

Vierne's *Pièces de fantaisie* Textual corrections

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In 1988 when I undertook to record the complete *Pièces de fantaisie* of Louis Vierne on the organ of Notre-Dame, I was already aware of the numerous textual errors in the printed edition which confront any performer of these works. The majority of these (often obvious) errors could be corrected without too much misgiving and with the exercise of some common sense. However, there remained some doubts that I did not wish to leave uninvestigated. To this end, I researched the manuscript sources which are now available, as well as the proofs of the original edition that had been corrected by Vierne himself. The manuscripts of the first three suites are kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris on shelf NS 18195 (1 to 3); the fourth, like all of the corrected proof copies, was still to be found at the original publishing house of Henri Lemoine.

A reading of the manuscripts alone is insufficient for an in-depth study: For the most part, Vierne, although practically blind, still wrote out his own music. As a result, his uncertain and imprecise methods of notation and, indeed, alteration of the manuscript made the engraver's task more difficult; the latter having to opt for solutions of his own on occasion with the result that the printed proofs could not guarantee to represent the composer's intentions. One should not forget that the organist of Notre-Dame used spectacles with especially thick lenses when he was engaged on the laborious work of copying, and these assured him of reasonably accurate vision only when he was at maximum proximity to the surface of the page; the lines of each stave were very widely spaced and the thick blue crayon that he used accounted for the rest!

Under such conditions, it is easy to understand and account for the multiple errors

that pepper the pages of the four volumes; so many, in fact, that the corrected proofs give us a great deal of wrong information:

In the first place, because of his weak eyesight, Vierne sometimes contributed to the errors when he was correcting certain pages of the proofs by seeking to rectify things that seemed, to him, to be mistakes;

Certain other, anonymous, 'editors' (whose handwriting, nevertheless, permits their identification), had, in spite of the warning of the composer, modified certain things which had been taken into account in the definitive edition. A number of people revised the text, each of them leaving their own imprint on the work, notwithstanding the fact that these precedents had already been indicated!

Louis Vierne, with absolutely implacable logic, always indicated the manuals in the order then current — G.P.R., P.R. and so forth. However, the translator who anglicised these indications was never sure of making the distinction between Vierne's writing of the letter 'P' — upper-case 'P' for the Positif keyboard and lower-case 'p' for the dynamic *piano*. Thus, it is not uncommon to find R.P. (meaning Récit and Positif coupled) in places where it was meant to mean R. *p* (Récit, dynamic *piano*). All indications of this kind are erroneous.

So, here are the corrections; for ease of comprehension I have opted for the following notation:

the numbers, in order, indicate the page (Lemoine Edition), followed by the system, the measure (bar), the beat and then the appropriate

correction. Other indications are r.h. (right hand), l.h. (left hand), G. (Grand-Orgue), P. (Positif), R. (Récit), Péd. (Pédale).

First Suite

Prélude

- English translation of Positif registration should be *Flute 4 ft.*
 3 4 2 3 l.h., third semiquaver upper voice is F# not E natural.
 4 2 1 4 r.h., fourth semiquaver is D not E.

Andantino

- 8 4 3 4 r.h., lower voice, stem missing from B flat.

Caprice

- Pédale registration should read G.R not C.R.
 12 1 1 4 l.h., lower voice A flat is tied across bar line.
 13 4 3 4 r.h., the F is tied to final chord.

Intermezzo

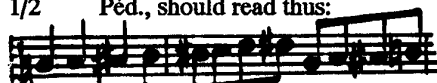
- 15 2 1 4 Péd., note is a B natural.
 18 1 1 4 Péd., note is C not D.

Requiem aeternam

- 19 4 4 1 l.h., upper voice is B not C.
 21 2 2 3 r.h., second quaver is F natural.
 23 1 3 1 Péd., note is not dotted.

Marche nuptiale

- 24 2 6 1 l.h., lowest note of chord is E flat.
 25 2 1 Coupling indication should read G.P.R.
 25 3 2 2 The indication here should be for Positif reeds.
 28 1 1 3 l.h., is two even quaver beats.
 28 3 1/2 Péd., should read thus:



- 30 3 3 1 l.h., add natural in front of the B semibreve.

Second Suite

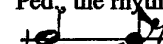
Lamento

- 2 2 3 2/3 l.h., the two Cs should be tied.
 2 2 6 4 l.h., the last quaver is A natural.
 3 2 2 Indication should be R. *p[iano]* and not R.P!
 3 2 4/5 l.h., both the G and E are tied to the following bar.
 4 1 4 3 l.h., C# second quaver is a D#.
 4 3 3/4 r.h., the D natural is tied across bar line.
 4 3 6 2 r.h., rhythm should be the same as the preceding beat.
 4 4 5/6 l.h., C# is tied across bar line.
 5 3 6 There should be a bracket to indicate that both hands are on the Positif.
 5 4 3 This, redundant, R. (*Sw.*) indication was confused with 'r' (= *rit.*).

Sicilienne

- 6 1 2 4 Transfer *cresc.* indication to 6 2 2 4.
 7 1 2 5 r.h., upper voice is A#.
 8 1 2 1 Péd., note is C not A.
 9 1 3 3 l.h., add a natural sign to the D.
 10 4 2 1 Péd., the slur starts here and not on the last beat of the previous bar.

Hymne au soleil


- 11 2 4 3 r.h., the semiquaver notes of this beat are, upwards, F and A not D and F.
 11 3 1 1 l.h., the C minim should not be dotted.
 11 4 3 3 Add *cresc.*
 12 2 1 1 The F naturals in both hands should be F sharps.
 12 5 2 2 r.h., middle note of the chord is a B flat, tied to the next chord.
 13 5 2 Péd., the rhythm of this bar is  (cf. 14 3 3).
 15 3 3 1 This A is a natural, tied to the

16 1 1 note in the previous bar.
r.h., seventh quaver, upper voice,
is G not A.

Feux follets

17 4 l.h., the quavers all lack a staccato
mark.
18 3 2 5 l.h., third demisemiquaver is B
natural.
18 4 1 4 The note A, in both hands, is a
natural.
19 1 3 The word here is *simili*, not *simile*.
19 4 Péd., add staccato marks for entire
system.
20 1 1 Péd., add staccato marks.
20 1 2 All the semiquavers should have a
staccato mark, thus justifying the
word *simili* in the next bar.
20 3 2 2 l.h., third semiquaver is A double
sharp.
22 4 1 1 l.h., the quaver is B# not C#.
22 4 2 2 l.h., first semiquaver of triplet is
B.
25 2 2 5 l.h., second demisemiquaver is C.
26 1 2 3 r.h., first note is B.
26 2 1 3 Seventh note is D#.

Clair de lune


27 4 2 1 Add dynamic marking *f*.
27 4 4 1/2 l.h., the note is A natural.
28 3 4 4 l.h., the upper voice last quaver is
F natural.
29 2 1 1 The dynamic marking here should
be *mf*.
32 4 3 1 Add decrescendo sign from here
to third beat of the next bar.
32 5 3 1/2 r.h., rhythm of melody for these
two beats should be dotted crotchet
(F) and quaver (E flat). 
32 5 3 3 l.h., add an E flat to the second
quaver (A flat).
32 5 4 3 Add *cresc.*
33 3 1 l.h., the D natural should be a
semibreve (*cf.* 27 4 3)
33 4 4 1 r.h., lower note of chord is G.
33 4 5 Add sign indicating crescendo
through the whole bar.

Toccata

Initial dynamic is *fff*.
37 5 3 2 l.h., second semiquaver is A flat.
39 5 2 2 l.h., third semiquaver is G natural
followed by E flat (not natural).

Third Suite

Dédicace

4 1 1 2 l.h., the three notes are C double
sharp, D sharp and D double
sharp (no tie).
4 4 1/2 r.h., the C sharps are tied across
the bar line.
4 4 2/3 l.h., these notes are not slurred.
6 2 5 1 r.h., the second alto quaver is B.
6 4 2 This manual indication should
not be there (confused with *p*
subito).
7 1 4 2 r.h., the alto rhythm is incorrect
and should read:

8 3 3 2 Péd., the A flat should be a semi-
quaver.

Impromptu

11 4 5 l.h., upper note of this chord is G
natural.
12 2 2 1 l.h., upper note of this chord is E
double flat.
12 2 3 Péd., the manuscript gives a
different articulation: the two
notes have staccato dots.
13 1 5 2 There seems to be no reason why
the order of notes is reversed here
and it would seem logical to play
them the same way as in 9 4 3 2.
13 2 4 1 l.h., the second semiquaver is G.

Etoile du soir

19 4 2 3 l.h., the first semiquaver should
be A.
19 4 3/4 l.h., there should be no tie from
the B flat to the B natural.
20 3 7/8 r.h., tie the Ds in the top voice.

Fantômes

- 23 2 3 l.h., correct manual indication is R. (*Sw*).
23 3 4 1 l.h., lower note of this chord is B flat.
25 3 2 1 r.h., second semiquaver is B#.
26 1 2 There are missing manual indications here: first beat r.h., P., l.h., G.R.; at fourth beat both hands play on the Positif.
26 4 1 Rather than G.R.P., this should read G.R. *p*[iano].
27 1 3 4 r.h., add another B to the top of this chord.
27 2 2 Metronome indication should be two bars earlier (27 1 3 1).
28 2 5 1 Péd., the C should be dotted.
28 3 5 1 l.h., the upper voice should be a dotted semibreve D, tied to the previous bar.
28 3 5/6 l.h., there is no slur between the D just corrected (above) and the note in the following bar.

Sur le Rhin

- Name of dedicatee should be MALEINGREAU.
29 2 7 3 l.h., add C minim.
31 2 3 The chords in both hands should be played on the fourth beat (with two crochet rests before).
32 1 1 Manual indication should be R. *p*[iano].
32 2 2 3 r.h., alto voice is G flat.
33 2 2 1 l.h., top note of this chord is B.

Carillon de Westminster

- 37 1 1 1 Péd., B instead of A.
37 1 2 1 l.h., second semiquaver is D.
37 1 4 1 l.h., second semiquaver is D.
37 4 2 Add decrescendo marking through the whole of this bar.
37 4 3 1 Péd., no quaver rest after the pedal note.
42 1 1 2 l.h., and Péd., notation should both be the value of a crochet with a quaver rest on the sixth beat.
42 3 3 2 l.h., this chord, from bottom, should read A D G B.

- 42 3 5 2 l.h., this chord should also read as above.
43 1 3 1 l.h., first semiquaver is C not B.
43 4 5 1 Péd., this octave is B flat.
44 1 2 2 l.h., sixth beat lacks a quaver rest.
44 2 1 2 l.h., this chord should have an A at the bottom.

Fourth Suite

Aubade

- 3 1 2 2 r.h., this chord should have an E flat above the B (cf. 6 2 5).
3 4 6 Coupling indication, Péd. G.P. is missing from under pedal system.

Résignation

- 7 4 4 This coupling indication should be Péd. P.R.
8 1 1 4 l.h., lower note is G natural.
8 4 2 3 Both the manual staves lack pause signs.
8 4 3 r.h., add manual indication R.
11 1 2 4 r.h., second quaver is B#.

Cathédrales

- 12 1 1 Manual indication should be R. *p*[iano].
13 3 2 Add Anches R. (*Reeds Sw.*) to G.P.R. indication.
14 4 2 l.h., the D sharp is a dotted semibreve followed, on the fourth beat, by B and D minims (cf. rhythm 14 3 4).
15 2 4 1 l.h., top note of chord is A.
16 2 1 2 l.h., the quavers are G E G E.
16 4 1 1/2 l.h., tie the G# to the next note (A flat).

Naiades

- 19 1 2 1 l.h., missing note in the middle of this chord is C.
28 3 3 3 There should be no dynamic sign (*f*) under the l.h. semiquavers.

Gargouilles et Chimères

- 29 2 6 1 Péd., Add 'V' accent mark to head of note (cf. 32 1 3 1).
29 3 2 1 ditto.

Handwritten musical notation for the first system, consisting of two staves with various notes and rests.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system, including a circled annotation "R.p. Sw. Ch." and a detailed handwritten note: "R. fonds et au. cu 16 8 u. - sw. Formation style 16-8-4 ft. / ch. Formation style 16-8-4 ft." Below this, it says "P. Fonds 16 8 u.".

Handwritten musical notation for the third system, including annotations "P.R. ch. sw." and "cresc poco a poco".

Sur le Rhin from page 79 of Vièrne's manuscript of the Third Suite.
 Note the misinterpretation of R.p as Sw.Ch. and the style of the composer's notation.

- | | | | | | |
|--------|---|--|--------------------------------|---|--|
| 29 3 2 | 4 | Péd., add staccato dot to the quaver. | 34 3 2 | 6 | Péd., add staccato dot to the note. |
| 29 4 5 | | l.h./r.h., these semibreves should not be dotted. | <i>Les cloches de Hinckley</i> | | |
| 30 2 2 | | Registration indication (G.) should be in parenthesis. | 37 2 5 | 5 | l.h., this note is an E. |
| 31 1 7 | | ditto (R.). | 38 1 2 | | l.h., add a dotted G semibreve in the fourth space and tie it to previous bar. |
| 31 2 4 | | ditto (G.). | 38 4 3 | 3 | r.h., this, above the stave note, is A flat. |
| 31 3 5 | 1 | r.h., lower note of second quaver is G flat. | 39 1 1 | 5 | r.h., this note is F natural. |
| 32 1 1 | 1 | r.h., second semiquaver is E flat. | 39 3 1 | 2 | Péd., this note is a D. |
| 32 1 1 | 1 | l.h., lower note of second quaver is F#. | 39 3 2 | 5 | r.h., second quaver is B natural not A natural. |
| 32 1 3 | 4 | Péd., add staccato dot to the note. | 40 2 3 | 5 | l.h., the crochet should be B natural not A natural. |
| 32 1 4 | 1 | Add dynamic marking <i>f</i> . | 41 2 2/3 | | r.h., top C is tied across the bar. |
| 32 2 1 | | Péd., Add 'V' accent to first beat and staccato dot to quaver. | 42 2 2 | | r.h., small note at end of trill is D natural. |
| 32 2 1 | 4 | The chords in both hands should be identical to those at 29 3 2 4! | 43 3 2 | | l.h. add indication G.P.R. |
| 33 1 6 | | Indications to prepare registrations are missing (<i>cf.</i> 30 2 2). | 44 1 2 | 1 | l.h., middle note of this chord should be E. |
| 33 2 3 | | r.h., lower voice of fourth semiquaver is F double sharp. | 44 3 1 | | Péd., semibreve should not be dotted. |
| 34 3 1 | | Lacks coupling indication Péd. R. below pedal stave. | | | |

Olivier Latry, one of the most outstandingly gifted performers and improvisers amongst the present generation of French organists, was appointed *titulaire* of the cathedral of Notre-Dame in 1985 when aged twenty-three. Initially trained in his birth place of Boulogne-sur-Mer, he subsequently studied with the late Gaston Litaize at the Conservatoire of Saint-Maur, from which he graduated with high distinction and the gold medal for virtuosity in improvisation.

M. Latry visited Australia in 1989 for MIFOH and subsequently gave a recital for the Organ Society of Sydney at the Great Hall of Sydney University in March of that year, as well as playing at the Easter vigil service in Sydney's 'Notre-Dame'.

Olivier Latry already has many disc recordings to his credit, the following being those made on the Grand Organ of Notre-Dame:

WIDOR: Symphonies 5 & 6 BNL 112617
VIERNE: Symphonies 2 & 3 BNL 112741
VIERNE: Pièces de fantaisie BNL 112742 A/B
LITAIZE: Organ works BNL 112768



Olivier Latry at the console of Notre-Dame

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