1 (London, 1962), p.126.

31. Ralph Scott Grover: *Ernest Chausson: the man and his music* (London, 1980), p.56.

32. Jean Gallois: *Ernest Chausson: l'homme et son oeuvre* (Paris, 1967), p. 69.

33. Gallois: *Ernest Chausson*, p.81.

34. d'Indy: *César Franck*, p.15.

35. Andrew Thomson: *The life and times of Charles-Marie Widor* (Oxford, 1987), p.56.

remained among Franck's internationally famous and unswervingly active creative champions. (Lesser figures in Franck's existence had also departed prematurely. Georges Verschneider, Sainte-Clotilde's junior organist, died in 1895, aged 41; Samuel Rousseau in 1904, aged 51.) Others praised Franck on an occasional basis. Such advocates included Debussy, who by his paganism represented Franck's antipode, and whose own Conservatoire lessons from Franck had been less than congenial, but who was too honest to let his world-view cloud his judgement permanently. In his 'Monsieur Croche' column for *Gil Blas* (on 13 April 1903), Debussy ruminated:

I would have liked best to fix the image of C. Franck in the consciousness of each reader and to impress on his memory a precise souvenir. It is well to contemplate, amidst too pressing preoccupations, the great musicians and above all to have them contemplated [by others]. I have taken the opportunity of Good Friday to render homage to one of the greatest, thinking that this homage befits the idea of sacrifice which the greatness of the man evokes in the sanctity of the day. (J'aurais voulu mieux fixer l'image de C. Franck afin que chaque lecteur en emportât dans sa mémoire un souvenir précis. Il est juste de songer, parmi de trop pressantes préoccupations, aux grands musiciens et surtout d'y faire songer. J'ai pris l'occasion du vendredi saint pour rendre hommage à l'un des plus grands, pensant que cet hommage répondait à l'idée de sacrifice qu'évoque la grandeur de l'homme dans la sainteté du jour.)³⁶

Three months beforehand, on 28 January, the 55-year-old Mlle Holmès breathed her last. Her beauty had collapsed, her increasing isolation had driven her to the bottle, and her ambitions to become her sex's first unanswerably great composer had long since turned to dust. A few heterodox souls still revered her, and on all too rare occasions visited her. One of these souls, Dame Ethel Smyth, called on her in 1899:

The first sight of her – a convalescent arrayed in a red flannel dressing-gown – was rather a shock. I had always thought of her as tall – on the contrary she was short and fat, her red hair powdered white – who shall say why? – and her white face, helped out with black, red and white, vigorously and wildly applied, as by one who could not be bothered to use a looking-glass and preferred doing her face 'by heart'. In fact, the general appearance was that of a barmaid of sixty. [...] When we parted after three hours' ardent conversation, we embraced with fervour. I [...] felt we really were friends. Just at the end there was a touch of symposium: 'Adieu, chère collègue', she said – a remark I pretended not to hear.³⁷

In a *Gil Blas* article on 2 February, Debussy lamented Mlle Holmès's death. 'She was very beautiful,' he reflected, 'and probably had everything necessary to be happy; she preferred music [*Elle fût très belle et avait probablement tout ce qu'il faut pour être heureuse; elle préféra faire de la musique*].'³⁸

For another leading artist who disclosed an unanticipated love of Franck's method at its most personal, we need only look at André Gide, who devoted a 1904 diary entry to praising the *Trois chorals*. There, he recorded, 'I submerge myself and resubmerge myself [*je me plonge et me replonge*] every

36. Claude Debussy: *Monsieur Croche: anti-dilettante* (Paris, 1971), p.142.

37. Dame Ethel Smyth: *What happened next* (London, 1940), p.157.

38. Rollo Myers: 'Augusta Holmès: a meteoric career', in *The Musical Quarterly*, July 1967, pp.365–76.

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evening.³⁹ Gide seems never to have recorded his reactions to d'Indy's book on Franck, when it appeared in 1906, but he almost certainly read it. Debussy, no longer on his best behaviour for Good Friday, greeted the book's publication with a self-consciously shocking swipe at 'the false mysticism of the old Belgian angel'.⁴⁰

BRITAIN'S WIDER MUSIC WORLD became increasingly Franck-conscious at around the same time that France's did. While still alive, Franck scored a brief notice in the supplement to *Grove's* first (1889) edition; and his death was mentioned in *The Times*.⁴¹ Another London publication, *The Athenaeum*, furnished – in lieu of a more accurate obituary – one misleading paragraph (anonymous, like the rest of the magazine's contents) in its 'Musical gossip' column:

The death is announced of M. César Franck, since 1860 organist of St. Clotilde, Paris. Franck was born at Liège in 1822, but became a naturalized Frenchman in 1870. He was an extremely prolific composer, his works including operas, oratorios, a mass, motets, chamber works, and, in fact, examples in almost every form of composition, though it cannot be said that his music became generally popular, even in his own country, owing to the fact that it is more remarkable for musical knowledge than inspiration [!]. His most pleasing effort is an oratorio entitled 'Ruth,' composed in 1845. Franck was much esteemed as a teacher, both at the Conservatoire and in private life.⁴²

Les Béatitudes inspired early affection among the British: predictably enough, when one remembers indigenous choral singing traditions before 1914. By 1908, when Sir Henry Wood conducted *Les Béatitudes* at the Sheffield Festival, it had already notched up performances at Cardiff, Glasgow and Hereford: though not all its presentations in those cities were complete. (Shades of the piecemeal approach taken to the work in Franck's own day.) It had also been lauded with intense enthusiasm by Massenet's biographer Arthur Hervey, who, in his 1903 tome, *French music in the XIXth century*, hailed it as 'one of the greatest masterpieces of the art'.⁴³ In 1912 the British organist John W. Hinton published his pamphlet *César Franck: some personal reminiscences*.⁴⁴ Vaughan Williams, looking back in maturity on a Piano Trio in G which he had written as a mere 16-year-old, reported: 'All I remember about it is that the principal theme was distinctly reminiscent of César Franck, a composer [...] whom I have since learned to dislike cordially.'⁴⁵ All this activity belies the 1949 assertion by the musicologist Norman Demuth that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries 'the organ works were the only ones [of Franck's] which were familiar here'.⁴⁶

America would eventually become the other great Franck-loving nation. The first traceable US performance of Franck occurred in 1897, when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra included in one of its concerts *Le chasseur maudit*⁴⁷ (the occasional Franck organ or chamber piece might have been

39. Emmanuel Buezod: *César Franck* (Paris, 1966), p.173.

40. Joël-Marie Fauquet: *César Franck* (Paris, 1999), p.492.

41. [Anon.]: 'M. César Franck', in *The Times*, 10 November 1890, p.6, col.b.

42. [Anon.]: 'Musical gossip', in *The Athenaeum*, 15 November 1890, p.671. The date '1860' should be '1858', and '1870' should be '1872'.

43. Arthur Hervey: *French music in the XIXth century* (London, 1903), p.220.

44. John William Hinton: *César Franck: some personal reminiscences* (London, 1912).

45. Michael Kennedy: *The works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Oxford, 1992), p.12.

46. Norman Demuth: *César Franck* (London, 1949), p.43.

47. Kate Hevner Mueller: *Twenty-seven major American symphony orchestras: a history and analysis of their repertoires, Season 1842-43 through 1969-70* (Bloomington, 1973), p.130.

heard in the States before then). Within a decade, not only *Le chasseur maudit* but the Symphony and the Symphonic Variations had become staples of American orchestral repertoires, notably in Chicago and Philadelphia.⁴⁸ For ordinary newspaper-readers, the composer's name had become sufficiently famous to ensure that a non-music-related remark by Georges Franck (urging action to stop Niagara Falls from being destroyed) achieved publication in *The New York Times*, complete with a reference to Georges's eminent father.⁴⁹

It is seldom appreciated that among Franck's most avid admirers in the USA before World War I was – of all surprising people – Charles Ives. Berkeley professor Richard Taruskin has tartly stressed how this reverence has been overlooked, for the sake of imputing to Ives a factitious parochial innovation:

Ives's special favourite composer was Franck, whose Symphony in D minor was as haunted by Beethoven's Ninth (and his late quartets) as Ives's 'Concord' Sonata was by Beethoven's Fifth. Love of Franck followed in part from Ives's background as an organist: he kept a reproduction of Jeanne Rongier's famous portrait of Franck seated at the organ tacked to the door of his music studio [...] it can seem a wonder that Ives and Franck are not habitually linked. But of course the twentieth century taught us all to pay more attention to manner than to substance. [...] We might learn something new about him, and perhaps get closer to him, if the next time there is an Ives festival we placed a little less emphasis on his familiar – indeed, hackneyed – image as an 'American' and an 'original' and risked a greater emphasis on the dowdy, corny 'substance' he shared with the composers who actually mattered to him.⁵⁰

Nevertheless it took World War I to make Franck an object of mass ardour in Britain and America, as well as in the lands where he had been born and domiciled. As the musical incarnation of 'gallant little Belgium', he became a cultural mascot for several of the Allied powers. The awkward facts that Franck possessed half-German ancestry, and that without the German examples of Mendelssohn and Wagner his mature style would scarcely have developed in the way it did, were overlooked. Franck lived in France, he had demonstrated the good taste to be born in Belgium, and these things were what counted in the struggle against steel-helmeted, baby-bayoneting Prussian *Schrecklichkeit*. (War-fever caused Dame Ethel Smyth to grieve Sir Osbert Sitwell by finding treasonous elements even in Bach's music. 'Don't play Bach', she told Sir Osbert, 'it's playing the German game'.⁵¹) A Festival César Franck – postponed because its original date clashed with the funeral of General Joseph Gallieni – took place at Paris's Salle Gaveau, on 4 June 1916, to raise funds for 'des femmes et des enfants victimes de la Guerre'.⁵² In an article for *The Nineteenth Century*, the novelist Constance Elizabeth Maud – who later reprinted her piece as part of her collection *Sparks among the stubble* – reflected on how Franck helped the Allied war effort from his grave:

48. Mueller: *Twenty-seven major American symphony orchestras*, pp. 131–32.

49. Charles E. Loew: 'Niagara a trust, not an asset', in *The New York Times*, 17 April 1905.

50. Richard Taruskin: *The Danger of Music and other anti-utopian essays* (Berkeley, 2009), pp. 189–90.

51. Sir Osbert Sitwell: *Noble essences: a book of characters* (London, 1950), p. 79.

52. From the visual arts catalogue of the Imperial War Museum: www.iwads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=32368.

53. Constance Elizabeth Maud: 'Sparks among the stubble', in *The Nineteenth Century*, pp. 117,

54. Maud: *Sparks among the stubble*, p. 681.

To realize what César Franck stood for in the days of the Great War one had only to be in Paris on All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, both solemnly dedicated in France to the Departed [...]. It was [on the 1917 *Jour des Morts*] César Franck who sang his great message of invincible hope and courage wherever the mourning crowds met together. At Notre-Dame the beautiful uplifting strains of the 'Béatitudes' rang through the arches of the Cathedral, falling like healing rain on the thirsting crowds of kneeling black-robed people. At the Grand Palais a vast throng gathered to hear the 'Oratorio of Ruth', the 'Panis Angelicus', and other words of benediction [...] during the War, Mlle. de Monvel and a young officer recently from Verdun played, quite unforgettably, the famous Sonate for violin and piano dedicated to M. Ysaÿe. The youthful violinist had passed eight months in that fiery ordeal where seventeen thousand Frenchmen lie buried in one valley alone. He had been taken prisoner by the Germans while lying severely wounded, but had managed to escape from his Hun captors by falling out of an ambulance in the dark. A first prizeman at the Conservatoire, he promised if his life were spared to be in the foremost ranks of violinists.

I asked him if he could have rendered the Sonate just like that before Verdun.

He answered slowly: 'Nothing is quite the same after one has passed through Verdun. One is not studying music down there, and yet one is learning how to play the violin – how to express such thoughts as Franck has here – as never before one could have expressed them'.⁵³

The last year of war turned out to be also the last year of Mme Franck's existence. She attained the age of 94, and suffered the dismal fate of outliving all her children. Georges Franck had died (his account of his father's doings still unattempted) in 1910, his brother Germain – credited with 'a sweet and withdrawn [*douce et effacée*] personality'⁵⁴ – two years later.

PUBLIC LOVE of Franck maintained its momentum after the Armistice, in those territories where it had occurred in the first place. D'Indy had the satisfaction of observing that the centenary of Franck's birth was commemorated in lavish fashion, not least in Paris. At the Opéra on 7 March 1922, a choral and orchestral concert was held, d'Indy officiating there as one of the conductors. The concert consisted of *Le chasseur maudit*, the Symphonic Variations, *Rédemption*, and the fourth and eighth *Béatitudes*. A Conservatoire event on 15 March was given over to the Violin Sonata, the Piano Quintet and the String Quartet, played by the Italian-born pianist Cesare Galeotti and the Capet Quartet. On the 31st of the same month, former Franck pupil Gabriel Pierné appeared as organist at a Franck recital in Sainte-Clotilde. This was a multiple recital, with Charles Tournemire, Galeotti (again), Gigout, Dallier, Mahaut and Adolphe Marty – Marty being another blind ex-student of Franck's – taking turns to perform. On 9 and 10 December, Pierné (having the previous week given an interview on the subject of Franck for the music weekly *Le Ménestrel*) conducted the Société Colonne in two all-Franck concerts. These were devoted to the Symphony, the Symphonic Variations, *Rédemption*, *Psyché* and parts of *Les Béatitudes*. Seemingly indefatigable, Pierné also mounted the podium for a one-day

53. Constance Elizabeth Maud: 'César Franck (musician of the Great War)', in *Sparks among the stubble* (London, 1924), pp.117, 118, 140.

54. Fauquet: *César Franck*, p.681.

Franck festival on 20 December; there listeners heard not only the Symphony and *Rédemption* but *Paris* (written during the Franco-Prussian War), the song *Soleil*, and the national anthems of both Belgium (*La Brabançonne*) and France. The Symphony and *Rédemption* had appeared once again at a Strasbourg concert under d'Indy's old friend Joseph Guy-Ropartz two days earlier, along with two other songs: *Nocturne* and *La Procession*. Paris's civic authorities unveiled on 19 November a plaque in memory of Franck, at his old home (95 Boulevard Saint-Michel).

As for Liège's commemorations, Elisabeth, the eccentric and violin-playing Belgian queen, witnessed on 26 November the unveiling of a monument to Franck. Executed by French sculptor Pierre-Félix Fix-Masseau, it depicts the composer surrounded by three women who, according to one somewhat effortful 1990 interpretation, 'symbolisent les trois chorals pour orgue.'⁵⁵ Henri Rabaud (Fauré's successor in the Paris Conservatoire's directorship) formally entrusted this monument to the Liègeois people as a musical token of what French Education Minister Léon Bérard, also present, called 'l'amitié et [...] l'éternelle admiration des français.'⁵⁶ (Fix-Masseau's creation can still be found – or could still be found, as of December 2009 – in a side-annexe of the Liège Conservatoire.) The previous evening, in the queen's presence, Franck's long-standing supporter Sylvain Dupuis – by now running the Liège Conservatoire, and elevated on the same day to the French Legion of Honour⁵⁷ – conducted *Les Béatitudes* in full.⁵⁸

Naturally, even at the height of Franckophilia (between 1920 and 1925 Franck's orchestral music achieved a greater following in America than it ever had done before or ever would do again⁵⁹), dissenting voices could be heard, in France as elsewhere. In 1919 the indestructible Saint-Saëns, aged 83 when the war ended, dismissed the *Prelude, chorale and fugue* as 'a morceau anything but pleasant or convenient to play, where the chorale is not a chorale nor the fugue a fugue'. (Curiously, Franck's insistence on calling the first movement a prelude failed to provoke from Saint-Saëns any further censure.) 'It speedily falls to pieces,' Saint-Saëns went on, 'and continues in interminable digressions which no more resemble a fugue than a zoophyte resembles a mammifer. These digressions are scarcely atoned for by a brilliant ending. Assuredly it is not in this way that we shall, even at the present time, understand the possibilities of the time-honoured venerable fugue.'⁶⁰ Ravel found the Franck Symphony to contain 'Melody of a cultivated and cheerful spirit, daring harmonies of especial richness, but a devastating poverty of form.'⁶¹ Satie could say nothing more definite on the topic of his attitudes to Franck than his verdict in a letter to the young Poulenc: 'His oeuvre is astonishingly Franckist, in the good sense of the word.'⁶² Poulenc, for his own part, announced in 1919: 'I don't like Franck because his isn't Latin art. It's still literary with a mystical side [*avec*

55. Victor Bernard: *César Franck: ses origines, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Liège, 1990), no page numbers.

56. Ville de Liège, *Commemoration du centenaire de la naissance de César Franck 1922* (Liège, 1924), p.14.

57. Ville de Liège, *Commemoration*, p.18.

58. Conservatoire Royal de Musique de Liège, *Centenaire de César Franck, 1822–1922*, Programme (Liège, 1922), pp.1–41.

59. Mueller: *Twenty-seven major American symphony orchestras*, p.xxxvii. In 1920 Franck's output amounted to almost 2.5 per cent of the total music performed at American orchestral concerts.

60. Camille Saint-Saëns: *Outspoken essays on music*, trans. Fred Rothwell (London, 1922), p.47.

61. HH Stuckenschmidt: *Maurice Ravel: variations on his life and work*, trans. Samuel R. Rosenbaum (Philadelphia, 1968), pp.138–39.

62. Myriam Chimènes, ed.: *Francis Poulenc: Correspondance 1910–1963* (Paris, 1994), p.50.

63. *ibid.*

64. Ch. ed.: *A.* (Lond.)

65. Ce. (Lond.)

66. *ibid.*

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68. M. Josett. *musica* 2001)

un côté mystique] à la [JK] Huysmans, whom I don't like at all.⁶³ Delius politely hedged: 'I think a good deal of Franck. The Symphony and the Sonata I consider the works which will live [...] [but] I never find him quite original.'⁶⁴

Possibly the oddest expression of anti-Franck sentiment occurred across the Channel. Originally the critic Cecil Gray had considered Franck to be 'one of my gods';⁶⁵ but under the increasing influence of his boon companion Peter Warlock, he performed a complete volte-face, when confronted with Warlock's parody *The old codger* (from a series of so-called 'Cod-pieces'), in which snatches of the Symphony are guyed. Gray called *The old codger* 'a witty and sacrilegious production which has the effect of rendering it impossible for anyone who has once heard it to listen again to the original with due and becoming respect.'⁶⁶ Better known and with greater pretensions to moral authority is the somewhat later condemnation of Franck by Warlock's fellow toper Constant Lambert:

for the typical nineteenth-century symphony as represented by Tchaikovsky No 5, Dvorák's *From the New World*, and César Franck in D Minor, there is frankly nothing to be said; their mingling of academic procedure with undigested nationalism or maudlin sentiment, or both, produces a chimerical monster, a musical Minotaur that fortunately has had no progeny.⁶⁷

BY 1940 – the year Franck's output came out of copyright – those leading advocates of Franck who had known him well had mostly left the scene. D'Indy, Dupuis and Ysaÿe died in 1931; Duparc in 1933; Pierné, Vierne and Widor in 1937, French music's *annus horribilis*, during which Ravel and Roussel also perished; Tournemire in 1939. (A few Franck pupils battled on well after the Liberation. Henri Büsser's death occurred on 30 December 1973, just over two weeks before what would have been his 102nd birthday.)

Whilst the Nazis occupied Paris, German commentator Wilhelm Mohr published in Stuttgart *César Franck: ein deutscher Musiker*; the subtitle speaks for itself. In the same year (1942) as the appearance of Mohr's book, the Nazi-founded newspaper *Pariser Zeitung* insensitively devoted an article to an attempted proof of Franck's essentially Teutonic nature; this incurred an accusation of 'nouvelle insolence'.⁶⁸ Overall, though, Franck did not constitute one of the more hotly disputed musical reputations of the war years. He had no known Jewish blood, and his music therefore remained unbanned in either German-controlled territory or the Vichy zone. It continued to inspire deep esteem in both France and England. Curiously, two essays on Franck written at much the same time – one by Neville Cardus as part of his book *Ten composers*; the other by political theorist 'Alain' (pseudonym of Émile-Auguste Chartier) for the *Mercure de France* in September 1943 – refer with approbation to identifiably ecclesiastical elements of Franck's

63. *ibid.*, p.99.

64. Christopher Redwood, ed.: *A Delius companion* (London, 1976), p.60.

65. Cecil Gray: *Peter Warlock* (London, 1934), p.71.

66. *ibid.*, p.142.

67. Constant Lambert: *Music ho! a study of music in decline* (London, 1937), pp.223–24.

68. Myriam Chimènes & Josette Alviset, edd.: *La vie musicale sous Vichy* (Paris, 2001), p.342.

idiom. Alain says: 'The beads of a rosary, their variety and their monotony, do not at all badly represent this suite of musical moments which comprise Franck's music.'⁶⁹ Cardus says: 'If we object to the various works of Franck for their sameness or their mannerisms it is as though we should complain that the ritual is always the same, the vestments always the same [...] By the miracle of imagination Franck rings his changes, tells his beads – and lo! they do not remain the same thing the more he changes them. His art is a sort of perpetual transubstantiation of music.'⁷⁰ It should be emphasised that despite such intuition of Franck's Catholic aspect, neither Alain nor Cardus identified himself as a religious believer.

Franck continued to have a great following after 1945, though more in Britain, France and Belgium than in America. It can be best understood as part of what may be called 'the *Brideshead revisited* syndrome': that craving, not without nostalgia, for leisured luxury of a pre-ration-book sort. Waugh wrote of *Brideshead's* appearance: 'It was a bleak period of present privation and threatening disaster – the period of soya beans and Basic English – and in consequence the book is infused with a kind of gluttony for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language'. Looking back in *Music Review's* May 1966 number, one Ronald Pearsall – beginning an otherwise decidedly supercilious profile – recalled:

In that music-conscious decade that followed the end of the last war, no symphony was greeted with more rapture than César Franck's. This was particularly true in the provinces, and every season of the City of Birmingham Orchestra's programme was ornamented by at least one performance of the Franck Symphony, as well as the ubiquitous Symphonic Variations. In the plebiscite concerts, where audiences sent in postcards to vote for a favourite concert, the Franck Symphony always had a huge following.⁷¹

The Symphonic Variations were actually presented at Covent Garden as part of a plot-less ballet, choreographed by Sir Frederick Ashton; George VI and French President Vincent Auriol attended the ballet's 1946 opening night. Sibelius's biographer Robert Layton humbly admitted a change of attitude which the success of Franck's Symphony had forced upon him in post-war Britain. As a young record-reviewer he found the thought of hearing this piece every month on new discs 'an unwelcome prospect. Rather to my surprise, I discovered that what I had taken to be a rickety old warhorse was pretty indestructible and the impatience with which I had viewed it [...] was, as often is the case, quite unwarranted.'⁷² Biographies of Franck by Maurice Kunel, Norman Demuth, Norbert Dufourcq, Hendrik Andriessen, and the aforementioned Léon Vallas (*La véritable histoire de César Franck*) all appeared between 1945 and 1955.

In the 1960s Franck's stocks sank. According to the Schwann and Gramophone catalogues of discs in print, 14 LP recordings of Franck's

69. 'Alain' [Émile-Auguste Chartier]: *Humanités* (Paris, 1960), pp.176–183, at p.179.

70. Neville Cardus: *A composer's eleven* (London, 1959), p.167.

71. Ronald Pearsall: 'The serene anxiety of César Franck', in *The Music Review*, May 1966, pp.98–101, at p.98.

72. Robert Layton: 'A Quarterly Retrospect', in *Gramophone*, August 1987, pp.18–20, at p.18.

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Symphony were available in 1963 on both sides of the Atlantic (the figure a decade previously had been 13); by 1968 the figure had shrunk to four. The big Franck piano works, represented in 1953 and 1963 with up to three recordings each, could not be bought at all on LP in 1968, save second-hand. Statistics of orchestral concerts showed a similar decline: the Symphony retained a certain recognition, but erstwhile staples like the Symphonic Variations largely faded from view; and the symphonic poems dropped out of sight almost totally once Sir Thomas Beecham and Ernest Ansermet were no longer around to direct them. Only the Violin Sonata and a handful of the organ pieces continued to be widely taken up. Cardiff University's Laurence Davies published two books on Franck (*César Franck and his circle*, 1970; *Franck*, 1973) when the composer's fortunes seemed to have worsened irretrievably, but these studies failed to trigger any significant long-term revival.

For Franck himself the times were out of joint. To audiences – never mind conductors – increasingly obsessed with Mahler's and Shostakovich's apocalyptic sarcasms, self-aware *Weltschmerz*, and preoccupation with Big Issues, Franck's own straightforward muse, his predominantly undemonstrative capacity for administering comfort, and his absolute freedom from the ironist's impulse, could all too easily be belittled as 'Victorian'. The exceptionally high proportion of organ music in Franck's output meant that much of his finest thought remained inaccessible to those for whom the organ is a mere source of tedium. Only with maturity is a taste for Franck likely to develop in those who ever acquire it. Be it noted that Franck's Conservatoire pupils were generally older than the student average. Davies, likening the String Quartet to Fauré's no less valedictory work in the same medium, observes that each composition 'seems to speak of "last things", and for this reason does not make much impact on the young. If we had to find a work to describe them [Franck's and Fauré's quartets] it would be "resignation" – that sensation that everything has been experienced, lived through and gradually cast aside'.⁷³

THE 1990 CENTENARY of Franck's death prompted greatly varied responses. Symphony orchestras in English-speaking countries paid the anniversary little or no attention. In certain other quarters, the event was quite handsomely celebrated. Belgium devoted numerous concerts of 1990's Festival van Vlaanderen and Festival de Wallonie to Franck; the BBC made Franck its featured composer in the week of his centenary. D'Indy and Widor biographer Andrew Thomson discussed aspects of Franck's creativity in the December 1990 *Musical Times*.⁷⁴ The Brussels-based *Revue Belge de Musicologie* devoted an entire annual number to Franck's deeds. As might be expected, organists showed particular

73. Laurence Davies: *Franck* (London, 1973), p.39.

74. Andrew Thomson: 'César Franck: mind, flesh and spirit', in *The Musical Times* (December 1990), pp.639–41.

willingness to keep Franck's memory green. Several cities – including Liège, Paris, New York, Washington DC, London and Sydney – witnessed commemorative organ recitals during the year, despite the partial clouding of Franck's glory by the fact that 1990 was also the 50th anniversary of Jehan Alain's death. Leading organist Michael Murray, in a cycle of New York concerts, featured all of Franck's biggest pieces. *L'Oeuvre d'orgue de César Franck et ses mystères*, by Jean Langlais's wife Marie-Louise Jacquet-Langlais, appeared in 1990 and chronicled the tortuous publishing history of Franck's organ inspirations. Rollin Smith in *The American Organist* and the late Alan Moffat in *The Sydney Organ Journal* each published an entire series of articles dealing with Franck (Smith's writings formed the basis of a subsequent book on Franck as organ composer). Liège's Ricercar CD label brought out a boxed set of Franck's main orchestral works, excluding the juvenilia. All of his songs, many of them unrecorded before, found their way onto a disc from another Liègeois company, Disques Duchesne. Several complete or almost-complete recordings of Franck's organ music appeared. Most unusual of Franck centenary offerings was the American Guild of Organists' decision to publish a Franck calendar, in which every important event of either the composer's own life or the lives of those near to him duly received a mention on the relevant day. Perhaps it is the discipline of poetry which provides the best summation of Franck's musical significance. Tennyson wrote this line in homage to Milton; it could equally well serve as homage to Franck: 'O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies!'