

DLA doctoral thesis – a summary

Dávid Farkasházi

„Montre et Voix Humaine”

The sound of Maurice Duruflé's Choral Works with Organ
Accompaniment in the Light of the Renewal of Church
Music in Paris

Supervisor: Salamon Kamp DLA

Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music
Doctoral School No. 28 (History of Art and Culture)

Budapest
2025

I. The Antecedents of the Research

The art of Maurice Duruflé is not a completely unknown field in musicology, but it should be noted that there have been practically no scholarly publications on the composer's works in Hungarian. In international musicology several volumes of studies, articles and a few books have been published, mainly in French and English. Among these, James E. Frazier's *Maurice Duruflé. The Man and His Music* stands out as the most comprehensive and exhaustive account of Duruflé's entire career and the background to his compositions. This volume has formed the basis of my research on the composer, but it is important to stress that the book focuses primarily on biographical elements and does not include an analytical analysis of the music. The other important work is *Maurice Duruflé, 1902-1986, The Last Impressionist* edited by Ronald Ebrecht, which contains essays on the composer's compositions in aspect.

Reading the two volumes together gives a relatively complete picture of Duruflé's works, but my own dissertation fills two gaps. On the one hand, the dissertation itself concentrates on the specifics not just the composer's organ works, but of choral music too, in contrast of the other publications. On the other hand, neither Frazier's book nor Ebrecht's book of studies embeds the composer's works in a tradition,

and the works of Franck, Widor, Vierne or other earlier organist-composers are mentioned only in connection with Duruflé, without any specific analysis. In general it is true that the available literature provides a localised rather than a holistic picture of the composer's works and life, and from this point of view I believe that the present dissertation provides a broader picture for understanding the period and musical world under study. It is also practically the only Hungarian-language representative of Duruflé's compositional presentation too.

II. Sources

In addition to the works of Frazier and Ebrecht, there is a wider literature on the works of the other composers included in this dissertation – Franck, Widor, Vierne and Poulenc – of which John R. Near's exhaustive work on Charles-Marie Widor *Widor's Life beyond the Toccata*, and Louis Vierne's memoir (*Mes Souvenirs*), published in English by Rollin Smith as *Louis Vierne Organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral* stand out. In addition archival radio recording of the 1947 premiere of Duruflé's *Requiem* Op. 9, and manuscripts of certain works (e.g. Franck's *Messe solennelle* Op. 12, Duruflé's *Quatre*

Motets sur des thèmes grégoriens Op. 10) have been particularly helpful to the research.

Of particular importance for the research was a five day study trip to Paris in January 2025, during which I visited the most important churches, organs and their current organists and conductors. The sites gave me the opportunity to experience the acoustic conditions of each space, the sound of the organs and in the spirit of *oral history* to interview the most important people in the field (Daniel Roth, organist at Sainte-Sulpice who was Duruflé's pupil, Vincent Warnier, Duruflé's successor as organist at Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, Yves Castagnet, organist and composer at Notre-Dame, and Frédéric Blanc, guardian of Duruflé's legacy).

III. Method

At the beginning of the research, I generally mapped out the most important composers and their works of the period under study, with a special focus on organ-accompanied choral works. The most important part of this was getting to know Duruflé's oeuvre and choosing which other composers' works to use to present the changes in 19th-20th century Parisian church music through their compositions. This was followed by Chapters 4-5-6, which deal with

Durufié, and then Chapters 2 and 3, which present a work by César Franck, Charles-Marie Widor, Louis Vierne and Francis Poulenc. Finally, I preceded these with Chapter 1, which is a sketchy but comprehensive overview of many aspects of Parisian church music after the French Revolution. Therefore, I wrote the chapters of the dissertation not in linear order, but in reverse order, which was necessary for the sake of a purposeful structure and orientation.

In the field of compositions, during the analysis I never aimed for a continuous analysis from the first measure to the last, but rather for a summary presentation of an author's toolkit, which I illustrated with various examples from the works. My aim was not to make a list, but to create a summary picture of the given composer's style and the spirit of the composition through the presented compositional techniques and sonority characteristics. To achieve this, I often used poetic examples in the dissertation, with which I wanted to strengthen the holistic approach.

The dissertation aims to be novel in its language in that it is intended to be readable not only for specialists, but also for the lay public. The thesis thus contains unique features in several respects: on the one hand, this is the first Hungarian-language publication on Durufié, which, on the other hand, unlike international literature, specifically strives to cover a larger musical historical-stylistic range,

while, in addition to detailed musical analysis, it tries to develop a colorful and readable language.

IV. Achievements

I first encountered French Romantic and twentieth-century organ sound and vocal style during my work as a church musician. I was fascinated by the genre of improvisation and the specificity of the choir treatment and sound. What particularly struck me in the works of Maurice Durufié was that the composer opens up a new dimension to plainsong, forming a bridge between the archaic and modern soundscapes. However defining this sound easily exhausts its beauty, and I felt the need to review the details and build up a complete picture of the composer's toolkit, for which I felt it was absolutely necessary to get to know the entire French late-Romantic and twentieth-century organ tradition.

The resulting holistic, yet coherent system aimed at presenting and understanding Durufié fills a gap in the international literature, especially in the Hungarian-language literature, and at the same time the analysis of the compositions can provide practical assistance to conductors and organists during their performances of the pieces. The appearance of the plainsong in Durufié's works, as well as the related

insights into harmony, organ registration and choral sound, are the most innovative parts of the dissertation from an analytical point of view.

V. Documentation of the activity related to the subject matter of the dissertation

Conductor work at St. Stephen's Basilica, Budapest since March 2022, during which I had the opportunity to rehearse some of the works included in the dissertation and perform them on occasions within the framework of liturgical services or concerts.

27 May 2025, 19:00, DLA Final Concert, Liszt Academy, Great Hall

Sergei Rachmaninoff: Vespers Op. 37 » 6. Bogoroditse Devo

Péter Tóth: Ave Maria

Franz Liszt: Christus, Part Two: After Epiphany » The Foundation of the Church (Die Gründung der Kirche)

Ádám Brandenburg: I will not leave you comfortless

György Orbán: Daemon irrepsit callidus

Þorkell Sigurbjörnsson: Heyr himna smiður

Maurice Duruflé: Quatre Motets sur des thèmes grégoriens op. 10 »

I. Ubi caritas, IV. Tantum ergo

Maurice Duruflé: Notre Père, op. 14

Maurice Duruflé: Messe “Cum Jubilo”, op. 11

Maurice Duruflé: Requiem, op. 9

Choir of Saint Stephen's Basilica (Choirmaster: Dávid Farkasházi),

La mia Fonte Chamber Choir (Choirmaster: Dávid Farkasházi),

Male Choir of Saint Stephen King Conservatory (Choirmaster:

Krisztián Safarek), Semmelweis Choir (Choirmaster: Márta Oláh),

Gesualdo Chamber Choir (Choirmaster: Tamás Barnabás Bánó),

Vass Lajos Chamber Choir (Choirmaster: Máté Szabó Sipos), Kós

Children Choir (Choirmasters: Edina Barabás, Borbála Szirányi,

Dávid Farkasházi), Duna Symphony Orchestra (Principal conductor:

Gábor Horváth), Viola Thurnay (mezzo-soprano), Máté Fülep

(tenor), András Gábor Virágh (organ)