



Charles-Marie Widor
Organ Symphonies Nos 7 & 8
 Joseph Nolan *org*
 SIGNUM CLASSICS SIGCD337 (2CD)
 ★★★★★

Australian organist pulls out all the stops for his latest recording

This is volume four in Joseph Nolan's widely acclaimed journey through the complete organ works of Charles-Marie Widor. The Perth organist's high standards show no signs of slipping, with magnificent accounts of Symphonies Nos 7 and 8.

Widor wrote these two symphonies between 1886 and 1887. These and the previous two (published 1879) comprise the composer's Opus 42, which after its initial publication in 1887 was to go through a further five editions. Massive in their structure and conception, 7 and 8 are more consciously symphonic in a late-Romantic sense and less suite-like than some of the earlier symphonies.

Nolan, formerly of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal, St. James' Palace and, Master of Music at St. George's Cathedral Perth, was recently made Associate Conductor and Head of Chorus at WA Opera. It's an appointment that will not only further his development, but allow him to exercise an aural imagination which thrives on maximising colour and texture in order to elucidate line and form – as he does here.

Again playing the superb organ of La Madeleine in Paris, which has no less than 60 stops and 4426 pipes, Nolan bathes the dramatic opening *Moderato* of the A Minor Symphony No 7 in a stained glass light of glowing registrations. He then makes his way to the astonishing Finale via movements such as the *Allegro non troppo*, the pianistically-conceived nature of which Ates Orga alludes to in the booklet notes, and a sublime *Largo*. Both feature playing of enormous subtlety and technical control.

The Symphony No 8 in B Major is likewise full of colour and nuance, qualities that are most readily apparent in the lyrical second movement. But if the fourth movement *Passacaglia* encapsulates Nolan's determination to achieve maximum cohesion through maximum differentiation, it's in the unbridled energy of the minor key finale that we find him at his most dramatically persuasive. **WY**