

Storm Fantasies for the Nineteenth-Century Organ in France

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THE MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY storm fantasy, improvised or composed, was a spectacle in sound, providing listeners with a literally astonishing experience. It was, at least in part, the frank pictorialism of the storm episode in the fantasy that both held such appeal for nineteenth-century listeners, and gave certain critics so much to deplore. On one memorable occasion, as Louis-James-Alfred Lefébure-Wély, one of the most powerful and successful organists of his time, improvised a storm on the new Cavaillé-Coll organ in Ghent in 1856, the gas lights were dimmed, presumably to heighten the listeners' experience of the "storm."¹ Lefébure-Wély turned his attention again and again to the possibilities of presenting scenographic spectacles on the organ. In a concert at La Madeleine given for the benefit of flood victims of a Loire Valley incident, his improvisation depicted the river overflowing its banks, the powerful waters roaring, and even the moaning of the flood's unfortunate victims.² Not all spectacular events had to occur on land: Lefébure-Wély drafted a plan for an organ piece to be titled "Ocean Voyage" or "Voyage at Sea" centering on a storm at sea and the disruption it brought to the ship's voyage and to the ship's crew. In this plan he delineates the narrative with references to fluctuating dynamic levels on the organ, and he also connects certain moments to specific organ stops: at a pivotal point the "sailors' prayers" ought to be presented, he writes, with the "Voix humaine."³

The storm fantasy exploited particular timbres and stop combinations provided by the Cavaillé-Coll organ, and many contemporary critics, using precise terminology, reported on the sounds they heard emanating from those instruments. Although the storm fantasy as a sonic spectacle depended upon an elaborate sequence of distinctive and contrasting sounds arranged in an

¹ For a detailed account see Jean-Pierre Félix, "Autour de l'inauguration par Lefébure-Wély de l'orgue Cavaillé-Coll de l'église St.-Nicolas à Gand en 1856," *L'Organiste* 97/1 (1993), 15-36. See also Joris de Henau, "Storm in de St.-Niklaaskerk te Gent anno 1856," *Het Orgel* 99/4 (2003), 5-15.

² See Fenner Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll and the Musicians*, 2 vols. (Raleigh: Sunbury, 1980), I: 70.

³ *Ibid.*, I:110. See below at fn. 48 for a complete account.

episodic formal structure, the technological innovation of the thunder pedal was, for better or worse, an important triggering mechanism that facilitated the storm component of the fantasy. Often referred to as *effet d'orage* or *tonnerre* in the nineteenth century, the thunder pedal was a combination pedal — one of several *pédales de combinaisons* — usually at the extreme left above the bottom pedal keys and thus often listed as the first of the combination pedals in a stop list.⁴ The Cavaillé-Coll instrument at Ghent (1856), a sizeable instrument of about forty stops, had a thunder pedal listed as one of thirteen combination pedals.⁵ But smaller organs might also come equipped with this device: the twenty-six-stop Cavaillé-Coll organ built for Saint-Louis-d'Antin in Paris in 1858 had a thunder pedal listed as one of ten combination pedals.⁶ And even in the face of critical opposition to the use of thunder and storm effects in a church setting, organ builders including Cavaillé-Coll, Merklin, and Debierre were still providing thunder pedals in the 1880s and beyond: Merklin's 1882 proposal for a renovation of the organ at the Cathedral of Rouen included among four new *pédales de combinaison* a *tonnerre* device, and Cavaillé-Coll included a thunder pedal in the important organs at Saint-Ouen de Rouen and Saint-Sernin at Toulouse at the end of the 1880s.⁷

But it would be a mistake to focus exclusively on the thunder pedal — a serviceable registrational device — in our investigation of the storm fantasy. In fact, these fantasies, whether improvised or composed, generally drew upon the

tonal resources of the Cavaillé-Coll organ in several important ways. The formal scheme of the storm fantasy depends first on relatively simple combinations of stops — designed to create striking orchestral colors — for expansive, often pastoral, sections. Second, it demands relatively rapid crescendo and decrescendo operations (independent of the thunder-pedal device), which may be facilitated by the available *pédales de combinaisons* provided on organs of this period. The storm fantasy, then, provided a vivid demonstration of the full range of tonal and expressive resources of the nineteenth-century organ. Such a fantasy brought together within one long episodic form the color, the sweetness, the dramatic crescendo/decrescendo capabilities, and, of course, the majestic — even frightening — power of the full organ.

This study, which is neither an encyclopedic survey of all storm pieces from the period nor a comprehensive essay on the aesthetics of the genre, addresses several crucial questions. How, and from what particular traditions and practices, did the organ storm fantasy arise? How did the genre exploit the tonal resources of the Cavaillé-Coll organ of the second half of the century? And how did contemporaries make sense of these pieces as musical works *for the organ*? The focus of this study will be a repertoire of published works from the period 1850 to 1880. The 1850s were a pivotal early phase of Cavaillé-Coll's organ-building career, for which the Ghent spectacle was an unforgettable milestone. By the 1880s, although thunder pedals continued to be built on new organs, the craze had begun to fade: the 1878 series of organ concerts on the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Trocadéro, which included three storm pieces (two composed and one improvised), prompted one critic to observe that the organ storm had, at this point, been played out.⁸

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⁴ For a thumbnail description of the device see Peter Williams and Barbara Owen, *The New Grove: Organ* (New York: Norton, 1988), 315. See also Kurt Lueders, "Reflections on the Esthetic Evolution of the Cavaillé-Coll Organ," in *Charles Brenton Fisk: Organ Builder*, 2 vols. (Easthampton, MA: The Westfield Center for Early Keyboard Studies, 1986), I: 137.

⁵ Félix, "Autour de l'inauguration," 28-9.

⁶ Clément Loret, *Cours d'orgue*, 4 parts (Paris: Loret fils et H. Freytag, n.d.), 3:xvi in Chapter 4. According to the Bibliothèque nationale (Paris), Loret's *Cours* dates from 1877.

⁷ For criticism of thunder effects, see Joseph Régner, *L'Orgue, sa connaissance, son administration et son jeu* (Nancy: Vagner, 1850), 180-82; for the stoplist of the Debierre organ at the Cathedral of Saint-Malo (1890), see Wallace Goodrich, *The Organ in France* (Boston: The Boston Music Company, 1917), 130-31; for the Merklin proposal see P. Hardouin, "Le grand orgue de la Cathédrale de Rouen," *Connaissance de l'orgue* 43-44 (1982), 50; for the stoplists of the organs at Toulouse and Saint-Ouen de Rouen see François Sabatier, "Les orgues de Cavaillé-Coll: évolution, registration," *L'Orgue* 249 (1999): 131-3. For the stoplists of the organs at Toulouse and Saint-Ouen, see also Jesse Eschbach, *Aristide Cavaillé-Coll: Aspects of his Life and Work*, vol. I: *A Compendium of Known Stoplists...* (Paderborn: Verlag Peter Ewers, 2005), 528-29 and 538-39. Cavaillé-Coll also included a thunder pedal for the two-manual organ installed in 1890 in the Jesus Church in Copenhagen: see Paul Peeters, "Walcker and Cavaillé-Coll: A Franco-German Competition," in *The Organ as a Mirror of its Time: North European Reflections, 1610-2000*, ed. Kerala J. Snyder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 257.

⁸ See excerpt from a review published in 1878 by H. Moréno quoted in Rollin Smith, "The Organ of the Trocadéro and Its Players," in *French Organ Music from the Revolution to Franck and Widor*, ed. Lawrence Archbold and William Peterson (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 297. Moréno reviewed a concert by Swiss organist Carl Locher, which included a fantasy that brought together Swiss "national airs" and a storm episode; he observed that "storms are no longer in fashion" in France. The review originally appeared in *Le Ménestrel* 44 (1878): 373. The French text — not quoted in Smith's article — reads as follows: "En France, où tout s'use vite, la mode n'est plus aux orages. Au point de vue de l'art élevé, il n'y a pas lieu de le regretter." A review of Lemmens's concert in the same 1878 series reported that Lemmens's own storm fantasy seemed less compelling than the other works on the same program: see *La Revue et Gazette musicale* 45 (1878): 306.

The Te Deum

It was the sung Te Deum, more than any other genre, that laid the foundation for the nineteenth-century storm fantasy. Based on an early Christian hymn of praise, the Te Deum proved to be both a reliable and flexible resource throughout the tumultuous revolutionary years in France; despite the Revolution's devastating effect on church music, the Te Deum never disappeared from French public life.⁹ When arrangements were being discussed for the "Festival of the Federation" of 14 July 1790, some thought a new French hymn ought to be written, yet the Te Deum prevailed.¹⁰ The importance of the Te Deum for the development of the storm fantasy may be traced to the longstanding church-music practice it denoted in which the organ made a conspicuous and even, on occasion, a spectacular contribution. Within a church service, the Te Deum gave the organist an unparalleled opportunity to explore the rich resources of the organ. Charles Burney wrote at length about what he heard in 1770 at Saint-Gervais, noting that the organist, Armand-Louis Couperin, was free to develop extended interludes in varying styles.¹¹ Couperin accompanied the Te Deum with great skill, wrote Burney, demonstrating a diversity of registrational combinations, and his skillfully conceived melodic inventions were pleasing to the listeners.

The text that particularly inspired organists, and about which critics often wrote, was *Judex crederis venturus* ("We believe that thou shalt come: to be our judge").¹² Louis-Claude Daquin's improvisations on the Te Deum at Saint-Paul,

to judge by eighteenth-century accounts, were extraordinarily memorable: "More sublime than ever, Daquin thundered in the *Judex crederis*, instilling listeners' hearts with impressions so vivid and so profound that everyone paled and shivered," wrote one critic.¹³ More than any other instrument of its time, the eighteenth-century organ provided ample resources for players such as Daquin to depict judgment day. But a Te Deum by Antoine Calvière (d. 1755) might well have served as an inspiration to organists: once the text had been sung by a soloist, orchestral flutes portrayed the whistling wind, and thereafter the other instruments (including drum roll and trumpets) joined together to create a veritable "storm" of terrifying power.¹⁴ Composers and critics in the decades surrounding the Revolution wrote in some detail about the use of the organ to produce special wind and thunder sound effects in the Te Deum. In reference to the *Judex crederis*, Jean-Jacques Beauvarlet-Charpentier wrote, "Since this piece must depict the disorder of nature, one may begin by imitating the winds, employing all the foundations." And he advocated the use of "thunder" at the conclusion, "to mimic the confusion of the universe."¹⁵ Michel Corrette, in comments included in his 1787 *Pièces pour l'orgue dans un genre nouveau*, described how to achieve the Te Deum's special sound effects; in the *Grand Jeu avec le tonnerre*, Corrette explained,

Thunder is produced by placing a plank on the last octave of the pedals — the Trompette and the Bombarde having been drawn — which the foot pushes as desired. As a conclusion, to imitate the passing of thunder, one strikes with the

⁹ The opening lines of the Te Deum run: "Te Deum laudamus" [We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord]. The 31-verse text, believed to date from the time of Saint Augustine, was, of course, not a revolutionary text but a sacred text whenever it was appropriated for use. For the schedule of services and events at Notre-Dame de Paris, listing as many as forty-four Te Deums between 1789 and 1814, see *Revue Internationale de Musique Française* 16 (February 1985): 28-32. Highlights include Te Deums in 1789 ("Pour le rétablissement de la paix"), 1790 ("Pour le premier anniversaire de la Prise de la Bastille"), and 1800 ("Pour le victoire de Marengo").

¹⁰ Historian Jean-Louis Jam writes: "The brilliance that the authorities wished to impart to the celebration, but also the difficulties of performing in the open air, required the composition of a new *Te Deum* which would be suitable to the Festival, both ideologically and in practical terms. Gossec was naturally entrusted with this task." See Jam, "Marie-Joseph Chénier and François-Joseph Gossec: two artists in the service of Revolutionary propaganda," in *Music and the French Revolution*, ed. Malcolm Boyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 224.

¹¹ Quoted in Brigitte François-Sappey, "Un demi-siècle de musique d'orgue française, 1789-1844, vu par deux étrangers," *L'Orgue* 209 (1989), 23.

¹² This verse occurs in the context of a longer passage that begins with the verse "Tu Rex gloriae,

Christe": Thou art the King of glory: O Christ. /Thou art the everlasting Son: of the Father. /When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man: thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb. /When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death: thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. /Thou sittest at the right hand of God: in the glory of the Father. /We believe that thou shalt come: to be our Judge. ["Judex crederis esse venturus."] /We therefore pray thee, help thy servants: whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. /Make them to be numbered with thy Saints: in glory everlasting.]

¹³ This widely quoted statement, attributed to L. S. Mercier, *Tableau de Paris* (Amsterdam, 1782), II, 80-81, was printed in Pirro's article, "L'Art des organistes," in *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du conservatoire*, ed. Albert Lavignac and Lionel de la Laurencie, 11 vols. (Paris: Delagrave, 1925), II: 1349.

¹⁴ Antoine Jacques Labbet, in *Sentiment d'un Harmoniphile* (1972; 1756), describes in detail not only the performance of the motet but the response (see pages 8-10). For a detailed account of this event see David Fuller, "Zenith and Nadir: the Organ Versus its Music in Late 18th Century France," in *L'Orgue à notre époque*, ed. Donald Mackey (Montreal: McGill University, 1982), 134.

¹⁵ Pirro, in "L'Art des organistes," 1363-64, discusses this piece with reference to a copy housed at that time at the Bibliothèque de l'université de Paris, "Fonds Guilmant."

elbow the last keys of the manual.¹⁶

Guillaume Lasceux, who held the position at Saint-Étienne-du-Mont from 1774, not only preserved the art of the Te Deum throughout the tumultuous revolutionary years, he provided a written account of the turn-of-the-century practice. Lasceux included a *Judex crederis* in a manuscript, *Essai théorique et pratique* (1809), and a revised version of that work in his *Annuaire de l'organiste* (1819).¹⁷ Lasceux describes the shape of this episodic fantasy, which encompasses rustic dances, interrupting thunder, a “Trompette du Jugement dernier” (“Trumpet of the Last Judgment”), a march (for the arrival, in the 1819 version, of the Judge), and a “Choeur des élus” (“Chorus of the Chosen”, considerably transformed in the 1819 version).¹⁸ Moreover, Lasceux explains some details

¹⁶ Michel Corrette, *Pièces pour l'orgue dans un genre nouveau à l'usage des dames religieuses et à ceux qui touchent l'orgue* (Paris, c. 1787), 16–17. Pirro discussed this method of creating thunder at the organ with reference to Corrette's instructions; see “L'Art des organistes,” 1363. If we cannot easily answer the question of how these pictorial effects were actually combined with the more conventional musical sounds within an essentially improvised art, we can at least report that in the case of Corrette's published pieces, the thunder sound effect clearly served as an embellishment to an apparently autonomous composition. In the score, Corrette added the serrated line (“tonnerre”) seven times in the first section (mm. 1–42) of this binary movement and ten times in the second section (mm. 43–90). See also Kimberly Marshall and William J. Peterson, “Evolutionary Schemes: Organists and Their Revolutionary Music,” in *French Organ Music from the Revolution to Franck and Widor*, ed. Lawrence Archbold and William J. Peterson (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 12–13. On the question of techniques devised by organists in the *Judex crederis* compositions, see Yves Jaffres, “Michel Corrette et la révolution française,” in *Le Tambour et La Harpe*, ed. Jean-Rémy Julien and Jean Mongrédien (Paris: Du May, 1991), 271. Because the production of special sound effects is a major theme of this essay, it is appropriate to acknowledge that clusters of pitches produced at the keyboard were not the only means of producing special effects used by composers around 1800. Ignace Pleyel, in his *La Révolution du 10 août 1792* (Strasbourg, 1793), called for a series of bells to be sounded all at once. The story of this remarkable event has Pleyel retrieving seven bells — a full scale — from the foundry where they had been deposited to be converted into a cannon. How the audience at Strasbourg Cathedral reacted when they heard the composition, we do not know. But when Pleyel heard the effect, as the story goes, he fainted from emotion. See Yves Jaffres, “Michel Corrette et la révolution française,” *Le Tambour et La Harpe*, 275. Pleyel's composition, *La Révolution du dix août 1792 ou le tocsin allégorique*, an impressive 146-page manuscript which features a central battle scene, is housed at the Bibliothèque nationale (MS Rés. F. 978).

¹⁷ The manuscript *Essai théorique et pratique sur l'art de l'orgue* brings together in one volume information about the organ and its construction, advice on devising registrations for organ pieces, and compositions for the organ (Bibliothèque nationale, MS 2249). *The Annuaire de l'organiste* (Bibliothèque nationale, MS 2248) contains masses, hymns, and Magnificats, as well as a Te Deum. Lasceux's achievements prompted Norbert Dufourcq to name him the “theoretician” of this art; see Dufourcq, *La Musique d'orgue française de Jehan Titelouze à Jehan Alain* (Paris: Floury, 1949), 121–2.

¹⁸ Lasceux, *Essai théorique et pratique*, 37. For published excerpts from Lasceux's Te Deum, consult

of execution, including the use of the Echo division and Voix humaine for the “dances and amusements of humans,” and the use of arm and hand to produce “a kind of acoustical undulation.”¹⁹ The *Judex crederis* of Lasceux, then, took the form of an extended fantasy in which “a frightful noise proclaims the falling of the stars and the annihilation of the creation” — in keeping with the gravity of its topic (“the dreadful catastrophe of the final day”).²⁰ And yet this fantasy had a relatively conventional formal structure, involving an opening statement, a contrast, and a concluding statement that provided resolution (“the whole concludes cheerfully with a chorus of the chosen”).²¹

Between 1820 and 1850, the Te Deum underwent further development. Two notable organists, Prosper-Charles Simon and Louis-James-Alfred Lefébure-Wély, presented the Te Deum in Paris in the 1820s.²² In 1827, when he was just ten years old, Lefébure-Wély played his first Te Deum at Saint-Roch, where his father was organist; the opportunity of hearing such a young organist demonstrate the expressive capabilities of the Saint-Roch organ attracted a considerable crowd.²³ During these years the young Lefébure-Wély, under the guidance of his father's teaching, learned how to produce special effects at the organ: in a Magnificat he produced a thunder effect, and in a Requiem Mass he experimented with the use of tone clusters in the bottom range of the pedal, the use of arms to produce an undulating sound, and the use of the voix humaine for “plaintive” passages.²⁴

Of published Te Deums from this period, by far the most widely discussed is the *Judex crederis* of Alexandre-Pierre-François Boëly, organist at Saint-

De Louis Couperin à Guillaume Lasceux: douze oeuvres françaises pour orgue publiées pour la première fois, ed. Jean-Paul Lécot (Geneva: Slatkine, 1986).

¹⁹ Lasceux, *Essai théorique et pratique*, 39.

²⁰ Pirro, “L'Art des organistes,” 1364.

²¹ *Ibid.* See also Marshall and Peterson, “Evolutionary Schemes: Organists and Their Revolutionary Music,” 13.

²² Simon, from Bordeaux, arrived in Paris in October of 1825 and made a deep impression on listeners at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires with his Te Deum. Simon was named organist at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires in 1826, and in the 1840s was also named “organiste du Chapitre royal de Saint-Denis.” See Alexandre Cellier and Henri Bachelin, *L'Orgue: ses éléments, son histoire, son esthétique* (Paris: Delagrave, 1933), 174.

²³ L'Abbé Lamazou, “Biographie de Lefébure-Wély,” *L'Illustration musicale* 1/2 (1863): 10.

²⁴ Orpha Ochse, *Organists and Organ Playing in Nineteenth-Century France and Belgium* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 21.

Germain-l'Auxerrois between 1840 and 1851.²⁵ This piece, entitled *Fantasia pour le verset Judex Crederis au Te Deum*, contains four large sections, each of which carries a specified registration. The sections are arranged as follows:

1. **“Allegretto Pastorale.”** Flutes 8' on Positif / 8' and 4' on Pedal / Hautbois on Récit (for treble solo).
2. [wind effects]. **“Grand Clavier: montres et bourdons”** at 16', with 8' flutes “sans prestant” (winds whistling and blowing); running chromatic motives in bass register, above which a treble-register motive later sounds (on the Récit Cornet) [crescendo passage].
3. [trumpet calls]. **“Trompette et Clairon”** of Positif; then “trompettes et clairons” of Grand Clavier (pedal Bombarde).
4. **Allegro agitato. Full organ.**

The fantasy concludes with a cadenza-like passage: a dramatic G-minor scale on the manual descending to a low C sharp on the pedal above which unfolds a terrifying tone cluster depicting “the falling of the stars.” Finally, this gives way to a somewhat unsettling cadence (see Example 1).²⁶

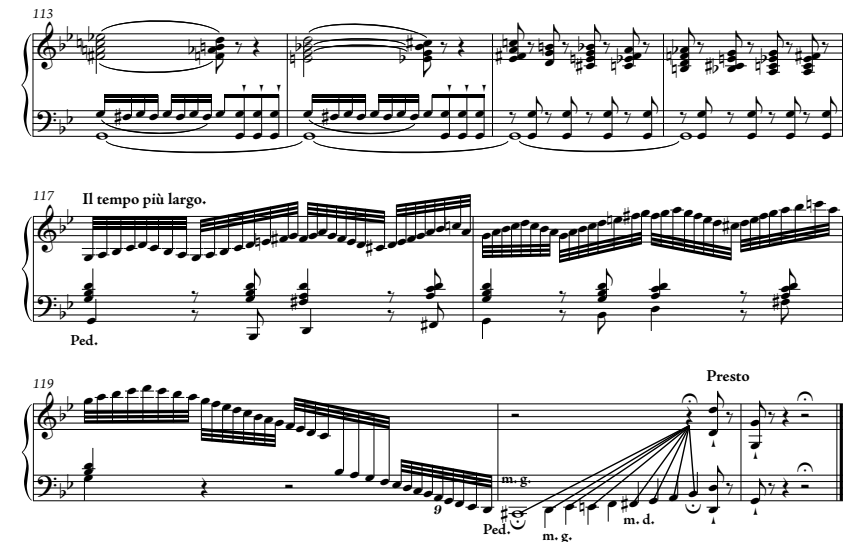
By the middle of the century, however, the Te Deum was not as prevalent in church life as it had earlier been. Abbé Lamazou in 1863 wrote at some length about the fall of the Te Deum from its earlier prominence. Lamazou regretted this change of affairs, for the Te Deum tradition had permitted the organist a generous amount of time “to allow the instrument to be heard and to develop his [own] musical ideas.”²⁷

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²⁵ Boëly's *Judex Crederis* was published posthumously. From the 1840s onward, Boëly was praised by critics for his seriousness of purpose as an organist and composer; one critic even suggested that he carried on the great art of Bach and Couperin. See the critique by Louis Roger, 1862, quoted in Cellier and Bachelin, *L'Orgue*, 181.

²⁶ The tonal plan of the fantasia, beginning in G major and concluding in G minor, underpins the scenario effectively. Brigitte François-Sappey has observed that Boëly failed to provide his *Judex crederis* with a final episode to represent the comforting words of God or a chorus of the “blessed.” François-Sappey asks, with good reason, if it was not appropriate to think of this fantasy as a sort of symphonic poem embracing the conflicting forces of Good and Evil (“une sorte de poème symphonique où se déchainent et s'affrontent les forces du Bien et du Mal?”). See François-Sappey, *Alexandre P.F. Boëly: 1785-1858* (Paris: Aux amateurs de livres, 1989), 448.

²⁷ “pour bien faire entendre son instrument et développer ses idées musicales.” See Lamazou, “Lefébure-Wély,” 10.



Example 1 Boëly, *Fantasia pour le verset Judex Crederis*, mm. 113-121

Battle Pieces, Revolutionary Music, and Genres Pittoresques

The storm fantasy of 1850-1880 had its roots in the late-eighteenth-century Te Deum practice, to be sure, but it also drew on a diverse keyboard repertoire of pictorial genres that flourished from about 1790 well into the early decades of the nineteenth century. Prominent among these works were battle pieces, revolutionary-era topical works, and some other religious-pictorial genres. The sound effects and episodic structure of organ works like Lasceux's *Judex crederis* could also be found in contemporary battle pieces for keyboard instruments. Though primarily associated with the harpsichord or fortepiano, these pieces were certainly not unknown to organists. Indeed, some of this repertoire was played on the organ: Michel Corrette left instructions on how to perform harpsichord pieces on the organ, counseling the use of the *Grand Jeu* for *La Prise de Jéricho*.²⁸ Claude-Bénigne Balbastre's *Marche des Marseillois et l'Air Ça ira* (1792), today one of the best known of these revolutionary-era pieces, is a case in point: scored for the “Forte Piano,” it has been recorded on both the organ and the harpsichord in recent years. Displaying a curious formal scheme, this Balbastrian fantasy is a set of variations on the *Marseillaise* capped by a finale

²⁸ Pirro, “L'Art des organistes,” 1362-63; Dufourcq, *La Musique d'orgue française*, 123.

on a separate revolutionary song, *Ça ira*. The battle begins during the second variation on the *Marseillaise*: as was typical in this genre, it is denoted here by verbal indications such as “combat,” “Fuite des ennemis” (“Flight of the Enemy”), and the ever-disruptive “Canon” (cannon). The cannon is signified by a bass-register cluster — CBAGFEDC — notated in whole notes with added fermata, no doubt resulting in a fine and discordant bellow. The disorder is eventually swept away by the decisive final cadence of the *Marseillaise*, which itself yields to the finale of the variation set, the *Ça ira* (marked “Victoire”). Balbastre’s March is, then, essentially a variation set on two revolutionary-era songs, outfitted with some of the most basic elements associated with battle pieces.

Jacques-Marie Beauvarlet-Charpentier’s *Victoire de l’armée d’Italie ou Bataille de Montenotte* (1796) serves as a splendid example of the epic scenographic battle piece. The title page informs us that this substantial fifteen-page composition is intended for use on the fortepiano or organ. Beauvarlet-Charpentier provides a running commentary to explain the story of this battle: opening patriotic strains, including references to the *Marseillaise* and the “Chant du départ” (“Song of Departure”), engagement with the enemy and, eventually, “disorder,” followed by “chants de victoire” (“songs of victory”).²⁹ A more expansive battle piece could hardly be imagined: a passage of over one hundred measures stretches from the initial engagement with the enemy to the battle itself. For the cannon effect Beauvarlet-Charpentier alternates bass-register, close-position triads with dizzying scale passages. The heat of battle is strikingly represented by means of a grave but supremely lyrical episode, which begins in F minor but moves into the major mode when the French forces triumph.³⁰ At the turning point, again, there appears the *Ça ira*.

Sound effects relating to cannon fire were common to battle scenes on both land and sea. Michel Corrette published *La Victoire d’un combat naval* as a harpsichord piece in 1779; he explained in the score that the player can achieve a sound effect imitating the cannon blast by striking all the keys in the bottom range with the flat of the hand.³¹ Daniel Steibelt’s *Combat naval pour*

le Fortepiano avec Accompagnement de Violon et violoncello ad libitum presents an entirely different method of “playing the cannon.” For the passage marked “canons,” Steibelt combines a bright G-major tune in the right hand with rolled bass-register octave Gs in a perky offbeat pattern. The formal design of these two naval combats provides a striking contrast: Corrette’s work (announced as a “Divertissement[t]” on the title page) is a fusion of a battle piece and an elaborate dance suite, while Steibelt’s is a scenographic battle scene complete with preparation, combat, plaintive cries of the wounded, and victory.³²

Organ music from the period 1790-1850 presents evidence of important developments in other programmatic genres as well, though such works were often informed by techniques developed in the battle and Te Deum genres. The German composer Justin Heinrich Knecht, known for his symphony “Le portrait musical de la nature, ou Grand sinfonie” [Pastoralsymphonie] published in the 1780s, came to the attention of French organists, at least in part, through the publication in France of a programmatic organ piece in Jean-Paul Martini’s *Ecole d’orgue, résumée d’après les ouvrages des plus célèbres organistes d’Allemagne*. Titled *Pièce pittoresque sur la Résurrection de Jésus-Christ*, the composition is a collection of seven scenes or episodes which include “the mournful silence of the tomb,” the “shaking of the earth,” the “departure of Christ from the tomb,” the “flight of Roman soldiers,” and the “triumphant song of the angels.”³³ Knecht depicts the shaking of the earth with

/ Et la victoire d’un combat naval / Remportée par une frégate contre plusieurs corsaires réunis; dans ce combat on exprime par l’harmonie, le bruit des armes, du canon, les cris des blessés, les plaintes des prisonniers mis à la fin de cale, et l’allégresse des vainqueurs, célébrée par une fête marine, which bears the following words: “Cette marque page 10 signifie de fraper toutes les touches d’en-bas du plat de la main pour imiter le coup du canon de 24 livres de balle.” Bibliothèque nationale, Rés.F. 49.

²⁹ The broad outlines of the *Bataille de Montenotte* compare in many ways with those of the *Judex crederis* — and, similarly, with those of the storm fantasies composed fifty to sixty years later.

³⁰ Musical battles were not an invention of the Revolution, of course. The movements from Dandrieu’s *Les Caractères de la guerre*, a harpsichord suite from the 1720s, include marches, fanfares, “La Charge” (with a “coup de canon”), a central conflict (“La Mêlée”), cries and “Les Plaintes,” culminating in “La Victoire — Rondeau,” and finally “Le Triomphe.” First printed in 1718, *Les Caractères* was printed as a keyboard piece in 1724.

³¹ See the title page of *Divertissemens pour le clavecin ou le forte piano, contenant les echos de Boston*

³² See Daniel Steibelt, *Combat naval pour le fortepiano avec accompagnement de violon et violoncello ad libitum*, Oeuvre 41 (Rotterdam: Barth, n.d.). Marches and battle pieces proliferated in the revolutionary years and in conjunction with the Napoleonic campaigns. Daniel Steibelt composed *The Battle of Neerwinde*, marking a 1793 battle, and, remarkably enough, *L’Incendie de Moscou* (“The Burning of Moscow”), commemorating Napoleon’s ill-fated entry into Moscow. *L’Incendie de Moscou* represented the fires as well as an explosion in the Kremlin, and eventually the flight of the French. See Lilian Pruett, “Napoleonic Battles in Keyboard Music of the Nineteenth Century,” *Early Keyboard Journal* 6-7 (1988-89): 81, 87. Another enormous success in the battle music repertoire was, of course, the infamous *Battle of Prague* (1774) for piano four-hands by Franz Kotzwara.

³³ The score includes the following titles: A. *Le morne silence du sépulchre*; B. *La disparition des vapeurs du matin*; C. *Le tremblement de terre*; D. *La descente du Ciel d’un Chérubin qui ôte la pierre du tombeau*; E. *La sortie de Jésus-Christ du tombeau*; F. *La terreur et la fuite des soldats romains*; G. *Le chant triomphal des Anges*. The composition was identified as “ein Tongemälde

a bold series of adventurous harmonies (seventh chords, for the most part) in close position played by both hands in the tenor and bass registers with full-organ resources.

Musical depictions of thunderstorms, explored in the final two decades of the eighteenth century by Knecht and a number of other composers of instrumental music, were of interest to composers of keyboard music at the turn of the century. Abbé Vogler, who made a name for himself in part through organ improvisations on spectacular themes such as “Seeschlacht von Abukir” (“Naval Battle at Abukir”) and “Einsturz der Mauern Jerichos” (“Fall of the Walls of Jericho”), was in Paris intermittently in the 1780s and 1790s. Of particular relevance is a report of Vogler’s improvisation in 1801 on a newly-built organ in Berlin of “Die Spazierfahrt auf dem Rheine, vom Donnerwetter unterbrochen” (“An Outing on the Rhine interrupted by a Thunderstorm”), in which various special-effect techniques were employed (for example, depressing three to four pedal keys at one time).³⁴ In the 1790s Knecht published an expansive organ composition titled *Die durch ein Donnerwetter unterbrochne Hirtenwonne . . .* (“Shepherds’ Celebration interrupted by a Thunderstorm”), providing explicit directions to the organist for creating thunder effects on the manual, on the pedal, and on both manual and pedal together.³⁵ With references to particular stops, he describes methods for creating distant thunder effects, strengthening thunder effects, and imitating loud thunderclaps (for which he recommends that one draw the “Bombard” for a couple of seconds to heighten the effect). He also provides detailed instructions on creating special bass-register effects with the pedals. First, he explains how to produce a pedal cluster — C C# D D# E F F# — using both feet (the left foot depresses the C D E and F keys). Second, he explains how the two feet can produce a diminished seventh chord on the pedal board, a chord he includes in the score (in mm. 188–191). Thunder effects of varying kinds are absolutely central to the piece overall: Knecht included twenty written indications for thunder effects in the course of mm. 98 to 324 (that is,

für die Orgel” (“Die Auferstehung Jesu, ein Tongemälde für die Orgel”) in Knecht’s *Vollständige Orgelschule*; it bears the title “Pièce pittoresque sur la Résurrection de Jésus Christ” in Martini’s *École d’orgue, résumée d’après les ouvrages des plus célèbres organistes d’Allemagne* (Paris: Imbault, n.d.; reprinted by Minkoff, 1974).

³⁴ On Vogler see Friedrich Jakob, *Die Orgel und das Donnergerollen* (Männedorf: Kuhn, 1976), 12–18.

³⁵ Knecht, *Die durch ein Donnerwetter unterbrochne Hirtenwonne* (Darmstadt, 1794); see also Knecht, *Die durch ein Donnerwetter unterbrochne Hirtenwonne*, ed. Heinz W. Höhnlen (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1982).

for over one-half of the composition’s five hundred and twenty two measures).

So far, we have discussed only published storm fantasies. Of course, though, pieces such as these informed, and were informed by, an improvisatory tradition: documentary evidence tells us that one could certainly hear improvisations with interrupting thunderstorms in Paris in the period 1790–1850.³⁶ A report from 1841 describes Prosper-Charles Simon demonstrating the organ at Saint-Denis with a depiction of a village scene, into which the organist introduced a storm, with notable wind and thunder effects.³⁷ Sigismond Neukomm, who settled in Paris in 1809, specialized in improvisation concerts: he demonstrated the new Cavaillé-Coll organ at Saint-Denis in Paris in 1842.³⁸ Neukomm’s published pieces include two striking “dramatic fantasias,” namely *The Last Judgment* and *A Concert on a Lake, interrupted by a Thunderstorm*, and it is not unlikely that the dramatic and pictorial effects defined so clearly in his published works would have been heard in his improvisations.³⁹ For the thunder passage in *A Concert on a Lake, interrupted by a Thunderstorm*, Neukomm invented a special effect exploiting the bass registers of the manual and the pedal. To depict the “onset” of the storm, Neukomm calls for the left hand to execute a trill figure using the lowest available notes, while the right hand plays a chromatic ascending and descending figure above it. He also specifies that the 32’ Diapason should be half drawn out on the pedal division while the feet play a minor third interval (C and Eb), and stops should be added periodically until the Principal 16’ and

³⁶ That organists were improvising storms in church settings even earlier in the eighteenth century is attested to by F. W. Marburg’s comment in 1750 that “On the organ one hears nothing but storms, battles and hunts, sonatas and opera overtures. It was once a serious and majestic instrument, with full and varied harmony. Nowadays, however, one could take it for a hurdy-gurdy or a Polish bagpipe.” (Auf der Orgel höret man nichts als Ungewitter, Kriege, und Jagden, Sonaten und Opersymphonien. Ehemals war es ein ernsthaftes und majestätisch Instrument, wo eine volle und abwechselnde Harmonie statt fand. Heutiges Tages würde man es bald für eine Leyer, bald für einen pohlischen Bock halten.) In Friedrich Wilhelm Marburg, *Der critische Musicus an der Spree* (Berlin, 1750; facs. reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1970), 337.

³⁷ The critic praised the wonderful crescendo and diminuendo effects demonstrated by Simon (“Les piano, les forte, les crescendo et les diminuendo ont été rendus à merveille”). See *La Revue et Gazette musicale* 8 (1841): 492.

³⁸ Neukomm regarded Paris as his home base for the duration of his career, though he traveled extensively in Europe and spent several years in Rio de Janeiro in the decades between 1809 and his death in 1858. He demonstrated the Cavaillé-Coll organ at Saint-Denis for the Duchesse d’Orléans: see the notice published in the *La Revue et Gazette musicale* 9 (1842): 238. In the 1840s, Cavaillé-Coll evidently regarded Neukomm as an important figure in the organ world.

³⁹ *Twenty-Five Original Voluntaries, or Grand Studies for the organ* (London). Although this London print is undated, an autograph manuscript, titled “25 grandes Études pour l’orgue” in the Bibliothèque nationale is dated “1832–34” (see Manuscript 8038).

The last Judgment A Dramatic Fantasia

GREAT ORGAN. Trumpet and other Reed-Stops only. No Diapasons.
CHOIR. Only a 16 feet Diapason.
PEDALS. One 32 feet Wood-Stop only, at first, half drawn out.

N^o 8.
(63 = ♩)
ANDANTE
MAESTOSO.

Great Organ.

No Pedals.

By degrees draw the Stop out entirely, and add all the other 32, 16, and 8 feet Diap^s. No Reeds.

CHOIR. add 8 feet Diapasons.

Example 2 Neukomm, *The Last Judgment*, mm. 1-25

Trumpet 16' have been brought into the ensemble. Similarly, *The Last Judgment* provides an arresting pedal effect on its opening page. Neukomm calls for a single stop to be drawn on the pedal division: “One 32 feet Wood-Stop only, at first, half drawn out” (see Example 2). Below a passage on this page the composer writes, “By degrees draw the Stop out entirely, and add all the other

32, 16, and 8 feet Diapasons. No Reeds.”⁴⁰ In general, then, we may conclude that during this period, many different organists of various backgrounds created special sonic effects exploiting the bass register of the manual and the bottom part of the pedalboard; and they found that the relevant techniques, once created, were variously adaptable to depict battle scenes, earthquakes, or thunderstorms.

...

The Storm Fantasy 1850-1880

The longstanding tradition of the *Te Deum*, exemplified and developed impressively by Boëly's *Judex crederis*, and the steady growth in pictorial genres made the early decades of the nineteenth century auspicious ones for the emerging storm fantasy in France. What distinguishes the period 1850 to 1880 from the earlier part of the century is not, of course, the coexistence of improvised and published storm pieces, but a notable repertoire of substantial published storm pieces connected directly or indirectly to the organ in France. The following seven representative works were published, for the most part, in the 1860s and 1870s:

Georges Schmitt: *Offertoire pour la Pentecôte* [Le Musée I, No. 15] [prob. 1857]

Edouard Batiste: *Offertoire . . . Fantaisie . . . Orage* [Six Offertoires, op. 23] [1862]

Joseph Franck: *Sicilienne et orage*, Op. 40 [prob. 1864]

J. Blanc: *La Procession de la fête d'un village surprise par un orage* (“Tableau musical”) [1863]

Louis-James-Alfred Lefébure-Wély: *Scène pastorale* [pour une inauguration d'orgue ou messe de minuit] [c. 1867]

⁴⁰ The *Concert on a Lake*, in its central storm section, calls for cluster effects. Both fantasias include chorale-like concluding passages. Storm pieces for the piano were also published in Paris; a storm piece for piano by Daniel Steibelt was, to judge from the publication history (including editions made in Paris), very well known in its time. The “Rondo Pastorale dans lequ'elle [sic] on a introduit une tempête,” originally the third movement of *Steibelt's Grand Concerto pour le Forte piano* (known as the “third concerto”; Paris: Imbault, n.d.) became an independent piece, bearing titles such as “L'Orage. Rondo pastorale pour piano” or “L'Orage. Précédé d'un Rondeau pastoral.” Steibelt also published a separate composition entitled *L'Orage sur mer. Nouvelle fantaisie pour le piano* (Offenbach: J. André, n.d.) in which he provided a sixty-measure storm scene altogether much more ambitious than the one he had composed for “L'Orage. Rondo pastorale.”

Jaak Nikolaas Lemmens: Grand Fantasia in E Minor (“The Storm”) [1866]

Clément Loret: Fantaisie pastorale [prob. 1877]⁴¹

Although these works contain plenty of thunder effects and simulated storms, they were not explicitly tied to the Te Deum or to the liturgy: the titles might well include the word fantasy but not, as in the case of Boëly, a reference to the *Judex crederis*. And if storm fantasies in this period drew on certain stylistic discoveries and achievements from earlier decades, the later works are with good reason associated with the development of organ building in France, as exemplified by Cavaillé-Coll’s growing list of important instruments ready to be inaugurated: there were abundant opportunities for organists to demonstrate these instruments by means of improvisations and composed pieces, and by all accounts, Lefébure-Wély — well known for improvising storm fantasies — was one of the most important figures within this scene.⁴²

The seven representative works considered here, loosely classified as “storm fantasies,” in fact present a number of titles not all of which include reference to storms or to fantasies. The titles of works by Batiste, Franck, and Blanc all include “*orage*” (“thunderstorm”), while the title of the Lemmens work — in its most familiar form — includes “Storm” as an identifying subtitle. The works by Batiste, Lemmens, and Loret all have the word “fantasy” as part of the title, and the Lefébure-Wély piece in its English edition was titled *Fantasia pastorale*. Schmitt’s *Offertoire*, standing apart, is one of a number of expansive pieces, some bearing the title *Grand Offertoire*, that he published in *Le Musée de l’organiste* (other titles include *Grand Offertoire pascal* and *Grand Offertoire patronale*).⁴³ Blanc’s *La Procession*, subtitled “tableau musical,” provides vivid scenographic detail for each of its eight sections; many of these indications

refer to musical (or even registrational) elements, as in (4) “*Cantiques des jeunes filles [Choeur de voix humaines]*.”

Even a brief study of composers’ indications concerning the storm element within the scores reveals a surprising diversity in this repertoire: the spectrum of storm fantasies as a whole presents a wide range of possibilities with respect to the question of extra-musical descriptions and labels functioning within the texture of the musical compositions. In his *La Procession*, Blanc provides an abundance of labels detailing the unfolding of the storm, including “Grand vent précurseur de la tempête” (Allegro) and later “Orage/Grand jeu” (Maestoso). Lefébure-Wély signals the storm episode with the word “Orage” placed next to an “Allegro,” while Batiste indicates the storm episode not with an explicit label but with liberal applications of the word “Tonnerre” in the Allegro section. In both Lemmens’s and Schmitt’s pieces, by contrast, the storm episode appears without verbal announcement of any sort. In fact, Lemmens’s fantasy contains only one word, “Prayer,” that extends beyond the normal indications of tempo and registration. Finally, Joseph Franck relies on verbal indications of thunderstorm imagery only in the title of his composition (*Sicilienne et orage*).

But in some instances, composers of storm fantasies attached lengthier performance directions to the published scores, describing performing techniques that were already well established by the middle of the century. Of the pieces under consideration here, those by Blanc and Batiste both provide such commentary to aid the organist. At the end of the score of his *La Procession*, Blanc supplies an explanation of how to create the wind and thunder effects.⁴⁴ First, he suggests that the organist place the feet across the pedal keys, using varying numbers of keys. Second, he suggests that, on organs lacking a pedal keyboard, one should use the forearm, allowing it to roll back and forth, depending on the effect desired. Third, he recommends that on organs equipped with a “pédale de Tonnerre” one should draw the 16’ and 8’ foundations and depress the pedal “to imitate the distant noise of the [thunder]storm” (“en cherchant à imiter la bruit lointain de l’Orage”). For the loudest thunderclaps associated with the height of the storm, he advises that one should draw the reeds on the pedal division. Similarly, for his *Offertoire*,

⁴¹ Kurt Lueders provides the date “1877/80?” for Loret’s *Cours d’orgue*; see his “Clément Loret (1833-1909): Orgelpedagoog aan de Ecole Niedermeyer te Parijs,” *Orgelkunst* 21 (1998): 115.

⁴² Lefébure-Wély was heard at inaugural recitals for seven Cavaillé-Coll instruments between 1855 and 1863. See Kurt Lueders, “Louis-James-Alfred Lefébure-Wély,” in *Le Grand-Orgue de Saint-Sulpice et ses Organistes*, published by *La Flûte harmonique*, Numéro spécial 59/60 (1991), 41. This is not the occasion to investigate the lively critical debate about the direction of French organ music in these decades — a debate that positioned Lefébure-Wély at one end of the spectrum and Lemmens, champion of the “*style sévère*,” at the other.

⁴³ Georges Schmitt did publish separately a nine-page piece entitled *La Pastorale. Scène champêtre* Op. 59 (Paris: Repos, n.d.), probably in the 1860s. Although the score bears the word “orgue,” its two-staff layout and textural design make the piece ideal for performance on the piano. In *La Pastorale*, Schmitt introduces a storm (“L’Orage. Allo. molto.”) in a long, sectional work with a hunting motif (see “arrivée des chasseurs,” p. 4).

⁴⁴ This word to the performer, at the end of the score, is entitled “Manière d’imiter le tonnerre.” In the composition itself Blanc introduces an intrusive thunder effect beneath an Andante section played on the Voix humaine (Blanc indicates that on the pedal only a stop of 16’ should be drawn, and he indicates the thunder effect with the word “tonnerre”). Blanc advances to an Allegro with howling wind effect (“Grand vent précurseur de la tempête”), which leads to the storm section (“Orage”), played on the “Grand jeu” (Maestoso).

Batiste supplies a short essay explaining how to produce the effect of thunder at the organ. Concerned that some organists would not have at their disposal a “pédale de Tonnerre,” Batiste advises the organist to press the left foot on four or five pedal keys at the bottom of the pedal clavier, an action that permitted the organist to play the conventional pedal line with the right foot. He also suggests that the performer could create a large thunderclap by putting the left arm briefly on the lowest keys of the Grand Orgue.

In summary, the representative examples may be described as expansive compositions which include prominent storm passages, most often as central episodes. But this does not capture the spirit or the drama of the genre. In simplest terms, the storm fantasy is an extended, episodic composition which depicts in music the power — even the threatening power — of nature. Two points seem worth stressing. First, the fantasy is nothing if not fluid: one episode leads almost magically into another, in part because the resources of the Cavallé-Coll organ are ready to be deployed as needed for the fluctuating dynamic levels. A fluid form, the fantasy offers both the player and listener an opportunity to hear sharply contrasting timbres and dynamic levels characteristic of the instrument — from the individual flute, perhaps supporting an oboe melody (in a pastoral passage), to the thunderous full organ ensemble that might well be used for the climactic storm episode. Second, the storm fantasy supplies a resolution for its disruptive storm episode, and is, in most cases, a rounded form. The dramatic arc would have been familiar to both the organist and the listener — the fantasy offers the possibility of glimpsing disorder, experiencing disorder, and, most importantly, emerging from disorder.⁴⁵

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Three memorable works in this later nineteenth-century storm fantasy repertoire — those by Clément Loret, L. J. A. Lefébure-Wély, and Nikolaas Lemmens — demonstrate particularly well the ways in which the tonal resources of the organ were deployed in order to depict thunder or a raging storm. In his *Fantaisie pastorale* (c. 1877), Loret creates a three-stage intensification. In the first stage, a pastoral section in $\frac{6}{8}$ meter is interrupted by distant thunder,

⁴⁵ Viewed from the perspective of its tonal and thematic plans, the work generally displays considerable structural coherence. And yet the “storm passage” may, as in the case of Batiste’s *Offertoire*, dominate the overall structure. In the Batiste composition the storm is “visible,” so to speak, in the dark opening passage, and increasingly audible throughout the series of episodes that unfold — the “tonnerre” indication occurs intermittently until the storm-dominated music inevitably gives way to the final episode of resolution.

Positif accouplé au Récit tous les fonds et jeux de mutation .

Mettez la Tirasse tirez tous les jeux de fonds .

G[♯] Orgue .

Mettez tous les jeux d'anches du Récit .

G[♯] Org: mettez les anches accoupez tous les Claviers .

Allegro maestoso .

ff

pp

anches .

Pédales .

Example 3 Loret, *Fantaisie pastorale*, mm. 100-117

produced by means of the “pédale d’orage” (thus indicated) with the 16’ Sousbasse and the 8’ Flûte drawn: the texture thins, leaving only a monophonic version of the pastoral motive heard earlier. The second stage focuses on the whistling of the winds, beginning with a two-layer texture: the left hand plays on the Grand Orgue with all the foundations (from 16’) and the right hand plays on the Récit and Positif together with foundations and mutations (see Example 3). Here, Loret pays homage to the well-established practice of using foundation stops (including the 16’ stops) for a restless, chromatic motive in

the bass region of the Grand Orgue against a trill motive in the right hand. To create a crescendo, the performer deploys the reeds of the Récit, while depressing the thunder pedal. When the Récit reeds are added to the ensemble the depression of the thunder pedal (indicated with a crescendo leading to a fortissimo) will necessarily — because the pedal couplers are engaged — bring the complete Récit forces into play to create a thunderous growling. The climactic third stage, the full-scale storm, employs the full organ for a somber and passionate passage, during which the thunder pedal is periodically engaged: obviously in this climactic passage, in which all couplers are engaged, the thunder pedal will activate the lowest pipes on every division within the organ to produce what would be a frightening sound effect. After the outburst of the storm Loret returns to the second-stage phase, focusing on the whistling wind sounds, during the decrescendo passage that follows the outburst. The system of ventil pedals made such a decrescendo a fairly simple operation: in one measure (measure 166) Loret calls for the organist to remove the Grand Orgue reeds, the Positif reeds, and the Pedal reeds on three of the successive beats, which could be done by pressing three ventil pedals in succession. The last stage of this decrescendo calls for a gradual reduction of the Récit. In the course of the ensuing pianissimo transition, on a registration composed of the Voix céleste with Gambe and Bourdon, it becomes clear that the storm has passed (Loret's *Fantaisie pastorale* can be heard on the CD accompanying this volume, Track 1).

Lefébure-Wély's *Scène pastorale* (c. 1867), by contrast, distributes thunder — whether distant or immediate — rather extravagantly throughout the extended fantasy: the composer writes indications for thunder effects on six out of the ten pages of music. Here as in Loret's fantasy, the distant thunder interrupts a pastoral scene (a merry, tuneful section marked Allegretto in $\frac{6}{8}$ meter which calls for the Hautbois with Octavin along with the Tremblant); anticipation is heightened by combining the rolling thunder with a thinning of the musical texture and an emphasis on the treble register. Lefébure-Wély directs the performer to use both the feet and the arms to produce the desired sound effect: if possible, the organist should use the "Pédale du tonnerre" (earlier he had specified that the 16' and 8' "jeux de fond" be drawn on the pedal); if not, the performer should place the left foot on the low C and C# of the pedalboard with the Flûte 16' drawn. Lefébure-Wély supplies a second prescription for yet another thunder effect in this same passage: "Imitate here the noise of thunder by placing the forearm on the bass [keys] of the Grand Orgue and employ a waving motion from the elbow to the hand." Finally, the storm arrives, marked



Example 4 Lefébure-Wély, *Scène pastorale*, mm. 71-85

by a double bar and the words "Allegro" and "ORAGE." The composer indicates that the organist should play this section on the Grand Orgue "jeux de fond de 16 et 8 pieds" (see Example 4) and employ the thunder pedal *ad libitum*. The Allegro is an animated passage of the sort that represents the stirring winds — based on ascending and descending chromatic motives which build strength over time. But since Lefébure-Wély expects that the entire passage be played on the Grand Orgue 16' and 8' foundation stops, supplying no indications for crescendo effects dependent on either the addition of stops or divisions, or the operation of the Swell pedal for the Récit, the storm episode gains its effect entirely from sound effects of nature rather than from a full-organ theme of majestic proportions. After a Grand Pause measure with only the thunder pedal in operation, while the organist changes stops, Lefébure-Wély presents a pastoral motive in the tenor register (by means of a 16' Cor anglais on the Récit) sounding against the thunder effects. This evocative transitional passage leads to an "Invocation" played on the Voix humaine of the Récit, ominously shadowed by distant thunder.

Lemmens's *Grand Fantasia in E Minor* (1866), the only composition in this repertoire published in England, is the work of a composer and organist who was born and raised in Belgium, was familiar with French organs from the decade of the 1840s, was acquainted with Cavaillé-Coll, and who presented in performance his storm fantasy on the Cavaillé-Coll organ at the Trocodéro in



Example 5 Lemmens, *Grand Fantasia*, mm. 63-66

1878. Not surprisingly, the title, as well as several registration directions are in English. In the *Grand Fantasia* Lemmens created a two-stage storm effect through musical means and without the use of the thunder pedal (which would not have been available on a typical English organ). In the first stage, the organist depicts the rustling winds by means of diminished seventh chords combined with ascending and descending chromatic motives. With only the 32' and 16' Bourdon on the pedal division, the feet play triads — sure to produce an ominous thunder-like sound effect (see Example 5). The chromatic motive on the manual, Lemmens indicates, should be played on the Bourdon 16' and Principal 16' on the Great. This passage, heightening tension by means of a crescendo and an accelerando coupled with a series of sequences, leads to a climactic section, *con fuoco*: the full-scale storm episode. This second-stage storm passage bears a fortissimo dynamic indication and “Full Org.” marking. After the storm, the organist effects a decrescendo through the deletion of stops coupled with a descent to the bass register of the manual. Because the score bears only the indication “dim:” the specifics of the decrescendo — the choice of which stops to delete in which measure — are left to the performer. At the last moment within this decrescendo passage Lemmens provides, by means of a transition, a subtle echo of thunder when the pedal part glides through a minor second and a major second interval as a final preparation for the ensuing “Prayer” episode.

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The storm episodes in the fantasies by Loret, Lemmens, and Lefébure-Wély, then, illustrate the skillful ways in which mid-nineteenth-century composers used the tonal resources of the organ to depict the terrifying power of nature.

Bearing in mind that the storm was one climactic moment within a longer fantasy, we might well ask how these tonal resources were deployed for the depiction of the pastoral landscapes that tend to set the scene for the storm, or for other equally important episodes in these works. Indeed, how did these fantasies, considered as compositional or formal designs, actually work? What distinctive traits characterize or set apart Lefébure-Wély's, Lemmens's, and Loret's storm fantasies? The most colorful of the three fantasies at hand, Lefébure-Wély's *Scène pastorale* is also the longest, encompassing at least seven identifiable episodes over its three hundred and twenty-one measures. The composer brings together musical style, registration plan, and imagery (for example, “imitation du rossignol”) to create a scenographic spectacle in sound. By all accounts, Lefébure-Wély was a consummate *popular* organist, and he constructed this role with reference to audience tastes. It was he who allegedly remarked: “When a smart performer wants to fill the house, he shows off his skill at the door; trumpets, bass drums, etc . . .” And further: “Let's pack them in, using thunderstorms, bells, bird songs, tambourines, bagpipes, and ‘human voices.’”⁴⁶ Of Lefébure-Wély's published pastoral pieces — the *Scène pastorale*, the *Fantaisie pastorale pour l'orgue expressif*, *L'Heure de l'Angelus: Fantaisie pastorale pour piano*, and *Les Moissonneurs (Scène champêtre)* — the *Scène pastorale* stands out as both the most formally compelling and the most sensational. Its formal design includes a well-developed introduction (mm. 1-76), a rustic theme “A” (mm. 76-126), a storm episode with transition (mm. 126-175), an “Invocation” (mm. 175-205), a transition/reintroduction (mm. 205-220), a reprise of the rustic A theme in the tonic (mm. 220-300), and a broad closing section or coda (mm. 300-321) featuring an imitation of the nightingale in dialogue with a closing theme on the Voix humaine. Broadly speaking, then, the structure comprises an introduction, an opening exposition or statement (presenting the A theme), a contrasting section (the storm episode), a second exposition (the “Invocation”), and a restatement or reprise (of the A theme) with coda (Intro A B C A Coda).

The score abounds in colorful registrational effects—Lefébure-Wély set the rustic A theme on the Récit Hautbois with Octavin [2'] alone with the “Tremblant,” heard against the Fonds of the Positif, with interjections played on the Flute 4'. This theme is a Lefébure-Wélian transformation of the eighteenth-century French “tambourin” style found in keyboard works of Rameau and

⁴⁶ Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll and the Musicians*, I: 82.



Example 6 Lefébure-Wély, *Scène pastorale*, mm. 175-184

Couperin and also in organ Noëls of that era.⁴⁷ The Andante transition that leads to the reprise of this A theme calls for the Flûte harmonique 8' to present a graceful treble theme heard initially as a monophonic texture. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that Lefébure-Wély perfected the use of the Voix humaine, which had such a striking effect on contemporary listeners; not surprisingly, the Voix humaine plays a crucial role in the *Scène pastorale*, figuring prominently in two separate episodes following the storm. As mentioned above, the sentimental “Invocation” that follows the storm episode, a prayer-like section in E major, was designed for the Voix humaine of the Récit (see Example 6). Lefébure-Wély finds a truly colorful strategy for bringing the work to finality, for he adds after the reprise a coda: an Andantino, featuring a 2' flute (“Octavin ou petite flûte”) in imitation of the nightingale. The piccolo motive alternates with a glowing cadential theme played on the Voix humaine, and this coda theme, in the end marked “très lent,” brings the piece to its tranquil G-major resting point.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The texture, featuring a sprightly treble tune heard against a drone bass, returns later as the reprise of the A theme, this time with the drone bass played on the pedal. A similar “rustic” musical texture may be found in Blanc’s *La Procession* and in Franck’s *Sicilienne et orage*. In all these examples the meter is 6/8. In his collection entitled *Douze Noëls*, J. J. Beauvarlet-Charpentier explored the “Noël en tambourin” (several examples given, all featuring a treble melody heard against a drone bass), and the “tambourin” style might also be found in the works of Balbastre (either unmarked or associated with the title “Muzette”) as well as in Michel Corrette’s *Nouveau Livre de Noëls*. The “tambourin” style also figured in eighteenth-century works of composers such as Jean-François Dandrieu and Pierre Dandrieu (in the latter case, associated with the term “En Viele” or the title “Musette”). For a definition of the “tambourin” style with reference to works of Rameau and Couperin, see *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. “Tambourin.”

⁴⁸ At least two additional usages of the Voix humaine by the same composer deserve to be

By contrast, Lemmens’s *Grand Fantasia in E Minor* stands some distance from Lefébure-Wély’s scenographic spectacle. Lemmens draws on elements from the storm fantasy less to paint a series of tableaux than to construct an integral compositional design. The work appropriates some storm fantasy features within an expansive and weighty musical statement that, all in all, warrants the neutral title it displays. If this fantasy is sectional, it is not assembled from episodes so much as it is constructed from broad units whose distinguishing marks are interdependent and almost strangely self-reinforcing. Indeed, the piece demonstrates how a composer might shed new light on captivating structural principles while fulfilling the general expectations of a storm fantasy. One long-range structural principle at work is the underlying progression from E minor to E major, the explanation of which draws us into a consideration of the formal design itself. The opening Andante sostenuto, an introductory section (mm. 1-29), unfolds in the key of E minor. This passage yields to a longer, subdivided section configured as theme with two variations in E Major (mm. 29-64). The stability and the major mode then give way to the instability of the storm scene, first with its sequential diminished-seventh chordal points and second with the full-blown fortissimo storm scene in B minor. The disruption having passed and the endpoint of the decrescendo having established itself as B major (functioning as a V chord), the fantasy

mentioned here. The critical account of Lefébure-Wély’s improvisation in 1846 at La Madeleine for the benefit of flood victims in the Loire valley includes the following passage: “The river overflowed its banks; the rampaging waters roared onward, spreading death and destruction everywhere. The victims could be heard moaning and shouting in desperation. Suddenly, the organist halted his improvisation and intoned a faraway *De profundis* on the Voix humaine. A deathly shudder ran through the audience, and their tear-filled eyes bore witness to both the triumph of a distinguished artist and the infinite resources of his instrument.” Text by Louis Roger from *L’Indépendant littéraire* (1869), as translated by Douglass in *Cavaillé-Coll and the Musicians*, I, 70. The second usage of the Voix humaine — a projected usage — would have been part of the design for Lefébure-Wély’s improvisation (mentioned at the opening of this essay) to be entitled “Voyage at Sea”:

“Organ piece: *Ocean Voyage*

The Ship Sets Out	
Imitation of Waves	Sailors’ Song
All Foundations	Voix humaine stop
except <i>Prestant</i> .	

Start *forte* and diminish gradually. When *pianissimo* has been reached and imitates the distant ship, *play the wind*: 16’ *Pédale* stops. Increase the volume, and imitate the waves breaking and crashing. The thunder, lightning, rain, and storm increase. *Imitation of the signal cannon, sailors’ shouts, invocation, sailors’ prayers*; soft, reverent melody: Voix humaine. The roaring tempest seems to yield to the sailors’ prayers. The crew resumes the voyage and enters port, to the noise of the military band: *grand chœur*.”

Quoted from Douglass, *Cavaillé-Coll and the Musicians*, I: 110.



Example 7 Lemmens, *Grand Fantasia*, mm. 103-107

then sinks into a lengthy “Prayer,” a one hundred and thirty four-measure unit chiefly rooted in E major. Thus, the piece might be described as comprising an exposition (introduction and theme with two variations), mm. 1-63; a contrasting section (the storm), mm. 64-103; and a recovery — embracing a first statement (“Prayer”) and second statement (the closing themes capped with a reprise of the “Prayer” theme to mark the conclusion), mm. 103-237.

From its soft opening section to the theme and variations to the fortissimo storm passage to the pianissimo “Prayer,” the fantasy embraces the spectrum of sound possibilities offered by the nineteenth-century organ. And the broad final section includes perhaps the most colorful combinations of stops within the fantasy: the pianissimo Prayer, on manual alone, calls for the “Voix Célestes” (see Example 7). The Agitato section presents an 8' foundation combination on the Great supported by Bourdon 16' and 8' on the pedal. The first appearance of the closing theme (in C# major and combined with decorative melodic strands from the Agitato section) features Diapasons 8' and Flute 8', while the second appearance — now in E major — features the Swell Vox humana with 8' and 4' stops for the theme in the left hand above which the Great Flute 8' provides an exuberant arabesque. After a delicate decrescendo, the pianissimo Prayer theme returns on the Swell Voix Célestes supported by Bourdon 16' in the pedal for the fantasy's concluding passage.

Loret's *Fantaisie pastorale*, an attractive, well-constructed, and well-balanced piece, depends less on color and on fantastical discourse than on compositional prowess. And yet it is a storm fantasy in the fullest sense. In every element of the musical structure, the piece makes a statement that is both compelling and eloquent. Easily executed using the resources available on a mid-nineteenth-century Cavaillé-Coll organ (Loret had at his disposal at Saint-Louis-d'Antin a Cavaillé-Coll organ of twenty-six stops), the *Fantaisie pastorale* may be regarded as a distillation of the storm piece, in which all of the parts work



Example 8 Loret, *Fantaisie pastorale*, mm. 232-241

together in an extraordinarily skillful way. True to his title, Loret creates a pastoral fantasy with devoted attention to what might be called a Loretian pastoral musical style, prominent in the broad opening and closing sections of the work. The structure comprises an opening exposition of the pastoral theme and of a secondary theme (mm. 1-c. 99), a transition and preparation for a storm (mm. 99-115), the fortissimo storm episode (mm. 115-166), a transition and decrescendo (mm. 166-178), a recovery period (pianissimo) marking the end of the storm (mm. 178-207), and a reprise of the pastoral theme with pianissimo conclusion (mm. 207-253). Broadly speaking, the formal design, then, might be represented as Exposition (A A' B A''), Contrast (prelude to the storm — the storm — aftermath of the storm), and Reprise (A A' [A concl.]). Although Loret creates a fantasy seemingly marked by great stability (in the pastoral key of F major), he nonetheless devotes extraordinary attention to the art of the transition: all of the material from m. 65 to m. 207 is in some sense transitional and in many ways unstable. If this fantasy has no prayer-like theme or section following the harsh storm, it does have a hauntingly beautiful arrival — pianissimo — in C major, executed on the Voix céleste and moving heavenward, creating an extraordinary sense of calm after the storm. Loret's *Fantaisie* paints a musical pastoral landscape of enduring features temporarily dominated by a terrifying — but passing — storm. The composer explores the principles of registration in an imaginative yet restrained way, foregoing exuberantly colorful combinations and completely avoiding the Voix humaine.

For his $\frac{6}{8}$ pastoral theme at the beginning and end, Loret chooses the Bourdon 8', Gambe 8', and Flûte 4' of the Récit, heard above the pedal Flûte 16' and Flûte 8'. The variation that follows the initial presentation of the A theme combines the Hautbois 8' — carrying the pastoral melody — with a second thematic element played on the Positif Harmonic Flute 8'. The reprise revives the familiar pastoral theme (the A theme), this time carried by the Récit foundations (8' 8' 4') and the Hautbois 8' (see Example 8). Finally, the haunting cadence at the end of the fantasy, with its plagal emphasis, seems particularly apt for this earnest pastoral musical scene. All in all, Loret exploits the color and the power of the organ, but in an artless, perhaps even knowingly modest way.

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Let us conclude by considering the explanatory text published in Edouard Batiste's storm fantasy of 1862:

In certain religious and musical solemn occasions one wishes to hear on the organ an imitation — more or less genuine — of a Storm, and several celebrated instruments owe their reputation, in part, to the possibility of this imitation as much as to the skillful manner [brought to the task by the organist].

Explaining that this genre was, in effect, very beautiful when treated “in a religious manner,” Batiste observed that the storm fantasy offered the opportunity of presenting — and hearing — some of the limitless resources of the “King of Instruments.”⁴⁹ Perhaps at this point we can better understand how the storm fantasy demonstrated to nineteenth-century musicians and audiences the “majesty” and “power” of the organ; perhaps we can better understand what led a critic in 1884 to write these words in reference to the storm fantasy: “so many different voices capable of touching our soul, of moving it, of startling it, of terrifying it, of ravishing it, of transporting it from the cramped realm in which it lives, into the boundless regions of ideals and the infinite!”⁵⁰ In

⁴⁹ “Dans certaines solennités religieuses et musicales on désire entendre sur l’Orgue l’imitation plus ou moins réelle d’un Orage, et quelques instruments célèbres même, doivent une partie de leur réputation à la possibilité de cette imitation comme bien certainement aussi à la manière habile de parfaite convenance dont l’Organiste doit faire preuve.

“Un morceau de ce genre est en effet fort beau lorsqu’il est traité religieusement et non comme une fantasmagorie indigne de la maison de DIEU. C’est surtout une possibilité de faire entendre quelques unes des innombrables ressources du Roi des instruments et notamment la majesté et la puissance des grands fonds de l’Orgue.”

⁵⁰ Quoted in translation by Lueders, “Reflections on the Esthetic Evolution of the Cavaillé-Coll Organ,” 137 (with attribution to Le T.R.P. Monsabré, *L’Orgue, discours prononcé le 8 mai 1884 en l’église St. Godard de Rouen pour l’inauguration du grand orgue*, Rouen, 1884).

light of the development of the Te Deum practice after the Revolution and of pictorial genres in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is by no means surprising that the storm fantasy established itself in the period 1850–1880 as an appropriate genre ideally suited to provide an effective demonstration of the wide range of tonal resources on the Cavaillé-Coll organ.

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Constant Troyon, *The Approaching Storm* (1849). [National Gallery of Art]. Storms and stormy weather inspired not only musicians but also painters, including Constant Troyon, Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, Narcisse-Virgilio Diaz de la Peña, and others.