

**Louis Vierne: Organ Symphonies op. 47
& op. 59**

aud 92.676

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Gramophone (Malcolm Riley - 2014.09.01)

GRAMOPHONE

This third volume concludes Hans Eberhard Ross's magisterial survey of Vierne's six organ symphonies, recorded in 2013 on his 'home' organ, the glorious Goll four-manual instrument in St Martin's Church, Memmingen, west Bavaria. Designed with a symphonic tonal palette, it has sufficient aural heft to overwhelm the listener while still containing enough soothing tone-colours for Vierne's more tender moments. This is music that draws one in, written in a deeply chromatic idiom, full of turmoil and despair; demonic at times and certainly sardonic.

Ross has no technical problems with these fearsomely complex scores, rattling through them with aplomb and authority. Another bonus is that he uses the recent edition by Laukvik and Sanger, and – in the case of the Fifth Symphony – reference to the copy marked up by the work's dedicatee, Joseph Bonnet. This, the longest of the six, is the narrative of a hypersensitive man who suffered many personal setbacks.

The Sixth Symphony has a sunnier disposition. The skittish devilment of the Scherzo provides a welcome pivot between the serenity of the second-movement Aria and the sunken gloom of the Adagio, where Vierne pushes his tonal language to its furthest limit. The exuberance of the finale provides a sonic feast. Above all, Ross succeeds in stressing Vierne's contrapuntal mastery with flair while retaining a strong sense of the Romantic architecture of these huge structures.