

# *Parallels*

*Alexander Ffinch*



# Parallels

Gustav Holst (1874-1934), arr. Thomas Trotter

1. **Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity from  
The Planets Op. 32** 8:34

Florence Price (1887-1953)

**Suite No.1 for Organ**

2. I. Fantasy 4:30  
3. II. Fughetta 2:31  
4. III. Air 3:23  
5. IV. Toccato 3:04

Chris Martin (b.1977), arr. Alexander Ffinch

6. **Paradise** 3:43

Edward Elgar (1857-1934), arr. William H. Harris

7. **Nimrod from Enigma Variations** 3:34

Dan Locklair (b.1949)

**Rubrics**

- |          |   |      |
|----------|---|------|
| 8. I.    | ["The ancient praise-shout,] 'Halleluja', has been restored ... " | 2:20 |
| 9. II.   | "Silence may be kept"   | 3:29 |
| 10. III. | " ... and thanksgivings may follow."                              | 2:01 |
| 11. IV.  | "The Peace may be exchanged."                                     | 3:07 |
| 12. V.   | "The people respond - Amen!"                                      | 2:09 |

Edward Elgar

- |     |   |      |
|-----|---|------|
| 13. | <b>Pomp and Circumstance March No.1</b><br>arr. Edwin H. Lemare | 6:37 |
| 14. | <b>Chanson de Matin</b> arr. Herbert Brewer                     | 3:17 |

Leon Boëllmann (1862-1897)

**Suite Gothique**

- |          |                       |      |
|----------|-----------------------|------|
| 15. I.   | Introduction - Choral | 2:20 |
| 16. II.  | Menuet Gothique       | 3:15 |
| 17. III. | Prière à Notre Dame   | 4:59 |
| 18. IV.  | Toccata               | 4:15 |

Total playing time	68:00
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*Alexander Ffinch, organ*

## *Florence Beatrice Price (1887-1953)*

### *Suite No.1 for Organ*

Florence Beatrice Price was the first African-American woman to receive international recognition as a classical composer. Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, her father was a dentist whose clients included the state governor. Her mother was an elementary school teacher who taught Florence to play the piano. Although raised in a sophisticated middle class Presbyterian home, she was inevitably influenced by the Southern Black culture of her community. Furthermore, she became acquainted with many leading African-Americans who visited her family's home, including the abolitionist Frederick Douglass, the virtuoso pianist Blind Tom (Thomas Greene Wiggins), and the tenor Roland Hayes.

She enrolled in 1903 at the New England Conservatory of Music, majoring in organ and minoring in piano pedagogy. She studied theory and composition with noted composer George Chadwick. After graduation, she returned to Arkansas to teach at the Cotton Plant-Arkadelphia Academy (1906-1907), and at Shorter College (1907-1910) in North Little Rock. From 1910-1912 she was head of the music department at Clark University in Atlanta. In 1912, she married a lawyer, Thomas J. Price, and returned to Little Rock. Here she taught piano and found time to compose while being a wife and mother to three children. She won a second place tie in *Opportunity* magazine's Holstein Award

in 1926 for *In the Land O' Cotton* for piano. Her acquaintance with this magazine and her choice of subject for this piano work show her rising interest in Black heritage. However, she was denied membership in the Arkansas Music Teachers Association due to her race.

After a brutal lynching in her neighborhood, many of Little Rock's professional Blacks moved north. In 1927 she and her family settled in Chicago, where she established her reputation as a concert organist and pianist, studio teacher, and nationally recognized composer. She enrolled at Chicago Musical College and The American Conservatory studying composition with Carl Busch, Wesley LaViolette, and Arthur Olaf Anderson.

Her first major breakthrough as a composer was in 1932 when she won first prize in the Wanamaker Music Composition Contest for *Symphony No. 1 in E Minor* (1931), which premiered at the Chicago World's Fair by the Chicago Symphony (1933). This concert was the first performance of a composition by a Black woman by a major orchestra. The concert sold out, and prominent persons attended, including George Gershwin and Adlai Stevenson. Other works awarded prizes and honorable mention in the 1931-32 Wanamaker contests included her *Cotton Dance* for piano, her piano *Sonata in E Minor*, piano *Fantasie Nègre*, and her orchestral *Ethiopia's Shadow in America*.

The next year her *Piano Concerto in One Movement* was performed by Margaret Bonds and the Woman's Symphony Orchestra

of Chicago. The Michigan W. P. A. Orchestra premiered her *Symphony No. 3 in C Minor* in 1940 with Eleanor Roosevelt attending. Sir John Barbirolli commissioned a string orchestra work, *Five Folksongs in Counterpoint*, which he premiered with the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, England, in 1952.

In Chicago Price found a culturally active African-American community. Many churches and theatres sponsored concerts, which were routinely reviewed in the important Black newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*. She joined the Chicago Club of Women Organists in 1935, and may have premiered her *Suite No 1* for organ at their concert at Grace Episcopal Church on April 6, 1942.

During this period, from the late 1920s through 1950, she became increasingly interested in African-American musical materials. Her musical style is otherwise conservative, reflecting the romantic, nationalist style of the 1920s - 1940s, as influenced by Antonin Dvorak. But within traditional European forms (sonata allegro, concerto, song forms, and fugue), she frequently used African-American elements including Spiritual-like melodies based on pentatonic scales and descending motion, Juba syncopated rhythms, and jazz harmonies and rhythms.

Hence in the *Suite*, she composed pentatonic descending melodies for all movements. The Fantasy presents such a theme at the outset in a free structure. While the tonal design is typical of European works (tonic-dominant-tonic tonal centers), the

chords used are like those of sophisticated jazz. The second movement is a standard European short fugue complete with stretto and pedal point, with the subject drawn from the Spiritual “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.” The third movement is like a jazz ballad, based on a theme similar to another Spiritual “Let Us Break Bread Together.” The final movement is a showpiece of technique, again with pentatonic descending tunes, and the use of a juba bass in the pedal for the second theme. The second section features a chromatic theme descending and ascending before returning to a short recapitulation of the opening theme.

Price died June 3, 1953, of a cerebral hemorrhage, prior to a planned trip to England and France, intending to attend the premiere of her orchestral work by the Hallé Orchestra.

*Calvert Johnson*



*Florence Beatrice Price*

# Arrangements

I was first aware of how amazing the art of organ transcription is in performance as a student attending Birmingham Town Hall. And to this day, audiences in the City of Birmingham are so fortunate to be dazzled each week by their legendary City Organist, Thomas Trotter, and his fantastic *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity* transcription appears on this disc appears by his kind permission. Furthermore, this year Gustav Holst's Cheltenham roots are very much relevant because 2024 is the 150th anniversary year of the composer's birth. I am immensely grateful I can include this arrangement along with some others by his great contemporary Edward Elgar.

Holst's *The Planets* (1916) was composed 15 years after *Enigma Variations* (1899) and demonstrates similarities in its overall structure. Furthermore, Edwin H Lemare's classic *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1* arrangement reflects distinct similarities with *Jupiter* too where both reveal 'big' tunes in their central 'trio' sections. These melodies are frequently sung to words: '*Land of Hope and Glory*' which forms the flag-flying finale to the BBC Proms last night;



Gustav Holst



and ‘*I Vow to Thee my County*’ which is a hymn to which Holst’s melody is set. As far as the other items are concerned, Elgar’s *Chanson de Matin* brightens any grey morning with its charming simplicity and the profundity of *Nimrod* forms a stirring prelude to a solemn occasion.

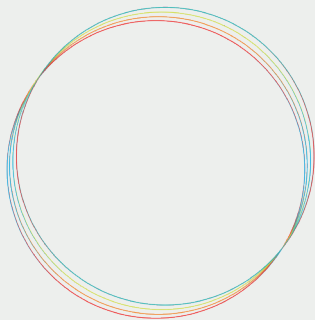


Gustav Holst’s piano at the Holst Victorian House  
copyright Richard McCleery courtesy of Cheltenham  
Camera Club.

With my own Coldplay *Paradise* arrangement however, I believe I may have ventured into less well-discovered territory and this arrangement is included by the stellar band’s kind permission. I was asked to both arrange and play the song in 2021 and once I

began to make some sketches, I realized that the colossal stature and subliminal aura of the piece transfers very well indeed onto the organ. So using some idiomatic styles of writing for manuals and pedals, I have been able to translate the walls of texture and exchange of forces contained in the song. It was an exciting process and the result was immediately well-received.

Today, one of my daily duties is to play to 700 students at the start of their working day. I am facing a generation with the power to instantly access the music they want to at any time and trust me, it's not likely to be original organ music! So, to capture their attention, I have enjoyed turning to classical and some pop/rock arrangements to present music they hear elsewhere. *Parallels* includes some of these arrangements therefore to contrast three original works which I also of course play (along with a great many others) to my captive student audience.



# Dan Locklair on **Rubrics**

**AF:** *What is it that makes Rubrics sound ‘American’?*

**DL:** I wish I knew! It has always been a mystery to me how, with composers using the same 12 pitches over hundreds of years, not only can an individual composer’s musical personality most often be discerned, but also the fingerprints of the nationality of that composer. It is a mystery, but it is true. However, like being asked to describe your own human personality, the question is best posed to another individual who knows the person. I feel the same is true about a composer’s musical personality. Not to cop out on this one, but you, for instance, would be far more able to accurately answer this question than I would.

**AF:** *When you were commissioned to write Rubrics by the Organ Artists Series of Pittsburgh for its tenth anniversary season in 1988, what led you to choose this title?*

**DL:** More often than not, I like to have a piece titled before I begin composing it. I have always been inspired by extra-musical stimuli. I believe that short, concise titles for compositions are the best, for they can be more easily remembered. So, I give a good deal of thought to a title. A good title provides me with inspiration and gives both the performer and listener insight into the composition itself. Since the extra-musical stimulus for *Rubrics* was the liturgical instructions found in the small print of

the Episcopal *The Book of Common Prayer* – the rubrics – the title for the organ suite, *Rubrics*, seemed to me to be an ideal choice.

**AF:** *What do you mean by the term “Liturgical Suite”?*

**DL:** From the start I wanted *Rubrics* to be, in part or whole, a composition that could be used in a service and/or performed in a recital. Since the composition became a collection of five varied pieces, with two of them being dance-like, the term “suite” seemed appropriate. Since a liturgical rubric inspired each of the five movements, I thought it also appropriate that both words – “liturgical suite” – be a part of the subtitle of the piece.

**AF:** *Would you say the outer movements reflect a “minimalist” style?*

**DL:** I don’t think so. The first and fifth movements that you mention are, to be sure, highly rhythmic and energetic. But neither features the over-extended ostinati that are an unmistakable trait of minimalism, especially early minimalism. Too, the musical material in a minimalist piece tends to unfold gradually in a non-developmental way over a long time-span. My only organ work that was somewhat inspired by minimalism is *Agonies and Ecstasies*, the fifth and final movement from my 1978 five-movement composition entitled, *INVENTIONS for organ* (<https://youtu.be/7sAJLaO9dcs>). That said, though, I have always attributed the hypnotic repetition in that movement more to early music than to minimalism. Composed ten years before *Rubrics*, the shape of *INVENTIONS* actually inspired the shape

of *Rubrics*. Although *INVENTIONS* is primarily a concert piece, its five movements, along with its use of limited pitch material and the freedom to excerpt and shift movements around, really influenced *Rubrics*.

**AF:** *Could you tell us how ‘silence’ is demonstrated by sound in the second movement?*

**DL:** The second movement is a sudden and gentle contrast to the full and vibrant first movement. The calming nature of two soft 8’ flutes, both as metered soloist and accompaniment to each other, and in the tranquility of echoing one another in free meter, shapes this movement. At the same time, there are a number of rests in the piece, a silent trait not in plentiful supply in the opening movement! To be sure, it is impossible to have true silence when music is sounded. But the illusion of silence can be suggested, especially with the help of soft flutes and inspirational words like “Silence may be kept.”

**AF:** *Does the Trumpet Tune-style third movement have an English ancestor?*

**DL:** Unlike so many of those well-known and stately organ trumpet tunes, this one is a fast, sassy dance piece. To be sure, much of its primary melodic material is carried by a trumpet stop, thereby, I suppose, making it a trumpet tune. But my primary intention in this movement was to create a trio of equal voices based on limited pitch material. Performers likely see it as the trickiest movement of *Rubrics*, owing both to its ever-

changing meters and virtuosic nature. My hope is that it is seen and heard as a movement that offers an exuberant outpouring of thanksgiving.

**AF:** *Are there any stories to tell about the fourth movement?*

**DL:** Peter Hardwick, writing in *The Diapason* some years back, called *Rubrics* “one of the most frequently played organ works by an American composer.” It is my belief that its fourth movement, *The Peace May Be Exchanged*, is the primary reason for that. Certainly the most excerpted movement of the entire suite, it is regularly performed throughout the world in recital, worship services, weddings and at numerous high profile events. Such events have included the Washington National Cathedral funeral services of U.S. Presidents Ronald Reagan in 2004 and George H.W. Bush in 2018, as well as the January 2009 Martin Luther King Jr. service, in that same venue, during the Presidential Inauguration of President Barack Obama. In those instances it is a piece that seems to “reach across the aisle” (as politicians often say)! A peaceful aria that features the unique sound of the 8’ diapason stop, that solo color is accompanied by the ethereal sound of the organ’s celeste strings. Double pedaling, coupled to the strings’ manual, is a constant throughout the movement, helping not only support a rich harmonic backdrop for the aria, but also offering an opportunity for organists to keep both feet busy! Not often stated in program notes about the piece, but, to me, the most important extra- musical element of the piece, beyond its descriptive rubric, is the deeply personal inspiration

behind its notes. That was my father, Archie Greer Locklair (1916-1986), who died only two years before the composition of *Rubrics*, and whose radiance and goodness I tried to capture in this movement.

**AF:** *Are your organ registration directions suggestions or (like French repertoire) fixed?*

**DL:** Suggestions. One of the strengths of *Rubrics* is that it can be performed on organs of any size or style, with or without a combination action. In my organ works I always offer registration suggestions. But, since every organ is different, those suggestions will often need to be amended and/or varied as each performer sees fit. In the case of the fourth movement, though, I do like to encourage that the solo diapason be used. However, if an organ has an overly rich diapason that doesn't balance well with the strings, some players have chosen to use a solo flute. I have no problem with that at all for, first and foremost, it is paramount to me that my music be played musically. Sensitivity and good taste in registration are important components of that.

**AF:** *What makes Rubrics popular among your many other fantastic compositions?*

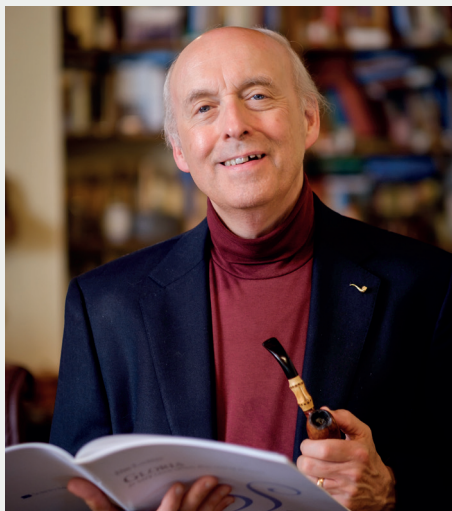
**DL:** It is so hard to know what makes one piece resonate widely with performers and audiences and another, of equal craft and inspiration, does not. I find it to be a double-edged sword. On the

one hand, I am thoroughly delighted that organists are drawn to *Rubrics*, but I hope that they might also seek out other works from my substantial organ catalog. As with all my compositions and, here, specifically with *Rubrics*, I like to think that the piece has something enduring say. None of its five movements are overly lengthy, none involve much registration change within the movements, each involves a good technical challenge (but not over the top), and the piece, in part or whole, is useful within many performance contexts. But that is all just a guess. So, another mystery! What I do know with certainty, though, is that when a composition is successful, it is because performers have believed in it, have championed it and played it often. While too numerous to name all who have done that with *Rubrics*, the American organists Mary Preston, Barbara Harbach and Marilyn Keiser have to be especially cited. Mary gave the piece its World Premiere and Barbara was the first to record it commercially. But no one performer has done more to popularize *Rubrics* in America and England (at the 1993 Southern Cathedral's Festival) than Marilyn Keiser. One of America's most beloved and outstanding organists and teachers, dear friend Marilyn has played *Rubrics* far and wide and has recorded it twice. Now you! I genuinely believe that the significant role of performers as advocates for a composer and/or a particular piece cannot be over-emphasized. It is the valued work of those performers that help a composition to enter the repertory and, that is a most gratifying gift for the composer.



**AF:** *The organ has sometimes been called ‘King of Instruments’. How would you say it lives up to this in the music of today?*

**DL:** The fact that this statement has been uttered by so many of Western music’s greatest composers and musicians only attests to its truth. And we have J.S. Bach! Like the orchestra, the organ contains an infinite amount of color and expressive possibilities. There is just no single instrument on the planet to equal it. Your fine recording only attests to that fact!



Dan Locklair

## Leon Boëllmann (1862-1897)

### *Suite Gothique*

The *Suite Gothique* of 1895 is Leon Boëllmann's most celebrated work. The title is something of a mystery with the word 'Gothic' actually posing a question rather than referring to the piece's specific stylistic content. The life-story of the composer on the other hand reads like the synopsis of a great Romantic novel, and while there may be grounds to explore a truly gothic connection here, these pages will not afford me the space to discuss at greater length.

The traditional and accepted view is that Boëllmann's ideas in *Suite Gothique* are more likely to have found origin within the vastness of gothic structure than gothic novels. He in any case has earned a significant place among Romantic Parisian contemporaries with the piece, which is still largely responsible for his popularity today. Originally from Alsace, Boëllmann's talents were spotted by the French Organist Eugène Gigout who encouraged and supported him. He went on to win first prizes in piano, organ, counterpoint, fugue, plainsong, and composition at the celebrated Institution Royale de Musique Classique et Religieuse otherwise known as École de Niedermeyer, a prestigious Parisian school where big names such as Fauré had also been a pupil and Saint-Saëns no doubt an influential teacher!

In *Suite Gothique* the finely crafted *Introduction-Choral* and *Menuet Gothique* with both their arresting harmonies and antiphonal effects, the candle-lit devotion of *Prière à Notre Dame* and the ominous, spinetingling *Toccata* are all conceived on a grand scale for the full palette of organ tone and colour. As these dramatic tableaux unfold, my imagination is coaxed by some of the most successfully idiomatic writing of the repertoire. For me, there is no escaping a conflict between light and darkness here. When the blaze of the final chord of the *Toccata* ends we understand exactly why *Suite Gothique* is both one of the organ's best-loved works and one that will always stand the test of time.



Léon Boëllmann at the organ of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul

# Alexander Ffinch

Alexander Ffinch studied at the Royal College of Music, and was later organ scholar of Keble College, Oxford where he subsequently became a pupil of Thomas Trotter. He was resident organist at Lancaster Town Hall where he gave over 100 recitals in the 1990's and gained recognition in the St Albans Interpretation Competition in 1999. He continues to perform extensively in UK, Europe, USA, and Asia.

He was appointed College Organist of Cheltenham College in 2004, after a three-year tenure as Director of Music at St Catharine's College, Cambridge and is responsible for the daily organ playing in the College Chapel as well as accompanying the Choirs. Throughout his time at Cheltenham, he has continued to give recitals regularly. He has featured in Cheltenham International Music Festival and on BBC Radio 3 broadcasts as organist.

In 2017, Alexander oversaw the second complete rebuild of the College organ by Harrison and Harrison, and he continues to promote opportunities for both the College organ pupils as well as visiting recitalists. 2019 saw the release of the album *Transformations* (DDA 25193) which includes a critically acclaimed recording of Liszt's 'Ad nos' and the world premiere recording of *The Dancing Pipes* by Jonathan Dove.

Throughout 2020/21, Alexander was fortunate to be able to perform online regularly. He gave the monthly Cheltenham College Lunchtime Live Organ Recital and played for many livestream events during this time. 2024 will see the release of a second album *Parallels (DDX 21112)* which places another commercially unrecorded work alongside more familiar and popular repertoire.

[www.alexanderffinch.co.uk](http://www.alexanderffinch.co.uk)



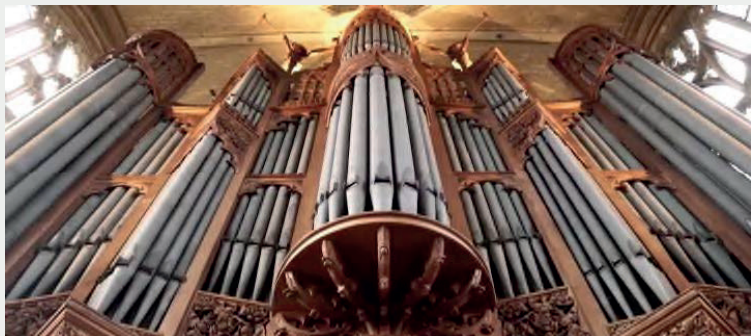
Alexander Ffinch

# *The Organ*

At the heart of Cheltenham College Chapel lies the College organ, originally built in 1897 by Norman & Beard. The case was designed by Henry Prothero, architect of the Chapel. The organ was rebuilt and extended by Harrison & Harrison in 1930 and was last restored with minor alterations in 1976. In 2013, a 32-foot 'Double Ophicleide' stop was added.

The organ has been excellently maintained by Harrison & Harrison since the last rebuild, but the time was right for the entire instrument to be taken apart in 2017 for major restoration, which was again undertaken by Harrison & Harrison.

The complete console, soundboards, wind system and pipework were all removed from the organ case and moved to Durham for overhaul, reworking and releathering before being reinstalled. Some pipework was removed and cleaned onsite. The organ has retained all of its valuable historical features and, like its larger cousin at King's College, Cambridge, which has also been newly and successfully restored, it will certainly remain one of the finest examples of British organ building of the period.



*The Cheltenham College organ*

# Organ Specifications

## PEDAL ORGAN

1. Open Wood	16'
2. Violone (from 21)	16'
3. Sub Bass	16'
* 4. Principal (from 21)	8'
5. Flute (from 3)	8'
* 6. Fifteenth	4'
* 7. Mixture 19.22	II
# 8. Double Ophicleide	32'
† 9. Ophicleide	16'
10. Trumpet (from 42)	16'
* 11. Clarion (from 42)	8'
* 12. Oct. Clarion (from 42)	4'
<i>I. Choir to Pedal</i>	
<i>II. Great to Pedal</i>	
<i>III. Swell to Pedal</i>	

## CHOIR ORGAN

13. Hohl Flute	8'
14. Viole d'Orchestre	8'
15. Wald Flute	4'
* 16. Nazard	22/3'
* 17. Piccolo	2
* 18. Tierce	13/5"
* 19. Mixture 19.22	II'
20. Clarinet	8'
<i>IV. Tremulant</i>	
<i>V. Octave</i>	
<i>VI. Sub Octave</i>	
<i>VII. Unison Off</i>	
<i>VIII. Swell to Choir</i>	

## GREAT ORGAN

21. Double Open Diapason	16'
22. Large Open Diapason	8'
23. Small Open Diapason	8'
24. Claribel Flute	8'
25. Octave	4'
26. Harmonic Flute	4'
27. Octave Quint	22/3'
28. Super Octave	2'
† 29. Sesquialtera 12.17	II
† 30. Mixture (12)15.19.22	III-IV
† 31. Tromba	8'
† 32. Octave Tromba	4'
<i>IX. Reeds on Choir</i>	
<i>X. Choir to Great</i>	
<i>XI. Swell to Great</i>	

## ACCESSORIES

Eight general pistons and general cancel Six foot pistons to Pedal Organ  
 Five pistons to Choir  
 Organ Six pistons to Great Organ  
 Six pistons to Swell Organ (duplicated by foot pistons)  
 Stepper, operating general pistons in sequence  
 16 divisional and 128 general memory levels  
 Reversible foot pistons: *II, XI & 8*  
 Combination couplers: *Great and Pedal pistons; general foot pistons* Balanced expression pedals to the Choir and Swell organs  
 Reversible foot pistons: *II, XI & 8*  
 Combination coupler: *Great and Pedal pistons*  
 Balanced expression pedals to the Choir and Swell organs  
 \* 1976 † revoiced 2000 # revoiced 2013  
 The manual compass is 58 notes; the pedal 30 notes  
 The actions are electro-pneumatic

## SWELL ORGAN

33. Open Diapason	8'
34. Lieblich Gedackt	8'
35. Salicional	8'
36. Voix Céleste	8'
37. Gemshorn	4'
38. Lieblich Flute	4'
* 39. Fifteenth	2'
40. Mixture 22.26.29	III
41. Oboe	8'
<i>XII. Tremulant</i>	
42. Double Trumpet	16'
43. Trumpet	8'
44. Clarion	4'
<i>XIII. Octave</i>	
<i>XIV. Sub Octave</i>	



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## ALSO AVAILABLE



### TRANSFORMATIONS

Alexander Ffinch, organ

Jongen, Dove, Liszt

**DDA 25193**

Gramophone

*“Richly detailed, powerfully driven and suitably extrovert performance... a very fine recording.” —Marc Rochester*

The Organ

*“This is one of the finest recordings of an organ I have heard for some time, the microphone placing being absolutely perfect. ffinch’s interpretative insight is splendid – genuine performances from a manifestly gifted musician. This disc is very strongly recommended.” (FIVE STARS)” —Robert Matthew-Walker*

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