

World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Chicago, site of Alexandre Guilman's first concerts in America

Alexandre Guilman: American Tours and American Organs

by Agnes Armstrong

FÉLIX-ALEXANDRE GUILMANT, the renowned French organist-composer, whose one hundred fiftieth birth anniversary was celebrated during 1987, was the first European concert organist to tour the United States. Guilman visited America on three separate recital tours at the turn of the century -- in 1893, 1897-98, and 1904. Considered to be at the top of his profession, he was unabashedly referred to by journalists and music critics of his day as "the world's greatest organist." His immense popularity in this country began with his very first recital at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 and grew to enormous proportions. Throughout his three American tours, Guilman played to capacity audiences. He was received with excitement everywhere he went, and, although the ticket prices were often costly by the standards of the day, his recitals were usually sold out in a few days.

Born on March 12, 1837, in Boulogne-sur-mer, a small northern French fishing and resort village on the English Channel, Alexandre Guilman was one of a family of organists and organbuilders. His father and grandfather had built pipe organs mainly in the north of France, and Alexandre most likely

Agnes Armstrong, a well-known authority on Alexandre Guilman, has lectured on his life and performed recitals of his music extensively. Ms. Armstrong, recipient of a research grant from the District of Columbia AGO Foundation and a 1988 Fellow of the OHS American Organ Archive, is preparing a book about Guilman's concert tours of the U.S.

assisted in this enterprise as early as he was able.¹ The last known organ built by the Guilmans was a small, four-stop studio instrument of 1850, on which Alexandre later taught his students, including many Americans, in his apartments on the rue de Clichy in Paris.²

In 1872, Guilman was appointed organist at the Parisian church of La Trinité, where he presided over a three-manual instrument of forty-six stops, built in 1869 by Aristide Cavallé-Coll.³ He also frequently played the Cavallé-Coll organ in La Salle des Fêtes (the concert hall) of Paris' Palais Trocadéro, which had been constructed for the Exposition Universelle (World Exposition) of 1878. Originally a smaller instrument intended for a church in Paris, the organ was enlarged to four manuals and sixty-six stops and installed in the Trocadéro in 1878, where it remained in concert use for many years.⁴ About 1900, Guilman had a three-manual, twenty-eight stop organ built in his villa at Meudon by Charles Mutin, the successor to Cavallé-Coll. The specifications and pipe scalings were determined by Guilman himself.⁵ These three instruments were the organs which Guilman knew intimately and played most regularly.

Extensive recital tours of Europe took Guilman to all the important organs of the time. He played the dedicatory recital on the 120-stop Walcker instrument at the Cathedral in Riga, Latvia; he gave regular organ recitals at the Crystal Palace, Albert Hall, and Windsor Chapel in London; and he opened the Merklin organ at the Church of St. Louis of France in Rome.⁶ The inaugurations of many large, new organs, both in France

and abroad, were an important aspect of Guilmant's concert career. In fact, he opened a number of organs on this side of the Atlantic during his three tours, including the Casavant instrument, Opus 40 (1893), at the Nouvelle Cathédral Montréal (September 21 and 22, 1893)⁷, the Karn & Warren organ at the Conservatory of Music in Toronto (February 14, 1898)⁸, and two Hutchings-Votey instruments in 1904 -- one at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, Opus 1517 (1903), and the other at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Maryland.

The late nineteenth century was a period of vigorous economic development in America, shared by the organbuilding industry. The growth of organbuilding corresponded directly with the rapid increase of construction, for it was considered imperative that the myriad new churches and municipal auditoriums being built should be equipped with pipe organs. At the same time, organbuilders were busy applying burgeoning and competitive new technologies to their own craft. In 1876, the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition boasted two large pipe organs: the Main Hall had a four-manual Hook & Hastings organ, Opus 828 (1876) (which still exists in the Old Cathedral, Buffalo, New York), while the New York section of the main building had a three-manual Roosevelt, Opus 15 (1876). The Roosevelt organ displayed the innovative technologies of electric key actions and wind pressure generated by electric motors, thus allowing the divisions of the organ to be located at great distances from each other.⁹

In late August and early September, 1893, Guilmant played his first four recitals in America on the organ at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a four-manual, sixty-three stop instrument built by Farrand & Votey, Opus 700 (1893). Officially commissioned by the World's Fair authorities, this organ was erected in Festival Hall under the guidance of Chicago organist Clarence Eddy. The organ contained several new developments of the time in organbuilding technology, making use of tilting tablets for couplers, a water engine to provide wind, and electric key, coupler, and combination piston actions.¹⁰

In an editorial on July 2, 1893, the *New York Times* voiced great expectations: "What American organbuilders can do will be far better illustrated in the large organ now nearing completion in the Festival Hall, upon which M. Guilmant has been expressly invited to give recitals later in the summer, than in any world exhibits."¹¹ After the end of the Chicago exposition, the instrument was installed in University Hall at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor as the Frieze Memorial Organ. Guilmant apparently liked the organ well enough, as he requested to play it again on his second tour, remarking to Professor Stanley of the School of Music at Ann Arbor that he "could not go back home to Paris without once more playing upon that grand organ."¹² The instrument has since been

significantly altered and rebuilt several times, and the original Farrand & Votey work is no longer recognizable.

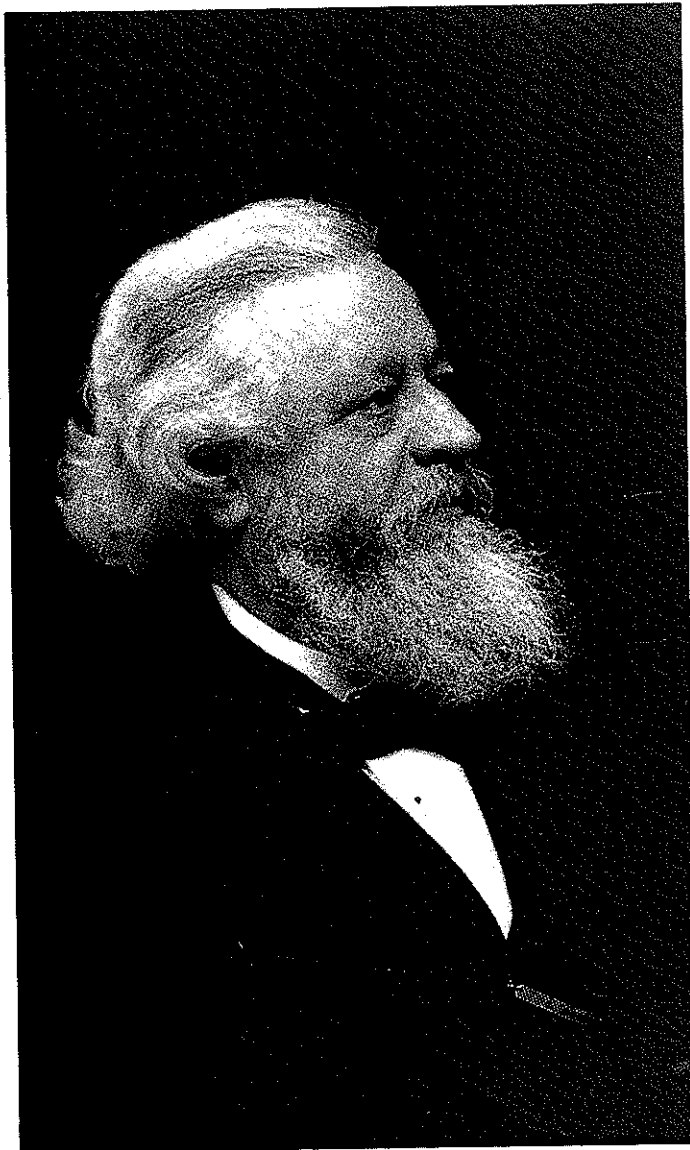
At the start of his third American tour in 1904, Guilmant performed his famous series of forty recitals on the Festival Hall organ at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri. Built by the Los Angeles Art Organ Company as Opus 35 (1904), this five-manual organ was designed by George Ashdown Audsley to have one hundred forty stops, although it is unclear exactly how many were ever actually installed while the organ was in St. Louis. Intended mainly as a concert instrument, the organ could also be played by a mechanical

roll-player, and, at the time it was built, was claimed to be the largest organ in the world. After the St. Louis Exposition ended, the organ was acquired by John Wanamaker who had it installed in the Grand Court of his Philadelphia department store in 1909 where it became the nucleus for one of the world's largest instruments.

The St. Louis Exposition organ was a monstrous undertaking, resulting in financial ruin for Murray M. Harris, the builder who originally contracted for it. After a number of intricate business dealings and lengthy delays, construction on the instrument was finally started. The organ was supposed to be finished for the opening of the Fair on April 30, 1904, but at the time of Guilmant's first recital on September 12, it still had not been completed. Even by the end of the first week of Guilmant's recitals, several solo stops were yet to be installed. Although most authorities blamed the organbuilders, some officials claimed that the building crew had not completed the hall on schedule for the organ's installation.¹³ The organ was used daily after its dedication of June 9, despite its unfinished state. The volume of sound must have been more than adequate, as a new dispatch from the Fair gives this account of an incident which took place during Guilmant's seventh recital on September 19, 1904:

"A large piece of heavy plaster, loosened by the vibration of the building, fell 40 feet from the ceiling to the floor of the balcony with a crash which was heard by the entire audience of 3,000 persons. Immediately the whole audience rose and started a rush for the exits. Only the coolness of Guilmant, who continued to the end of his selection, and the applause of several men in the front of the hall averted a serious panic. Half of the people left the hall before the next selection." It was suggested that "the tremendous vibration from the monster organ at the Fair should have been taken into consideration by the builders of Festival Hall. A more serious accident, with loss of life, might easily have happened." It was also reported that "the walls and ceilings now are being strengthened with girders."¹⁴

The overflow crowds who came to hear Guilmant play in America were treated to recitals in cathedrals, churches, college auditoriums, and public concert halls, almost anywhere



Alexandre Guilmant

that a decent instrument could be found. The organs which Guilman played during his American tours were certainly the best instruments of the day. No accounts have yet been found of his having performed in recitals here on an organ smaller than three manuals. Guilman did not differentiate between actions, playing the older mechanical instruments as well as those newer organs built with electric actions. Organbuilders were especially anxious for his endorsements, and Guilman's testimonials often appeared in their advertising for several years after his recitals on the noted instruments.

Farrand & Votey, who had built the recital organ for the Chicago World's Fair, published the following translation of a letter from Guilman which they had received on September 9, 1893, while he was still in Chicago:

It is with great pleasure that I have played the organ constructed for 'Festival Hall,' Chicago, by Messrs. Farrand & Votey. This instrument is excellent; it possesses stops of a charming quality (timbre); it has great power, and, besides, the sonority is expressive of it. The pistons, by which one can, at will, change the combinations, afford valuable resources to the organist for obtaining varied and instantaneous effects. I examined the interior of the organ, and I found the arrangement of it perfect; the work is executed with the greatest care and with excellent materials. It is an instrument of the first order.¹⁵

The firm of Pilcher & Sons of Louisville, Kentucky, builders of a smaller instrument for the Manufacturer's Building at the Chicago World's Fair, also received a highly complimentary letter from Guilman. Although he had not concertized on that organ, he had asked to try it during his visit to the Fair.¹⁶

The Mason and Hamlin firm, which had exhibited reed organs at the Fair, published in their advertising the translation of a letter received from Guilman, dated New York, October 21, 1893:

I thank you very much for showing me your excellent instruments. I have experienced great pleasure in playing your organs; the instrument (Liszt Organ), with two manuals and pedals, is of beautiful tone and will be very useful to persons wishing to learn to play the Great Organ.

Accept my hearty congratulations, and allow me to express my best sentiments.

Very sincerely yours,
Alexandre Guilman¹⁷

Many reports of the day quote Guilman as having said that the organ he was playing in a given recital was of the highest quality or was even the best organ he had yet played. For instance, the review in the Oswego, New York *Daily Palladium*, published the day after Guilman's recital at St. Paul's Church there in November, 1904, states that "Guilman paid the organ and the city a great compliment. He said: 'It is the sweetest and purest toned organ upon which I have ever played. Few cities in the world have instruments that can compare with it and that one of this magnificence is in Oswego testifies to the taste that is here developed for the best in music. Six years ago, when I was last here, the instrument was a grand one, but the added attachments have made it complete. Your citizens should be proud of this organ and the good priest whose love for the best in music caused him to have it installed.'" The organ, a three-manual, forty-two stop Farrand & Votey of 1893, was un-

finished when Guilman played it the first time. Another such example can be found in a letter written by Guilman to the Newark, New Jersey, organist Edward Morris Bowman, after a recital on a four-manual, fifty-eight stop Odell, Opus 274 (1889)¹⁹ in the Peddie Memorial Church there on October 11, 1893: "I have also had great pleasure in playing your beautiful organ. It is a magnificent and very sympathetic instrument."²⁰

Guilman was, obviously, quite politic in comments to his hosts concerning organs of which they were apparently proud. However, not all the instruments that Guilman played in America worked well, especially those organs built with the new electric action, which was notoriously unreliable in its early years. Still other organs were evidently not well main-

tained. It is easy to imagine that Guilman may often have longed for his familiar Cavallé-Coll organs back home.

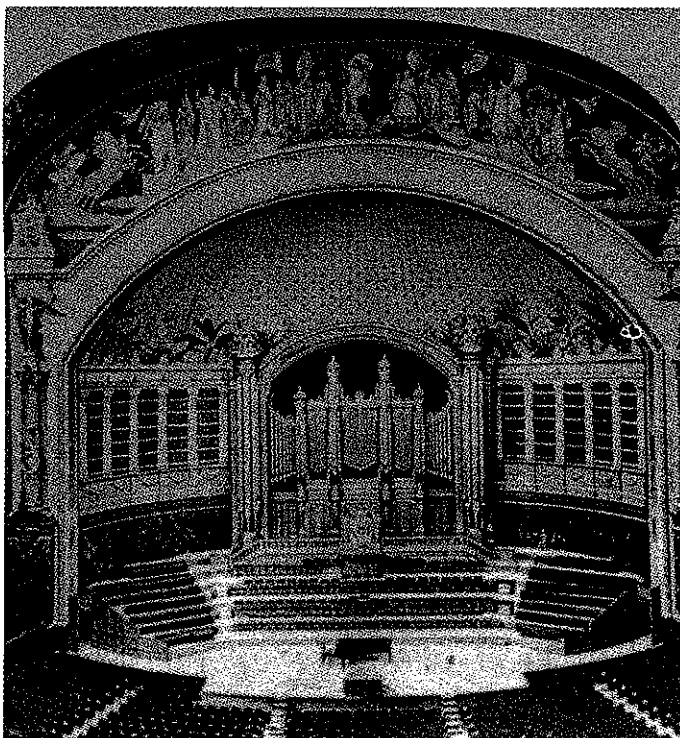
At the Chicago exposition in 1893, a reporter for the Chicago *Tribune* related that Guilman's first recital on the large Farrand & Votey organ was "marred by the frequent failure of the electric batteries, owing to some confusion of the positive and negative currents. Mr. Eddy, who acted as factotum, was much annoyed, and so was every one present, excepting M. Guilman, whom I found in the organ loft as amiable as a seraph."²¹ Another source recounting the same incident told that although "the organ achieved the worst fit of tantrums it has yet had, M. Guilman being obliged three times to quit the instrument until the fault could be remedied, he retained his artistic balance unruffled throughout."²²

In 1898, during Guilman's second visit to America, a report of his recital on the Odell organ,

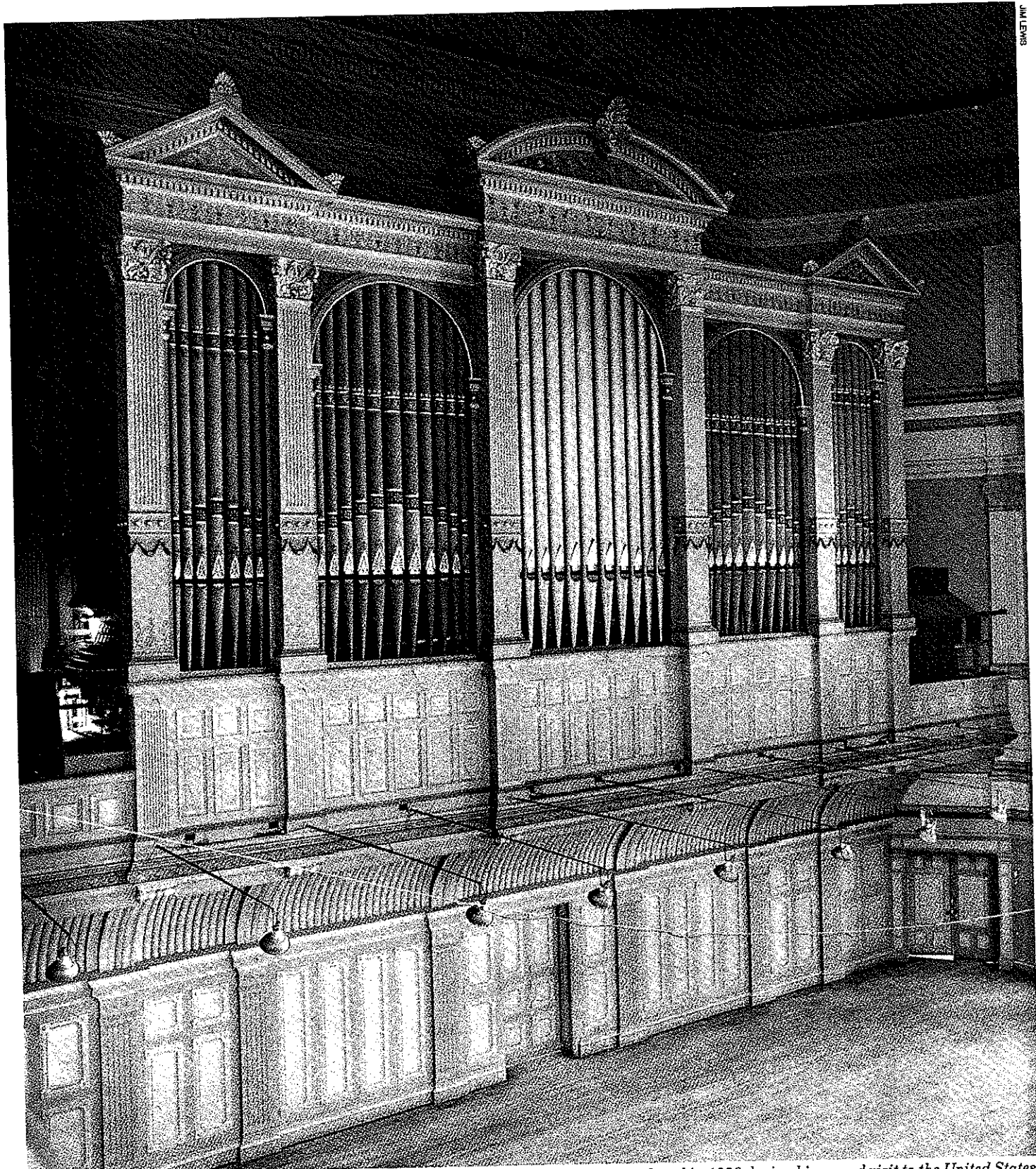
Opus 190 (1882), in the Troy (New York) Music Hall, related that "Troy was quite naturally proud of providing such a master entertainer as Alexandre Guilman, and what an ignominious fall for that same pride it was when the great Music Hall organ suddenly expired with one prolonged groan of despair. Then was the innate politeness of the great Frenchman manifested as he stroked his snowy beard and paced the small enclosure, while restoratives were being applied to his wonder-filling instrument."²³

One of the most telling accounts of *mal d'orgue* occurred during Guilman's third American tour, at his recital of November 10, 1904, in the New York Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, Brooklyn. The three-manual, sixty-stop Hutchings organ, Opus 200 (1890), had been the pride of its day when it was built, and Guilman had previously played it on his tours in 1893 and 1898. In the Brooklyn *Eagle* under the headline, "The Guilman Organ Recital Conducted Under Difficulties in the New York Avenue Church," it is reported that

Alexandre Guilman's recital . . . last night was perilously near an artistic fiasco, through no fault of his own. A great throng had assembled to hear the man who, without much doubt, occupies the first chair among organ players of the world; but, the results were disappointing. . . . The Brooklyn instrument did not respond as it should have done. His notes seemed fumbling at times, his combinations hard, and the responses from some pipes were not prompt. At last, in the middle of César Franck's rather pumpy and self-conscious *Pièce Héroïque*, he gave us an angry shake of the head, threw out his hands and fled. One of the keys had stuck and persisted in speaking out of its turn. Several volunteer organists



La Salle des Fêtes, Palais Trocadéro, Paris



The 1882 J. H. & C. S. Odell Opus 190, Troy Music Hall, Troy, New York, where Guilmant played in 1898 during his second visit to the United States.

hurried to the scene, there was a delay of a quarter of an hour or more while the big machine was inspected and overhauled, the pipes emitting queer noises meanwhile, and sounds coming into the auditorium which suggested that the examiners were falling over one another in the dark. Two of the musicians then announced to the audience that the organ was almost 'unplayable,' that it was in a wretched state as to repairs, and that the neglect to put it in order before giving a concert was inexcusable as it certainly was.

In the end the swell organ was cut entirely, and the concert was finished with such stops as remained. . . . M. Guilman on Tracker 329, 4989

made a heroic struggle against difficulties, and he won hearty applause for his playing. . . . Guilmant was several times called from his desk to bow his acknowledgements, and he achieved a personal and an artistic triumph over irritation and discouragements that would have sent some men from the building.²⁴

It was certainly to Guilmant's credit that he took such incidents in his stride. His many years of experience in playing the inaugural recitals on organs throughout Europe were, no doubt, an advantage here, as he had dealt with the unan-

anticipated idiosyncracies of many new instruments in the past. He must have maintained an adventuresome attitude toward his exploration of concert instruments in America, and it is well to keep in mind that this was the period before any real standardization in organ building or console design.

Everett Truette, a Boston organist and publisher of the monthly journal, *The Organ*, reviewing Guilmant's first Boston recital at New Old South Church on September 25, 1893, stated:

A word should be said about the organ used on this occasion. Built seventeen years ago by Mr. Geo. S. Hutchings [actually Hutchings, Plaisted & Co., Opus 58 (1876)], it has always been considered one of our best instruments. With all respect to the late Eugene Thayer, under whose guidance it was constructed, we must protest against the relative position of the manuals, the great being the lower manual, and the choir the upper. This arrangement proved more annoying to Mons. Guilmant than any peculiarity with which he has met this side of the water, and we cannot conceive of a reason for the arrangement.²⁵

Boston organist Philip Hale, a former student of Guilmant, also reported this incident in his review of the same recital for *The Musical Courier*:

The organ in the New Old South Church was designed, as I am informed, by the late Eugene Thayer. There are about sixty "speaking stops," three manuals and an old-fashioned ribbon crescendo pedal. The manuals are thus arranged, and singularly for an American organ, the great is at the bottom, nearest the player; the swell is just above the great, and the choir is at the top. There is no coupler between the choir and swell.

But Mr. Guilmant triumphed over these obstacles, and showed fully his great characteristics as a player . . .²⁶

Guilmant did feel compelled to make some suggestions for American organbuilders. He was quoted by New York organist William C. Carl, a former student of Guilmant, in an interview in *The Musical Courier* of December, 1898, as having "criticised the pedal board of American organs, suggesting that the pedal keys should be a trifle narrower, and nearer together, in order to give greater ease and facility." Carl goes on to say that "the American Guild of Organists are now taking the matter up, and will establish a standard for the country in a short time. This will be one of the best things that the Guild has accomplished, and I am confident the change will be welcomed by the builders as well as the organists."²⁷

In his editorial column of *The Organ* for November, 1893, Everett Truette stated:

M. Alexandre Guilmant specially recommended to us to call the attention of our readers to the following omissions in the specifications of our large organs. First, the absence of a soft 8 feet stop (Lieblich Gedeckt, for example) in the Pedal; second, the omission of a 16 feet string tone (in addition to the usual 16 feet Open Diapason) in the Great Organ; third, the frequent absence of a soft accompanying stop (Dulciana or Keraulophone) in the Great Organ.²⁸

In the same issue of *The Organ*, Alfred Pennington, also a former student of Guilmant and Director of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where Guilmant played a recital on October 6, 1893, related:

In our course of conversation I asked [Guilmant] how he liked the Festival Hall organ at the [Chicago] exposition. He replied that he was very much pleased with it, and remarked upon the system of combination pistons and pedals with enthusiasm. I inquired whether he preferred the system of pistons and pedals which threw out the stops, or the ventil system as used in France. His reply was to the effect that much could be accomplished with the ventil system, but ended in giving preference to the system as used in the Festival Hall organ. He spoke of his concurrence with Mr. Eddy's opinion that an organ with "adjustable pistons" should also be well supplied with "set" combination pedals, since there were times when a foot could be spared to bring on a combination, but a hand could not.²⁹

Writing for *The Musical Courier*, after Guilmant's first American tour, Fannie Edgar Thomas, who accompanied the master on his return journey to France, related the following opinions expressed by Guilmant:

1890 George S. Hutchings, Opus 200
New York Avenue Methodist Church
(Now Union Methodist Church)
New York Avenue, Brooklyn, New York
Unless otherwise noted, manual stops have 61 pipes; Pedal stops have 30 pipes, material is metal.

GREAT 61 notes		8'	Gedeckt wood
16'	Double Open Diapason	4'	Octave
8'	Open Diapason	4'	Violina
8'	Open Diapason	4'	Flute d'Armour wood & metal
8'	Viola di Gamba pure tin		
8'	Viola d'Amour	2'	Piccolo Harmonique
8'	Clarabella wood	8'	Orchestral Oboe
8'	Doppel Flöte wood	8'	Clarinet
4'	Octave		Tremolo
4'	Gambette pure tin	PEDAL 30 notes	
4'	Flute Harmonique	32'	Contra Bourdon wood
2 1/2'	Octave Quint	16'	Open Diapason wood
2'	Super Octave	16'	Violone wood
V	Mixture 305	16'	Bourdon wood
III	Scharff 183	16'	Dulciana
16'	Double Trumpet	10 1/2'	Quint wood
8'	Trumpet	8'	Octave
4'	Clarion	8'	Violincello
SWELL 61 notes, enclosed		8'	Flute wood
10'	Bourdon Bass 12 wood	16'	Trombone wood
16'	Bourdon Treble 49 wood	8'	Tromba
8'	Open Diapason	COUPLERS	
8'	Gemshorn	Swell to Great	
8'	Hohl Flöte wood	Choir to Great 8', 16'	
8'	Salicional pure tin	Swell to Choir	
8'	Vox Celestis (tc) 49 tin	Swell to Swell 4' (?)	
8'	Aeoline	Great to Pneumatics	
8'	Stopped Diapason wood	Great to Pedal	
8'	Quintadena	Swell to Pedal	
4'	Octave	Choir to Pedal	
4'	Fugara	COMBINATION PEDALS	
4'	Flauto Traverso wood	ADJUSTABLE	
2'	Flautino	5 for Great and Pedal	
V	Dolce Cornet 305	5 for Swell and Pedal	
16'	Contra Fagotto	4 for Choir and Pedal	
8'	Cornopean	4 for Pedal	
8'	Oboe	PEDALS	
8'	Vox Humana	Full Organ	
4'	Saxophone	All Couplers	
	Tremolo	Swell to Great, and Swell on itself	
CHOIR 61 notes, enclosed		Choir to Great Sub-octaves	
16'	Lieblich Gedeckt wood	Reversible Great to Pedal	
8'	Open Diapason	Balanced Swell Pedal	
8'	Geigen Principal	Balanced Choir Pedal	
8'	Spitz Flöte	Grand Crescendo	
8'	Concert Flute wood		
8'	Dolcissimo		

[Source: *Inaugural Recital Program, November 30, 1890 (OHS Archive). This organ was rebuilt in 1929 as Clarence E. Morey's Op. 397.]*

Organ mechanism in this country he found much more advanced than he expected. We have most clever builders, he said; also in Canada. He found here many new combinations, and mentioned especially that of pedal and piston. Electricity as an appliance is of French origin, but is cleverly adapted. The touch is perhaps too light in some; he likes a little resistance -- "not too much." That of the Cathedral of St. Pierre, Canada [See note box, page 20], he thought most to his liking. He missed the reeds everywhere. We must have more reeds, he said. He was glad to hear that some had been imported for use in the Exposition organ, which he thought very fine. Chickering Hall organ [Roosevelt Opus 25 (1876)] he thought quite bad, the reeds being sadly out of tune. Reeds are a necessity in French organbuilding, the idea being over a century old. He had played on the big organ at Riga, but said our organs and even the English were far ahead of it in effectiveness.

Our organ lofts he was pleased with. The beauty of their furnishing impressed him favorably, but he was sorry to see that they were not at all careful as to acoustics. I felt better when he said they had the very same difficulty of architect domination in France. "The architects put up the church," he says; "the organist must take what place he can get." There should be no carpets and less drapery in organ lofts.³⁰

Which Cathedral?

THERE IS A FAIR AMOUNT of confusion about the cathedrals in Montréal. Since the time of Bishop Lartigue, the first Bishop of Montréal, there have been six cathedrals. Currently, Montréal contains two structures which at various times have been called "cathedral." The Eglise de Notre Dame is actually a parish church facing Place d'Armes. Its organ is Casavant opus 26 (1890), an instrument of 4 manuals and 82 stops, which was inaugurated by Frederick Archer in May, 1891. The original installation included a 32' *Montre en façade* and many reed ranks imported from Cavaille-Coll. The church also contains one of the largest bells in North America, *Le gros Bourdon*, christened Jean Baptiste. This church was often referred to as the Cathedral of Notre Dame before the construction of the Nouvelle Cathedral, completed in 1893, although from 1855 to 1894, the "official" cathedral was a simple chapel at Mont St. Joseph.

The Nouvelle Cathedral is currently called Cathedral de Marie Reine du Monde-Cathedral Saint-Jacques. However, during the construction, which began in 1870, it was often referred to as St. Pierre since it is a replica to one-quarter scale of the Basilica of St. Peter at the Vatican in Rome. The Nouvelle Cathedral was consecrated in 1894 as the Cathedral Saint-Jacques. In 1904 it also became a parish, and in 1910 was constituted a minor basilica. On January 1, 1955, it was consecrated Cathedral de Marie Reine du Monde, while still maintaining the name of Saint-Jacques, its original titular saint. This structure contains Casavant opus 40 (1893), an organ of 3 manuals, 50 stops, which is the instrument inaugurated by Guilman on September 21 and 22, 1893. A. A.

During his second tour, Guilman in an article entitled "Organ Music and Organ Playing" published in the March, 1898, issue of the American journal *Forum*, stated his opinions concerning organs in America and gave some specific advice for American organbuilders.

In American I have found many good organs. They are especially effective in the softer stops, such as the Dulciana, Flutes, and Gamba. But the Full Organ lacks resonance and energy, and does not thrill. I do not think the mixtures and reeds of the Great Organ should be included in the swell-box, as this weakens the tone and destroys proper balance. The pedals in American organs are not so clear and distinct as they should be. They lack the Eight- and Four-Foot tone. The effect is the same as if there were too many double-basses in the orchestra and not enough violoncellos. The Sixteen-Foot Open Diapason in the Great organ is so powerful that every organ should also have the milder Sixteen-Foot Bourdon, which gives a mellow quality to the foundation stops. But, as a rule, the softer Sixteen-Foot stops are wholly lacking in American organs.

My opinion is that organbuilders should devote less time to mechanical improvements, and more time to the voicing of their instruments. Mechanical appliances are multiplying so fast that very soon the organist will be unable to occupy himself with anything except the mechanism of this instrument. This is a tendency greatly to be deplored. Organ-playing should be essentially musical, and, as far as possible, in

the pure style of the organ; it should involve the necessity of constantly changing the registration.

There is too great a tendency to use the vibrating stops, such as the Voix Celeste, Tremolo, or Vox Humana; so that, when these effects are really called for, they do not make the desired impression.³¹

In 1898, an interview published in the *Milwaukee Journal* also recorded Guilman's comments:

As to your beautiful country, I have found it most interesting and I am particularly struck with surprise at my audiences. I was warned that there was only a small public for classical organ music in American and yet my recitals have all been well patronized and my efforts have been received with great applause. This has been all the more gratifying to me as I had been thoroughly schooled to expect the contrary.

As to the American organs, I am somewhat less pleased with them than with my public. They contain, as a rule, many beautiful solo stops, but they lack sonority. There are too few eight-foot diapasons and also too few mixtures and other stops of that class. Another fault that I find with them is that there are too many sixteen-foot stops in the pedals and too few eight-foot stops there. What would one say of an orchestra in which one constantly heard an overpowering volume of tone from the contra basses, deadening everything else? The notes of the pedal part of an organ composition should be played where they are written, that is, with an eight-foot tone, unless the composer has explicitly stated that he wishes the sixteen-foot stops drawn also. It is a common fault with modern organists to use too many sixteen-foot stops, but it is one which a little thought would soon overcome. The preponderance of solo stops in the modern American organs and the comparative absence of diapasons, mixtures, cornets and so on, makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to play a Bach fugue, for example, in the spirit in which it is written. It would be a good thing if your organbuilders would first look to the general sonority and richness of their instruments and then add their pet beautiful solo stops afterwards.³²

The May 4, 1898, edition of *The Musical Courier* also recorded Guilman's feelings on this subject: "The American organs, while capable and efficient instruments and astonishing in modern mechanism, lack in point of grandeur. Even when sonority and tone are beautiful, he [Guilman] is generally struck by this lack of the grandiose, the sublime, the majestic in general effect."³³

During his three tours, Guilman met most of the prominent American organists and organbuilders of the day. In September, 1893, following his recital series at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Guilman was escorted to the Farrand & Votey factory in Detroit by Mr. Votey, where the firm presented Guilman with a large reed organ with pedal keys. On his tour of Canada, which immediately followed, Guilman visited with the builders of the electric Casavant organ Opus 26 (1890) at the Eglise de Notre Dame in Montréal, and tried the instrument.³⁴ In New York City, in October of 1893, a public reception at the Fifth Avenue Hotel included Frank Roosevelt of its committee of prominent musicians,³⁵ and builders attending as guests included Edward D. and George Jardine and John H. Odell.³⁶ Still in New York, later in the month, guests attending a private reception and musicale in Guilman's honor included George S. Hutchings.³⁷ In Brooklyn, George Ashdown Audsley and George S. Hutchings were guests at a banquet honoring Guilman at the Union League Club on October 18, 1893.³⁸

In 1898, during the second tour, organbuilder Emmons Howard of Westfield, Massachusetts, was on hand to tune and maintain the 3-manual Hutchings, Opus 322 (1893), for Guilman's recital at the Methodist Episcopal Church in North Adams, Massachusetts, on January 14, 1898.³⁹ At the end of Guilman's second tour, an account of the farewell dinner given in his honor by the newly-formed American Guild of Organists in New York on March 11, 1898, lists among those attending Mr. Heins and Mr. Cross of the Votey Organ Company, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Charles Jardine.⁴⁰ It was at this occasion that Alexandre Guilman was named the first honorary member of the A.G.O.⁴¹ During Guilman's third American tour in 1904, the account of a dinner given in his honor at the Hotel Astor in New York City listed among the invited guests Robert Hope-

Methodist Episcopal Church North Adams, Massachusetts Organ Recital by Alexander Guilman Friday Evening, January 14, 1898

Prelude and Fugue in G major
Berceuse
a. In Paradisum
b. Fugue in C
Funeral March and Hymn of Seraphs
Andante Cantabile (from the 4th Symphony)
Fifth Sonata

I. Allegro Appassionata

II. Adagio

III. Scherzo

IV. Recitativo

V. Choral and Fugue

Marche du Sacrement
Improvisation on a given theme
Cantata

J. S. Bach
Th. Salome
Th. Dubois
D. Buxtehude
Alex. Guilman
Ch. M. Widor
Alex. Guilman

A. Chauvet

Th. Dubois



An early class of the Guilmant Organ School, founded in 1898, at "Old" First Presbyterian Church, New York City. Dr. William C. Carl is standing beside the keydesk of the 3m Roosevelt of 45 stops. The author seeks assistance in identifying the students.

Jones, of the Guilmant Organ School faculty.⁴² The views of Alexandre Guilmant on America and Americans were certainly as interesting as his opinions on American organs. Fannie Edgar Thomas, on board ship with Guilmant for the return trip to France in 1893, related in *The Musical Courier* Guilmant's thoughts on the country in general:

Mr. Guilmant was too short a time in the country, and too actively engaged personally while in it, to be able justly to judge of America's musical condition. The public as an audience he found sympathetic and appreciative -- perhaps a trifle more generous than discriminating, as they seemed equally pleased with everything. In the artists with whom he personally came in contact, he found nothing to be desired as regards earnestness, desire to learn, progress, artistic sincerity, and musical brain and spirit.

He deplures, however, our lack of standard. We are without headquarters, our growth is individual, and each man does his own untraditional thinking. As this boat through the ebb and flood and channel of ocean needs guidance, so America needs a helm to guide to Art perfection through the changing seas of Art experiment. The country is new and must have this before the public is imbued with sufficient confidence to follow a leading. America needs schools -- a school such as the Conservatoire of Paris to dictate terms of respect and opinion in music. He realizes the difficulty of this, as such a school founded by the Government would need first of all the feeling of people toward music which it would be supposed to create. Such school, he thinks, however, might be established by personal or society endowment in a country of America's wealth. American thought at present is more for progress than perfection, and music feels this.

He considers the nation the most progressive that ever has been. "Seek, seek seek," is their motto. They surge hither and thither like the waves, never satisfied and not seeking even comfort.

Among leading American organists whom he remembered enthusiastically were Clarence Eddy, Mr. Dudley Buck

(whose compositions he praised highly), Mr. Bowman, Mr. Carl, Mr. Woodman, Mr. Pecher, Mr. Morse, Mr. Bartlett, Miss Welles. A host of others whom he found thoroughly artistic he did not hear play. His eye lights and face warms as he speaks of Clarence Eddy, and it is with child-like pride he tells of the recitals given by that organist "all for me." He also speaks of Mr. Stainer and Mr. Best in this way, as though he were honored by their acquaintance and proud of it.

Guilmant loves best the Gothic in church architecture as having the most religious sentiment. He considers the Cathedral of Notre Dame the noblest of them all and the nearest to perfection. He visited Italy on purpose to see the churches, but although astonished at the richness of structure and decoration, the statues, mosaics, frescoes, &c., he was not pleased with the Italian taste. It was not serious enough. He was delighted again to behold Notre Dame, although comparatively small. He also likes the dim religious light. Many of our churches were too light to please him, but of the Gothic of our structures he approved highly. Our church buildings all seemed small to him. The organ tone sonority is not the same as in Paris on this account. Yet Trinité, his church, is considered a "small" edifice. St. Pierre Cathedral in Canada, built in imitation of St. Peter's, was nearest to European perfection; was magnificent, artistically, religiously and musically. Over 20,000 people assembled there twice to hear him.

He does not know why it is that a country to which we are so much indebted musically as Germany, should remain so far behind in organ progress. In this the United States is far ahead. Holland, which has magnificent organ factories, is still worse. The art there is at a standstill. He becomes most enthusiastic in speaking of Cavallé-Coll, the great Parisian organbuilder, who, although he does not play himself, has worked a revolution in the art in twenty years. He describes him as a genius and the most charming of men. Sydney, Australia, he thought had the largest organ in the world; the organist is his friend.⁴³

While visiting Detroit during his second tour of America, Guilmant related through an interpreter some of his thoughts about this country. Under the headline, "Americans Live Too Fast. M. Guilmant Says They Go Much Too Swift for Artistic Development," was this report:

I like America and the Americans, they are *très aimables*, very hospitable and interesting. It is a great country, with a friendly people. Everywhere they have treated me with the greatest courtesy. Of course, the country is comparatively new, but it is not without interest. There are splendid railroads here and the facilities for travel are better than in Europe. The hotels, too, are fine and well kept, and the street cars are beyond compare. In fact, everything for the material comfort of the people is well advanced. Perhaps the advance in these lines has been too great to allow musical education to be solidly founded. Americans live too fast to be genuinely and strongly built up in the arts. Such an atmosphere for the arts as there is in Europe is the result of slow development for centuries. Nevertheless, Americans are becoming more intelligent in musical matters, and are growing more and more appreciative.⁴⁴

In 1904, during the third American tour, the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* related an anecdote concerning the master's encounter with American popular culture:

It happened Saturday evening in a New York café. With his pupil and companion, Prof. William C. Carl, of New York, Professor went into the café for dinner. Their repast had just begun when suddenly the orchestra swung into "I've Got a Feelin' for You." For a moment the great virtuoso was surprised, and then his expression deepened into a puzzled look. He paused with uplifted spoon over his consommé. "What is it?" he asked of Mr. Carl.

Mr. Carl said it was rag time. Professor Guilmant speaks but little English and he didn't understand. As music, the ditty was incomprehensible to him, and rag time was a new word. He demanded an explanation, and Mr. Carl had to illustrate the rag time motif by beating out the measure on the table with his hands. Mr. Carl yesterday declined to state what were the professor's comments at the time, so the question was put directly to M. Guilmant as to what he thought of rag time. Professor Guilmant frowned almost audibly and shook his head in a droll fashion. Mr. Carl translated his reply as "It is music without rhyme or reason."⁴⁵

Americans, from the general public to the most advanced musicians, were enthusiastic about Guilmant. After his first tour, Clarence Eddy stated, "This visit of Guilmant to the United States marks a new period in our organ history, and a stimulus has been given in the direction of a better class of organ music. It is a revival."⁴⁶

An unsigned article in *The Musical Courier* of May 4, 1898, describing Guilmant's return home to Meudon at the conclusion of his second American tour, asserted the inspiration

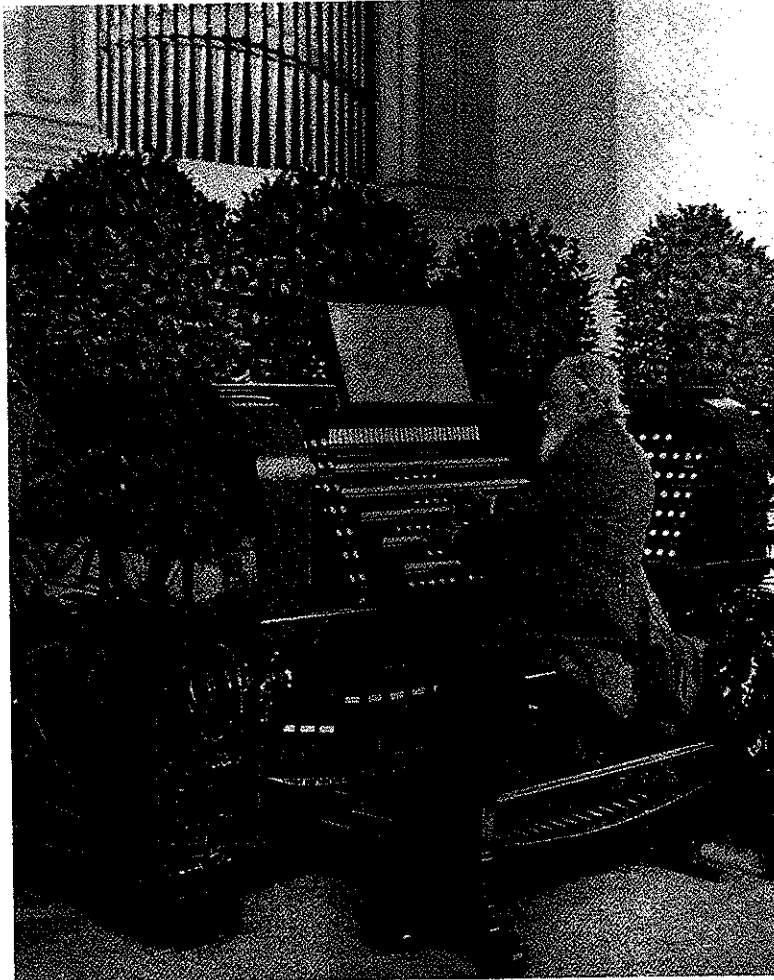
and influence which Guilmant brought here, and which can still be perceived today through succeeding generations of American organists:

To say that he was delighted with his trip does not express it. He had had no ennui or troubles, found himself surrounded and supported by friendly musicians and pupils at every turn, and went as far west as Kansas City. He found growth musically in the country since his last visit, advancement in every line, and above all the most anxious and earnest spirit of search after advancement. Search, search,

search everywhere after the unknown. His pupils had grown marvelously, and still flocked about him to profit by his presence in the country to take a few lessons, to receive more light, to be assured on certain points, to be corrected of recognized errors.

With the greatest of joy he discovered the best of the organ heart to be directed toward France instead of inevitably toward Germany, as in former days. While the most just of men and musicians, and while loving and admiring the German school of music, as all artists must, he feels what is doubtless true that in organ art France is the leader. M. Guilmant ought to feel much prouder of this change in musical sentiment with us than he is, being the most modest of men. For it must be seen by all that he, with his incomparable conscience, has been the influence to bring this condition about. It is difficult to say which country owes him the most — his own or ours.⁴⁷

William C. Carl, Guilmant's most dedicated American student, recounted precisely the effect which the master organist, composer, and teacher had



Guilmant at the St. Louis Exposition, 1904.

on the American music scene:

The estimate of his three visits to America will never fully be known. The great advance made here can easily be traced to the date of his first tour, when he was summoned to play the great organ at the World's Fair in Chicago. The succeeding visits did much to confirm this, and now in no country of the world is organ-music more appreciated than here. Guilmant's influence on the destiny of organ-music extended to many lands, as he was eagerly sought for, and traveled extensively. Whatever place he will fill in the history of his beloved France, it is safe to say that in no country will his name and the influence of his art live longer than in the United States of America.⁴⁸

In a retrospect written more than two decades after Guilmant's third American tour, Carl also observed:

When Alexander [sic] Guilmant, the great French organist, played at the Chicago World's Fair, some people exclaimed, "Why, when he uses his hands and feet, the notes are struck exactly together. We have never heard anything like it before (and mind you, this was thirty years ago!). The influence of Guilmant in this country can never be fully estimated, for he came at the crucial moment and when he was most needed. At that time, we were not discussing the merits of Fundamentalists or Modernists in either the world of music or theology. A new school of organists was being formed and Guilmant was the man to do the work and he did

it well. His unaffected manner won the hearts of our people on each of his three tours, and his marvelous improvisations have not yet been surpassed in either Europe or America.⁴⁸

The significance and import of Alexandre Guilmant's visits to America have largely been forgotten today, although few American organists have escaped the effects of his sphere of influence. Critics, musicians and the public who attended the virtuosic performances of his three American tours immediately raised the cry for the elevation of organ performance standards in this country. Guilmant's unequalled improvisations reawakened awareness and enthusiasm in extemporaneous organ playing. Indeed, the Guilmant Organ School in New York City, which was founded at the end of the second tour in 1898, and which existed for more than sixty years, taught Guilmant's techniques of organ performance to many of America's foremost organ performers and organ teachers. Several hundred Americans travelled to France to study with Guilmant as private students. Many other studied with illustrious French organists who had been students of Guilmant when he was professor of organ at the Paris Conservatoire,

most notably Joseph Bonnet, Nadia Boulanger, Marcel Dupré, and Louis Vierne.

Guilmant's recital programming, which included organ music of every style and period, encouraged performers to play the music written especially for the instrument. His publication of quality editions of early music for the organ made available to all organists many long-forgotten pieces for sacred service and recital use. His prolific composition of finely crafted music for the organ in many styles for both church and concert hall provided significant new additions to Romantic organ literature.

Alexandre Guilmant made an indelible impression on the organ world during his lifetime. In our own time there is a resurgence of interest in Guilmant the man, as performer, teacher, and composer. One hopes that this renewed realization of Guilmant's contributions to the organ world, and the recent renewal of interest in the Romantic organ and its music, will soon lead us to assign Alexandre Guilmant his rightful place in the long and colorful history of the organ.

NOTES

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