

This beautiful piece of music was played as an offertory by several organists at South Norfolk Baptist Church. I remember hearing this played by Gwen Whitehurst. Because of the range of stops available on the Henry Pilcher's Sons pipe organ, it was possible to follow the carefully marked score, indicating which stops to use.

“Cantabile”

-*Cesar Franck* - (1822 - 1890)

An organ is a grand and long-lasting statement by its creator, and music written for the organ often takes inspiration from the abilities of a particular style of organ, or even the work of one organ builder. In Paris during the early nineteenth century Aristide Cavaille-Col was building organs on a monumental, orchestral scale, which inspired an atmosphere in which organ composition blossomed. Names such as Widor, Vierne, Dupré, Duruflé, and of course Franck are all closely associated with the sounds made possible by Cavaille-Col's creations.

Franck marks very carefully in his scores which stops are to be used by the performer, giving a formal appearance to the music. Franck's music, though, is deeply Romantic and he always seeks to make use of the deep sonorities and large dynamic range of Cavaille-Col's instruments. Two striking features of his music are the long, lyrical melodies and subtle harmony.

The *Cantabile* was composed as the middle of his *Trois Pieces*, written in 1878. The other two pieces (*Fantasie in A major* and *Piece Heroique*) are of symphonic scale and length, but the *Cantabile* is shorter and, on first inspection, simpler - a solo voice with chordal accompaniment. We hear distinctive Franck/Cavaille-Col textures, with the foundations of the organ accompanying the trumpet and oboe stops. There is a real feeling of journey through the piece. The opening is warm and welcoming, and the solo line sings clearly, but as the journey continues subtle changes in harmony and texture make the mood darken and the listener is drawn towards the conclusion.

- *Robin Walker, director, The Cantate Choir (Kent)*