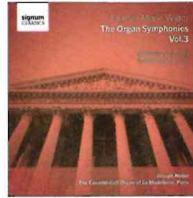
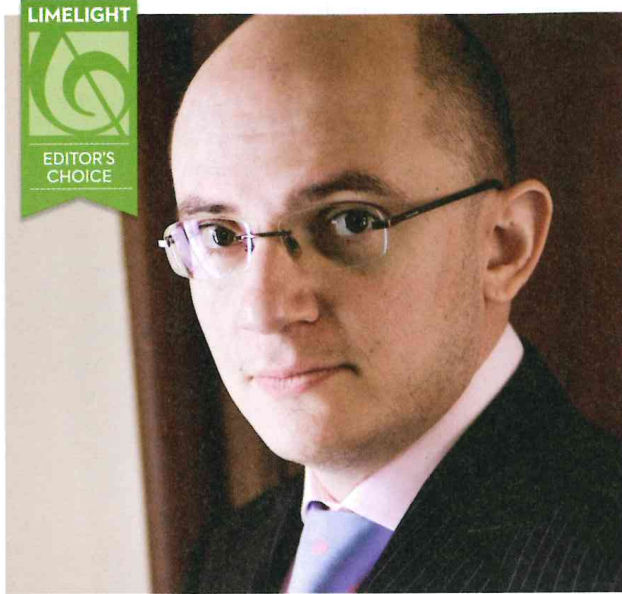


# Instrumental



**Widor**  
**Organ Symphonies Nos 3 & 4**  
 Joseph Nolan *org*  
 SIGNUM CLASSICS SIGCD334



## TOPPING OUT THAT TOCCATA

Nolan proves there's more to Widor than that wedding fave

Those of you who still haven't cottoned onto the idea that Widor wrote a hell of a lot of brilliant organ music, most of it far superior to that Toccata, really need to hear this third volume in UK-born Perth-based organist Joseph Nolan's recordings of Widor's ten organ symphonies, part of his traversal of the composer's complete works for organ.

Like the previous two highly acclaimed volumes, this one's been recorded on the magnificent Cavaillé-Coll organ of La Madeleine, Paris. Cavaillé-Coll was a friend of Widor's and the composer's music is inextricably linked to his instruments, which Widor played throughout his career.

The four organ symphonies which comprise Opus 13 were first published in 1872 and later dedicated to Cavaillé-Coll. Taken together, the Symphony No 3 in E Minor and the Symphony No 4 in F Minor form a contrasting diptych, the more overt romanticism of the first contrasting with the neo-Baroque qualities of the second. Both however are equally imbued with delicacy and drama – qualities that are brought to the fore by Nolan with such nuance and insight that you feel you learn more about Widor by listening to these performances than reading any number of biographies of the composer.

The Third Symphony opens with a grand *Prélude* whose descending chromatic figures

unwrap an ominous sculptural edifice which opens out to the sunshine of a delicate *Minuetto* before a thunderous triumphal *Marcia* is itself overcome, like Mars by Venus, by an exquisitely diffuse *Adagio*. A toccata-like *Finale* brings proceedings to a close in skeins of swirling arpeggios.

The Fourth Symphony opens in equally grand fashion with a French-overture style *Toccata*, propelled forward by dotted rhythms and roulades, leading to a sensitively-lit four-part fugue the complexity of which contrasts sharply with an *Andante cantabile* of disarming sweetness and simplicity. Birds hopping amid fretwork and arabesques characterise the following *Scherzo*, which has its own faux-naïve pendant in the form of a placid *Adagio*. The symphony ends as grandly as it began with a massive, orchestrally-conceived *Finale*.

Nolan again proves himself to be every bit as adept at orchestration as Widor, his choice of stops and registrations evincing a palette designed to both clarify and delight. The same could be said of his phrasing and articulation, as tasteful in the conception as they are perfect in the execution. With some of the finest Widor playing on disc, this is a hugely pleasurable release and I look forward to the next volume with much anticipation. **WY**

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 ”