

# CD Reviews

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## St★Recording

### The organ of Saint Sulpice, Paris

Joseph Nolan  
SIGNUM SIGCD 167 72'41"

The five manual Cavaillé-Coll in St Sulpice is a fine vehicle for the French and German romantic repertoire but a more challenging choice for works by Elgar and Thalben-Ball. Joseph Nolan's approach to Böellmann's *Suite Gothique* is monumental and impressive. Tempi are on the slow side, which allows the music greater breadth and sensitivity, with a softly lyrical *Priere*. The *Toccata* comes across as a far more symphonic work than a more

extrovert and possibly rushed tempi would have allowed.

This monumentality acts as a fine balance to Liszt's *Fantasie & Fuge uber den Chorale Ad nos, ad salutarem undam*. Here the acoustic is allowed to come into its own and there is a fine sense of being in St Sulpice with the onslaught of the work and the sheer excitement of the playing. The end of the work is allowed to have its head and the climax is almost overwhelming.

Thalben-Ball's *Toccata Beorma* was written for the University of Birmingham in 1972, and is probably the least known piece on the disc. *Poema* was written a



few years later and the two published in 1980. Both pieces are untypical of Thalben-Ball's more conservative writing but are here very much at home with the European works, for there is more than a touch of French organ music about the scores. The gentle, hypnotic *Poema* leads to a more strident and enthusiastic *Toccata*.

For both, Joseph Nolan is able to convince us that they are not out of place in what might be assumed to be more prestigious company.

Elgar's Second Sonata sits very comfortably on the Cavaillé-Coll. Given its brass band and orchestral origin it yields itself to a broad brush approach where registration is concerned and is here given a breadth of colour and tone which adds to its attraction.

Joseph Nolan may have moved to Australia but his concert calendar and recordings like this help to keep us all in touch with a very fine performer.  
**Brian Hick**