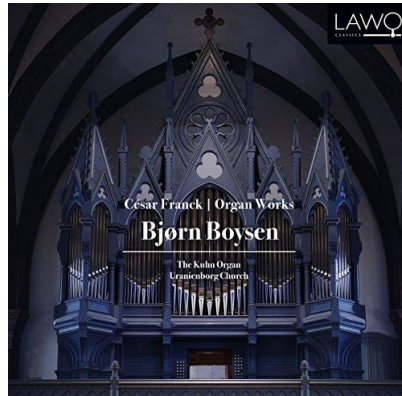


**FRANCK** *Andantino. Fantaisie. Grande pièce symphonique. Pastorale. Prière. Final. Prélude, fugue et variation.* 3 Pièces: *Fantaisie; Cantabile; Pièce héroïque.* 3 Chorals • Bjørn Boysen (org) • LAWO 1147 (2 CDs: 157:53)



Franck: Organ Works  
Audio CD  
Lawa Classics

Looking over the *Fanfare* Archive, going back to LP days, it's startling how many performances of Franck's canonical dozen organ works were found wanting, and how few to live with. When Susan Landale's landmark accounts appeared they were rapturously greeted with a sort of relief—"Rarely, rarely do the planets align themselves in such a favoring conjunction! Recordings of Franck's organ works are legion, and it has become fashionable to record them on one or another Cavillé-Coll instrument, whose unique timbres are akin to those of the organ on which Franck performed at Sainte-Clotilde for over 30 years" (*Fanfare* 28:2, Nov/Dec 2004). Landale spread her conspectus over three such instruments. What's rare, however, is her sense of complete interpretive identity, the virtuoso writing taken easily in stride (rather than as a pretentious headliner), the melodic and contrapuntal richness heard to optimum advantage, the instruments' secrets called out for hand-in-glove expressive point, and so on. Praises be that I've lived long enough to witness another stellium in the person of Bjørn Boysen, whose traversal of the canonical 12 is a worthy companion to Landale's. Boysen's pacing unfolds with an air of straightforward inevitability, neither hustled nor dragging, though dimpled with fleeting nuance where Franck seems to whisper ecstatic silvery confidences. *Final* grips and carries one with sublime seriousness, leaving all suggestions of perky Offenbach choruses, a staple of many organists, behind. The *Grande pièce symphonique* has, time and again, been a casualty of stop-and-go sectionalism transmogrifying one of Franck's grandest utterances to a lurching bore. *Chez* Boysen, the asides are piquantly telling, impelling a narrative *élan* in which palpable development looms, splendor on splendor, with compelling potency. And so on. As one expects, the aura of revelation reaches its apogee in Franck's deathbed testament, the *Trois Chorals*. Boysen has followed alterations to the Kuhn organ, in the Uranienborg Lutheran Church (in a suburb of Oslo), since 1958. His intimate acquaintance with this magnificent, powerful instrument informs a divinatory interpretive savvy. Sound is unusually detailed, winging through the vaulted ambience and filling it at climactic moments. Boysen's richly informed liner notes confect a final elegance. Highest recommendation and, as noted, to live with. **Adrian Corleonis**

This article originally appeared in Issue 41:6 (July/Aug 2018) of *Fanfare* Magazine.