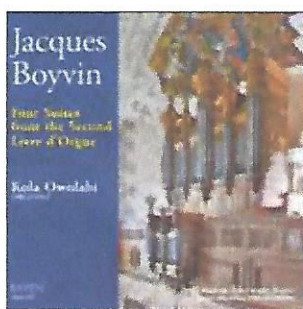


Russian bass tone (the score goes down to low B flat, below the staff), the inherent understanding of the nature of this work is comprehensively revealed in this compelling account. One might suggest, entirely free from liturgical considerations, a further recording of Shostakovich's Opus 88 Revolutionary Choruses for large mixed choir (also unaccompanied) – a Soviet response to the Russian Orthodoxy of the country's traditional liturgy. But this record warrants as strong recommendation. Robert Matthew-Walker



Jacques Boyvin

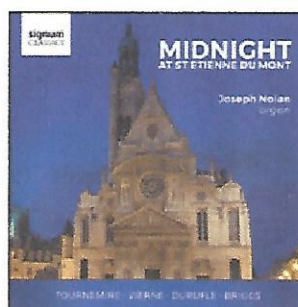
Four Suites from the Second Organ Book
Kola Owolabi, at the 1732 Andreas Silberman Organ, Saint-Maurice Abbey Church, Ebermunster
★★★[★] Raven OAR 997 [C.65']

It is difficult to over-praise the musical interest and significance of this issue. The music will largely be unknown to most organists for the works of the late 17th-century composer Jacques Boyvin (c.1653-1706), having been born around thirty years before JS Bach and Handel, has naturally been overshadowed by his more eminent successors, but we must

applaud the enterprise of both Kola Owolabi and the Raven company for producing such an excellent and musically worthwhile issue as this.

These four suites, of broadly similar construction, each ends with a 'Grand Dialogue' movement (the longest, by far, movement in the various Suites), and the range of expression, including much in the way of musical characterisation, that Boyvin is able to convey (especially through Dr Owolabi's fine performances) is quite remarkable – very French, as one might expect, but equally quite distinctive, even in the relatively brief fugal movements (the longest one of the four is two minutes). Boyvin was born in Paris around 1650 – some sources claim *circa* 1649) and died in Rouen on June 30th, 1706. Having been tenured of the organ of Quinze-Vingts in Paris, he was appointed organist of the cathedral of Rouen in 1674, the organ of which was rebuilt by Clicquot in 1689. As such, his organ music has clearly been unfairly overshadowed by his North European contemporaries and successors – as this finely-produced CD demonstrates – and one can only urge this most important issue to all musicians and music-lovers attracted to the music of this period. It is well worth the attention of every lover of the organ and its repertoire.

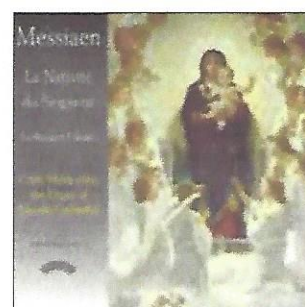
Robert Matthew-Walker



Midnight at St Etienne du Mont

Music by Tournemire, Duruflé, Vierne and David Briggs
(Le tombeau de Duruflé)
Joseph Nolan organ of St Etienne du Mont, Paris
★★★★ Signum SIGCD 470 [78'35"]

This cleverly-planned and exceptionally well-filled CD offers a selection of organ music eminently well-chosen to display the characteristics of the St Etienne instrument. Ate Orga contributes his customarily most informative booklet notes, which trace the relationships between the composers, the organ and the church itself – details which enhance the intelligence that has manifestly gone into the planning of this CD. With regard to the musical results, I found myself enthralled, and particularly impressed with David Briggs's memorial piece *Le tombeau de Duruflé*. A recording much to be prized as much for its intelligent planning and unusual repertoire as for the musicianship Joseph Nolan displays throughout. Robert Matthew-Walker



Messiaen: *Le banquet céleste; La Nativité du Seigneur*
Colin Walsh, organ of Lincoln Cathedral
★★★★ Priory PRCD 1194 [C.64']

We are not short of fine recordings of Messiaen's organ works – any more than we are of the symphonies of Brahms – but new recordings of those undoubted masterworks are always welcome in so far as they shed fresh light and perspective on the music. After all, there is often more than one way to reveal a composer's genius, and frequently an intelligent approach can demonstrate aspects of the music which are not so frequently encountered but which, in themselves, are as valid as more regularly accepted characteristics.

This is not to say that Colin Walsh's approach to Messiaen's music runs in any way counter to the established norms (in many ways, established by the composer himself), but in terms of tempo relationships, phrasing, and – indeed – registration, his performances are every bit as enthralling, moving and recommendable to those which have become familiar through long association.