

Organ Music Notes for March 16th

Prelude: Léon Boëllmann: *Verset de Procession sur «Adoro te»*

Postlude: Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens: *Marche Pontificale*

Since it is Palm Sunday, the organ music focuses on procession and marching, both solemn and triumphant. The prelude comes from Boëllmann's last publication (during his lifetime) 1891, the *Douze Pièces pour Orgue ou Piano-pédalier*. (Twelve Pieces for Organ or Pedal-Piano). Written for his work at the church St. Vincent de Paul in Paris, these pieces could have also been played in the home with an instrument called the Pedal Piano. Much like the organ, this was a piano, either grand or upright, with pedals that either connected to the main action or else operated an independent set of strings and hammers beneath the piano itself. The idea was common with harpsichords back in the Baroque era, for organists to use as practice instruments, though it enjoyed some brief popularity in France in the mid to late 19th century (Saint-Saëns, Alkan, and Gounod also wrote a few select works for it). This solemn processional is based on the Gregorian chant "*Adoro te devote*," or "we devoutly adore thee," a hymn by Thomas Aquinas.

Lemmens was a Belgian organist who toured France in 1852, (interestingly enough, his most famous recital was at St. Vincent de Paul, where Boëllmann would work thirty years later). His most notable contribution to French organ playing was that he played Bach and taught his students Bach, which was not well-known in France at the time. Consequently, the next generation of French organists (including Charles-Marie Widor, a piece of whose I will play on Easter Sunday) developed a more virtuoso technique thanks to his encouragement. The *Marche Pontificale* comes from his first organ sonata written in 1874. It is a grand and celebratory march in D Major, full of fanfares and flourishes.

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