THE SIXTH ORGAN SYMPHONY OF LOUIS VIERNE (1870-1937):

AN ANALYSIS

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By

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Abstract

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Louis Vierne, organist at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris from 1900 until his death, composed six organ symphonies over the course of his career, and it is primarily for these works that he is remembered. The Sixième Symphonie pour Orgue, Op. 59 was composed during the summer of 1930, at which time Vierne also began sketches of a seventh symphony. However, these sketches were never completed, leaving the Sixth Symphony as Vierne’s last contribution to the genre. This project attempts to analyze the Sixth Symphony, proposing the work as the culmination of Vierne’s compositional style as represented in his organ symphonies. Detailed analysis of the work will reveal this style to consist of a synthesis of aspects of impressionism, dodecaphony, traditional elements such as sonata form, and nineteenth century methods such as cyclic treatment and thematic transformation. In a virtuosic masterpiece influenced by both classicism and romanticism, Vierne’s inclusion of aspects of dodecaphony and impressionism marks the entrance of the genre of the organ symphony into the twentieth century.
To my piano teacher,
Miss Elizabeth Pastor

To my organ teacher and mentor,
Dr. Paul Mathew Weber

To my parents,
Edward J. Meixner and Susan R. Meixner

I dedicate this work with gratitude and love.
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CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Biography

Louis Victor Jules Vierne was born in Poitiers, France on 8 October 1870 to Henri Etienne Vierne, editor of a Bonapartist newspaper, and Marie Josephine Gervaz Vierne.¹ The eldest of four children, he was born with cataracts, a handicap that was somewhat rectified by a surgical procedure at age 7.² His family moved to Paris in 1877 and, thanks to the encouragement and assistance of his uncle, Charles Colin, a professor at the Paris Conservatoire, Vierne began his musical studies at the Institution Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles (October 1881), a foundation established to provide job training for the blind.³

In 1890, Vierne was accepted into the Conservatoire, where he entered the studio of the French organist and composer César Franck. However, his time with Franck was short-lived, for the professor died that same year, and the young Vierne suddenly found himself a pupil of the composer and organ virtuoso, Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937).⁴ Vierne excelled under Widor’s rigorous

¹ Steven George Young, “The Life and Work of Louis Vierne, 1870-1937,” DMA diss. (Boston University, 1994), 1.

² Young, 2.

³ Young, 3.

⁴ Young, 7.
tutelage, winning first prize in organ in 1894. This prize launched Vierne into a forty-one-year performance career including approximately 1,750 recitals across Europe as well as in the United States. In 1900 Vierne successfully competed for the position of organist at the Cathedral of Notre Dame, a position he held until his death on 2 June 1937 while giving a recital of his music. His death seems fitting, considering that Vierne had once related while speaking of the purpose of music, “It is beautiful because it is beautiful. I do not know why; but it is so beautiful that I would like to do the same and die immediately after...”

In spite of his prestigious post at Notre Dame and a successful career as a recitalist, Vierne’s life was plagued by hardships both professional and personal. He was repeatedly denied the position of organ professor at the Conservatoire in spite of several years of faithful service to the school. Although he had served as Widor’s assistant for several years, he was passed over for the position three times. A disastrous encounter with a street excavation site in 1906 resulted in a severe leg injury which nearly cost him his career as an organist, while a botched eye-surgery in Switzerland in 1918 left him totally blind. While Vierne was recovering from this surgery, his student Dupré filled in for him at Notre Dame

5 Young, 11.
6 Ibid.
7 Young, 4.
for what became a four-year absence. However, upon his return, Vierne discovered that Dupré had usurped his title as “organist of Notre Dame.” Vierne was deeply offended by Dupré’s behavior and terminated their friendship. Personal misfortunes were also numerous, including the discovery of his wife’s adultery with a supposed friend (the organ builder, Charles Mutin), and the death of both of his sons, one at age 10 from tuberculosis, the other a casualty of the Great War. The life of his brother Réné was also claimed by the war.

Considering the numerous misfortunes Vierne faced throughout his life, it comes as little surprise that Vierne’s music is often perceived as severe.

1.2 Origins

Louis Vierne, organist of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, composed the Sixième Symphonie pour Orgue, Op. 59 during the summer of 1930 between 15 July and 15 September at Cap-Martin, near Menton on the French Riviera. He was on holiday, and it was in the tranquil setting of the gray mountains, lush valleys, and pleasant villas that the composer received the inspiration not only to write his sixth organ symphony but also to sketch the beginnings of a seventh based on a choral theme.

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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Filsell. Recounting his visit to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, A C Delacour de Brisay described Vierne as follows in the Musical Times in 1935: “There is much pain, torment both physical and moral in Vierne’s face, and the hard and sometimes willful chromaticism of much of his music is symptomatic of this inner struggle.”

12 Franck Besingrand, Louis Vierne (Collection Horizons, 2011), 94.
Shortly after the completion of the Sixth Symphony, the composer received word that his friend and colleague, Lynnwood Farnam (1885-1930), one of the leading North American organists of the time, had died unexpectedly on 23 November. Vierne had first met Farnam in June of 1923 while Farnam was touring in Paris and heard him again in New York in 1927. His high esteem for the Canadian organist compelled Vierne to dedicate his last major organ work, “à la memoire de mon ami très regretté” — “to the memory of my much-lamented friend.” The work was published in 1931 by Henry Lemoine & Cie. Its publication was followed by its world premiere by Carl Weinrich on 7 February 1932 at the Church of the Holy Communion in New York City, the church where Farnam had served as organist until his untimely death. Three years later the work received its French premiere by Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986) at Notre-Dame Cathedral on 3 June 1935 in a joint recital under the auspices of the Société des Amis de l’Orgue. Vierne wrote of Duruflé’s performance, “[My] joy was in

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13 Rollin Smith, Louis Vierne: Organist of Notre Dame Cathedral (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 1999), 366, 386. In the words of Vierne himself, “[Farnam’s] technique is far superior to anything I have ever heard until now. [...] Apart from that, this man is a musician to the marrow; he knows everything; he has played everything; he has the most fantastic memory that there is.” In addition, Farnam was the first to record Vierne’s organ music in any medium, recording two player organ rolls for Welte in 1925 featuring the Allegro vivace from Symphonie I and Lied from the 24 Pièces en style libre. Farnam was also an indefatigable champion of Vierne and his music, even co-initiating a fund for Vierne to alleviate the “severe straits to which repeated misfortunes and ill health had reduced this great musician.”

14 Smith, 565.


16 Smith, 294; Vierne, xvii. The French premiere of the work was delayed due to the poor condition of the organ at Notre-Dame prior to its restoration in 1932. Even Vierne’s Fifth Symphony was not heard in Paris until 1934. The Sixth Symphony was performed in a joint
the matchless interpretation of my *Sixième Symphonie* played in its entirety by Maurice Duruflé. It was perfection itself, and I was deeply moved.”

Inspired by the tonal and technical resources of the Cavaillé-Coll organ, the organist at Notre-Dame composed a total of six organ symphonies over the course of his lifetime. It is for these multi-movement works that Vierne has received the most recognition. Indeed, his organ symphonies are widely regarded as the culmination of the genre. Certainly, they are considered some of the most significant contributions to early twentieth century French organ music, and many individual movements from these extensive works have become staples in standard recital repertoire. Vierne brings a sense of cohesion to his organ symphonies through the use of harmonic and thematic unity. In addition, although he never abandons the principles of tonal harmony, Vierne composes

concert with Duruflé in which Vierne also performed his yet unpublished *Messe basse pour les défuncts.*

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17 Smith, 295.

18 Smith, 295. In Vierne’s own words, “The splendid instrument, whose happy organist I have been for thirty-seven years, has played a dominant role in my artistic and intellectual life. In its ambiance, I wrote what I have written and formulated for myself the aesthetics of a ‘Cathedral Organist,’ working to adapt myself to its majestic sound, to the grandiose structure of the basilica, and to the great religious and national memories associated with it. To the high mission that was entrusted to me I have brought, for want of anything better, all the fidelity and sincerity of my heart as an artist and a believer.”


his symphonies in a chromatic melodic and harmonic style, relying on pedal points and ostinatos to indicate the tonal trajectory of the movement.\textsuperscript{22} Over time, Vierne’s harmonic language (as represented in his organ symphonies) becomes increasingly chromatic and tonally ambiguous, with the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies representing the apex of his mature compositional style.\textsuperscript{23}

It is possible to trace Vierne’s development as a composer through his organ symphonies. Two of the most significant features of these multi-movement works are the use of sonata-allegro form and the late nineteenth century idiom of tertiary key relationships, where the keys of individual movements within each symphony are related by thirds.\textsuperscript{24} We can already see these two features in the First Symphony, Op. 14, which is in D minor but contains movements in B flat major (the chromatic submediant) and F major (the chromatic mediant), with one movement in sonata form (the Final). Nevertheless, the work functions more as a suite than a symphony with six movements, several of which were first published separately.\textsuperscript{25}

Vierne consistently composes his organ symphonies in five movements beginning with the Second Symphony. Like the First, this work features tertiary

\begin{footnotesize}\begin{enumerate}
\item Smith, “Vierne, Louis.”
\item Walton, 109. With the exception of the First Symphony, Vierne typically composes the first fast movement of his organ symphonies in sonata-allegro form.
\item Martin Jean.
\end{enumerate}\end{footnotesize}
key relationships and sonata form but introduces increased chromaticism. The composer adds a third unifying factor, namely cyclic treatment, with nearly all five movements containing one of two recurring themes presented in the opening Allegro.26

Following the Third Symphony (in which cyclic treatment is absent), the Fourth Symphony reintroduces cyclic treatment and serves as a turning point for the composer. It is based on two recurring themes, adopting a type of musical antagonism through the opposition of two contrasting melodies which are developed and transformed over the course of the work. There is, however, a certain inconsistency to this symphony: while the outer movements continue to explore new harmonic and melodic avenues, the charm of the Menuet and the lush melodies of the Romance allude to a style of symphonic writing more akin to that of Widor. The use of tertiary keys continues: G minor (I. Prélude and II. Allegro), E major (III. Menuet), D-flat major (IV. Romance, the enharmonic equivalent of C-sharp), and G minor (V. Final). In addition, the Fourth Symphony is the first among Vierne’s symphonies to contain a theme using all twelve chromatic tones — namely, the opening theme of the Final — foreshadowing the twelve-tone chromaticism of multiple themes in the Sixth Symphony.

After the premiere of the Fourth Symphony by André Marchal in 1923, Vierne wrote a letter to his friend expressing his admiration and gratitude for the

performance. A comment within the letter reveals a significant aspect of Vierne’s compositional process regarding this specific work:

My dear friend, I thank you again from the bottom of my heart for the great pleasure that you provided me earlier today. I shall retain this feeling, one of the most profound that I have felt in my life as an artist, forever in my memory. This bitter matter, which for a moment was lightened by a reminder of illusion and then ended in fever, you have understood and felt remarkably well. You have translated it — and this is what it was all about — in a poetic manner.

This description of the symphony aligns well with one particular tragic event in the life of the composer. On 7 September 1913, Vierne’s ten-year-old son André died of tuberculosis. The previous description of “bitter matter — illusion — fever” aligns with the final stages of tuberculosis, where prior to their final moments, the patient experiences the illusion of a recovery before descending once again into fever. The “bitter matter” may be associated with the circling main theme of the Prélude, the “illusion” with the charming Menuet and the bittersweet Romance, and the “fever” with the chaotic transformation of the main theme in the relentless toccata figure of the Final.

This kind of programmatic description has not been found in the case of the later symphonies (if they exist). Nevertheless, Vierne may have used a similar process in the composition of the work, evidenced by his creed as a musician as found in his Souvenirs:

[Music’s] purpose is to give voice to the movements of the soul . . . and my preference is for the elucidating of the interior life.... The pure musician sings of his joy, grief, hate, anger, hope, assurance. His creative field is

27 This letter is dated 24 January 1923.
without bounds, because he expresses all the feelings that pervade his personality.²⁸

Vierne may have composed the later symphonies as a means of expressing his interior life as he faced additional tragedies.

With Vierne’s Fifth Symphony, all of the elements are in place for the Sixth: a high level of chromaticism, expanded use of conventional forms, and thorough cyclic organization. For instance, nearly all the thematic material of the Fifth Symphony is derived directly from one of the two cyclic themes.²⁹ In addition, Vierne’s extensive use of chromaticism considerably blurs the tonal structure.³⁰ The composer even expands his handling of sonata-allegro form to include a recapitulation in ternary form.³¹

The Sixth Symphony in B Major, Op. 59, takes the composer’s experiments with chromaticism and form even further. The work is in five movements: Introduction et Allegro, Aria, Scherzo, Adagio, and Final. The key signatures of each movement reflect the composer’s preference for tertiary key relationships: B minor, D minor, E-flat minor, G minor, and B major. Many of the movements

²⁸ Martin Jean.

²⁹ Kasouf, 159. With the exception of the first theme in the fourth movement, all of the themes are derived from the two cyclic themes, which are presented in the first movement. These themes also serve as accompaniments to one another in the first and third movements.

³⁰ Kasouf, 143, 160. An example of Vierne’s use of chromaticism to blur the tonal trajectory is found in the second exposition of the Allegro, where he alludes to F major as well as D minor.

³¹ Kasouf, 157. The ternary scheme of the recapitulation begins with the return of theme 1 in octaves in the pedal at m 174, followed by a contrasting section at m 193 in which theme 2 is presented. The ternary form of the recapitulation is rounded off with the return of theme 1 in the pedal once again beneath the triplet bell motive in the manuals.
reflect traditional forms as Vierne composes the first movement in sonata form with a slow introduction. Similarly, the second and fourth movements reflect a da capo format, while the Scherzo comprises an expanded binary form. The Final is particularly striking as Vierne continues to experiment with formal structures, combining ternary and rondo forms. Like the Fourth and the Fifth Symphonies, the Sixth Symphony also contains two cyclic themes. However, unlike the Fifth Symphony, here the composer devotes more time to the development of the first theme than the second.

Many scholars and performers pair the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies together due to their similar chromatic language, formal treatment, and thematic development. However, it is the Fifth Symphony which is hailed as the most monumental of the two due to its length and rigorous cyclic treatment.\textsuperscript{32} Indeed, the Fifth elicited more press coverage than any of Vierne’s symphonies, including the only French review by Jean Huré which ends with a challenge to the composer, “I promise Vierne to curse him bitterly if, with such talent, he should again write so perfect a work, to express such pain and anguish in the course of forty-seven pages of very beautiful music!”\textsuperscript{33}

While it is true that nearly all the thematic material of the Fifth Symphony is derived from its cyclic themes, the Sixth is equally successful as a cohesive whole. Vierne achieves this unity through alternative means: a predilection for the first cyclic theme, more balanced formal structures, and a greater mastery of

\textsuperscript{32} Smith, 543-544; Kasouf, 183.

\textsuperscript{33} Smith, 546.
harmonic and melodic chromaticism. The first cyclic theme appears in a variety of forms over the course of the work, yet it serves as a common thread tying the five movements together as a bitter melancholy is radically transformed into vigorous ecstasy in the *Final.* The forms of the Sixth Symphony are well-proportioned and compact, contrasting with the occasionally sprawling development sections of the Fifth Symphony. Although the themes of the Sixth Symphony are more chromatic, the melodies are similarly balanced and succinct.

As we will see, this organ symphony also marked a significant step in the evolution of Vierne’s harmonic language: themes that incorporate all twelve chromatic tones, fleeting whole tone passages in multiple movements, and, most significantly, the conclusion of three of the five movements with a dissonant final chord: namely, a triad with an added sixth, unprecedented in Vierne’s earlier organ symphonies. Vierne incorporates these twentieth-century idioms into a symphony teeming with diverse influences: traditional structures such as sonata-allegro and *da capo* forms, nineteenth-century practices such as cyclic writing and tertiary key relationships (both common features in the music of nineteenth century), and additional twentieth-century elements including a renewed interest in modality and Wagnerian opera. The Sixth Symphony represents the

34 Walton, 109-110; Martin Jean.

35 Vierne briefly uses whole tone methods in the *Allegro, Aria,* and *Scherzo.* However, this is not unprecedented, as Vierne includes instances of whole tone technique in both the Fourth and the Fifth Symphonies. The first and last sections of the third movement of the Fifth Symphony contain episodes employing the whole tone scale. There is also a brief whole tone section in the transition into the recapitulation of the Allegro at m 118 in the Fourth Symphony.
culmination of Vierne’s development as an organ composer due to his ability to combine these seemingly disparate influences into a cohesive whole.

1.3 Themes

The Sixth Symphony of Vierne revolves around the interplay of opposites: namely, the development of two dichotomous, cyclic themes. The first theme appears in all five movements of the work, while the second theme appears in three, namely the Introduction et Allegro, the Adagio, and the Final. In addition to the two cyclic themes, Vierne introduces multiple new melodies in the Aria, Scherzo, and Final.

Vierne builds the first cyclic theme upon four ascending intervallic pairs set in a perpetual motion rhythm and comprising a wide tessitura. The ascending figure is immediately repeated with the addition of multiple suspension figures (A-G and E-D) before concluding with a minor third on B (see Figure 1.1). The melody is built upon three minor sixths: E-sharp—C-sharp, F-sharp—D, and B—G (see Figure 1.2). The composer lays a particular emphasis on G, which functions as scale-degree six in the key of B minor. In short, the theme functions as a linear tonic triad with an added sixth, decorated with multiple

36 It is interesting to note Vierne’s emphasis on this particular interval given that this is the composer’s sixth organ symphony. This feature takes on even more significance when one considers that the first cyclic theme of the Fifth Symphony (as found in the first movement) is similarly constructed on two descending fifths (E—A, C—F) subtly combined into a series of descending thirds (E—C—A—F). Likewise, the first cyclic theme in the Introduction of the Fourth Symphony highlights the ambiguous interval of the tritone in both ascending (G—D-flat) and descending motion (E-flat—B-natural).
leading tones. Vierne frequently sets the theme in a tonic harmony using arpeggiated chords and pedal points (see Figure 1.3). Vierne uses these multiple associations with the tonic to equate the first theme with harmonic stability.

![Figure 1.1: Cyclic Theme 1, Allegro, mm. 40-43](image)

![Figure 1.2: Cyclic Theme 1, harmonic structure](image)

![Figure 1.3: Allegro, mm. 32-35](image)

Vierne transforms the first theme considerably over the course of the symphony, prefiguring it in the Introduction, then expanding it to become the main theme of the Allegro. This expanded version contains all twelve tones of the chromatic scale, one of the many instances of the influence of dodecaphony on the composer’s style. The first half of the melody is heard in multiple modes and
in inversion over the course of the movement, sounding predominantly in B major in the coda. However, Vierne keeps the sixth scale degree in the minor mode. The Aria consists primarily of the development of a new melody, yet the first cyclic theme is heard multiple times near the end of the movement. In the Scherzo Vierne introduces a syncopated variant of the original and inverted forms of the theme, alternating it with a virtuosic rhythmic motive. The theme also appears in its original and inverted forms during the Adagio and the Final. It is not until the last appearance of the theme in the Final that the entire theme is fully heard in the major mode as G is transformed to G-sharp.37

The second theme serves as a foil to the first, for it is as chromatic and enigmatic as the first is diatonic and resolute. Unlike the brisk sixteenth notes of the first theme, the second moves predominantly in eighth notes in largely step-wise motion, with multiple syncopations. The harmonic structure of the themes is also dichotomous. The opening phrase of the second theme begins on the tonic and consists of an ascending motion, a series of meandering half steps followed by a leap of a tritone. The ascending motion is counteracted by a descending minor sixth which resolves by half step to B-flat. Thus, while Vierne structures the first theme around the tonic triad, he designs the second theme so that it is free of any direct harmonic association (see Figure 1.4). This harmonic ambiguity also pervades the theme’s accompaniment as Vierne frequently sets the theme

37 Vierne includes a G-sharp in the second phrase of the first cyclic theme in the B section of the Adagio. However, the composer de-emphasizes the G-sharp by including it in the second phrase rather than in both phrases. In addition, the G-sharp functions as the upper note in a suspension figure. For these reasons, the theme is not fully transformed into the major mode until the last movement.
within a contrapuntal texture of autonomous lines. Often these lines share the same harmonic function, yet they either resolve independently of one another, or Vierne significantly delays their vertical alignment (see Figure 1.5). In this way Vierne juxtaposes the stability of the first theme with the tonal ambiguity of the second.

Figure 1.4: Cyclic Theme 2, Introduction, mm. 20-21

As one might expect, the juxtaposition of the contrasting themes first occurs within the context of the Introduction et Allegro. The first presentation of the second theme features all twelve chromatic tones set in a homophonic texture. In the Allegro Vierne significantly alters the rhythm of the theme while simultaneously extending it several measures. In addition, the composer twice uses the inversion of the theme as a modulatory device. The second theme returns later in the symphony as the principal material of the Adagio in its
original and inverted forms, and lastly in a brief episode within the rondo form of the Final. Nevertheless, similar to the idée fixe of Berlioz’s Symphonie fantastique or a Leitmotiv from a Wagnerian opera, it is clear that the transformation of the first theme is the primary focus of the symphony.

1.4 Harmonic Syntax

The transformation of the two cyclic themes occurs within harmonic structures organized according to the principles of the traditional tonal system. Indeed, Vierne often uses the bassline to articulate tonal progressions within the macro harmonic structure of the symphony. Nevertheless, the composer blurs these tonal progressions using several compositional devices: the autonomous enharmonic reinterpretation of individual tones in both the micro and macro harmonic organization of individual movements; the horizontal outlining of a vertical function (such as the dominant) in multiple melodic voices; dissonance through neighbor-tone and stepwise motion; complex forms of mode mixture; and the use of multiple harmonic layers, some of which are decorative tangents, while others are functional progressions in the overarching trajectory.

The independent enharmonic reinterpretation of individual tones frequently (but not exclusively) occurs in the bassline. Vierne uses this technique in mm. 27-32 of the first movement, where he concludes the presentation of the second cyclic theme with a lengthy pedal point on F, harmonized in a German augmented-sixth chord. As the Introduction transitions into the Allegro, the composer reharmonizes F as the leading tone to the dominant with the entrance of the first cyclic theme in the pedal (see Figure 1.6).
Vierne uses a similar strategy in the middle section of the Aria. As the composer tonicizes the key of D major, the pedal alternates between the tonic and A-flat. The tritone serves as a pivot to the key of D-flat major as Vierne reharmonizes it as the dominant in mm. 46-47 (see Figure 1.7).
A third example of this occurs in mm. 274-275 of the *Final*, where the refrain of the rondo returns outlining a dominant-seventh chord on B-flat. Vierne once again reinterprets the F in the pedal as the leading tone to the dominant, simultaneously reinterpreting the B-flat in the manuals as the leading tone to the tonic (see Figure 1.8).

![Figure 1.8: Final, mm. 272-275](image)

Vierne often disguises his harmonic progressions by outlining vertical functions (such as the dominant) horizontally in multiple melodic voices. This strategy is primarily used for the presentation of the second cyclic theme as seen in the second exposition of the *Allegro* (see Figure 1.5). However, occasionally Vierne uses similar strategies to accompany the first cyclic theme. A prime example of this technique is found in the harmonization of the first half of the first cyclic theme in the *Scherzo*. Beginning in m. 41, the left-hand states the melody in the key of E minor as the bassline outlines a chromatic fifth from E to A. Meanwhile, the right-hand states a two-measure figure ascending from B to E, harmonized in a series of fourths and fifths. All three parts suggest the key of E minor, yet Vierne avoids their vertical alignment. While the manuals cadence in E minor, the pedal ends on A rather than rising up to B (see Figure 1.9).
Vierne also decorates his harmonic progressions through the use of dissonance, namely figures such as neighbor-tone motions and chromatic scalar passages. A prime example of this use of dissonance occurs in the exposition of the second theme in the *Allegro*, where the pedal figuration on A is reiterated on B before falling in a chromatic scale down to E. The pedal figuration subsequently returns to A as the second theme is restated in the left hand. The repeat of the pedal figure on B functions as a decorative neighbor motion to the return to A in m. 71, while the descending chromatic line serves as a modulatory harmonic tangent (see Figure 1.10).
Figure 1.10: Allegro, mm. 63-71
A similar strategy occurs on a smaller scale in the first theme of the Scherzo as Vierne incorporates the twelve tones of the chromatic scale into three cluster chords comprising a series of neighbor motions linking the opening G minor arpeggio to the B-flat minor arpeggio in m. 5 (see Figure 1.11). This strategy will be explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

Figure 1.11: Scherzo, mm. 1-5

Complex forms of mode mixture further embellish the tonal framework. Although the Allegro features a traditional harmonic scheme, the first cyclic theme appears in multiple modal inflections over the course of the movement (the use of mode mixture in the Allegro will be revisited in Chapter 2). In addition, Vierne emphasizes the Phrygian and Mixolydian modes in the Aria and Final, respectively (the influence of modality in these two movements will be addressed further in Chapters 3 and 6, respectively). The composer incorporates
additional elements of impressionism into the work through the incorporation of multiple whole tone passages.

Finally, Vierne disguises his use of tonal harmony by composing the movements in multiple layers, some of which serve as functional progressions in the overarching trajectory, while others serve as decorative tangents. This is especially true in the Final, where Vierne intersperses the key of B major with short interpolations of dominant-seventh harmonies on tones including E-flat (enharmonically spelled D-sharp), D, and G.

1.5 Harmonic Overview

As previously mentioned, the keys of the movements of the Sixth Symphony are organized in the following scheme: B minor, D minor, G minor, E-flat minor, and B major. The first and last movements emphasize a traditional harmonic scheme, albeit with several embellishments through mode mixture and tangential tonicizations. By contrast, the second, third, and fourth movements depart from this tendency, instead emphasizing a series of chromatic mediant relationships with sudden tritone shifts.

The Introduction opens with the key signature of B minor, yet it is not until the beginning of the Allegro that Vierne fully establishes the tonic key. The remainder of the movement adheres to the typical harmonic structure of a sonata-allegro movement, with the exposition of the first and second themes in the tonic and the relative major, respectively. Although the development features modulations to normally expected keys such as the dominant and the submediant, Vierne also explores more obscure tonal areas such as D-flat major
and modes centered around B-flat. The movement concludes with a triumphant coda in the parallel major.

Vierne composes the Aria in the mediant key of D minor. Structured in an A-B-A’ format, the movement opens and closes in the tonic key yet explores less conventional tonal areas in the middle section. These tonal areas comprise multiple harmonic motions by half step: B-flat, B, D, D-flat, E, and E-flat, a series of modulations accomplished through the reinterpretation of the triton of the previous key. The first cyclic theme also returns during the final measures of the B section in the key of G-sharp minor. In addition, the composer simultaneously suggests the Phrygian mode, particularly in the inclusion of multiple chordal passage reminiscent of Debussy and the modulation to E-flat within the B section. Vierne also highlights tertiary relationships within the Aria by tonicizing chromatic inflections of the submediant.

The Scherzo unfolds in the following harmonic scheme: Gm — Em — Am — E-flat m — F-sharp m — Bm — Gm, as Vierne alternates a new virtuosic theme with the first cyclic theme. The accompaniment to the first cyclic theme is tonally stable, typically featuring a prolonged tonic harmony. By contrast, the new theme is characterized by chromatic ambiguity and modulation. The composer continues to emphasize local tertiary relationships within the Scherzo through modulations to the mediant and multiple chromatic inflections of the submediant. The movement concludes with multiple whole tone passages ending with a G minor triad.

Composed in an A-B-A’ format, the outer sections of the Adagio feature the return of the second cyclic theme in the key of E-flat minor. However, Vierne
blurs the tonal trajectory of the A sections by setting the theme in a dense chromatic texture. The resulting tonal ambiguity corresponds to the harmonic independence of the theme. In the B section Vierne reintroduces the first cyclic theme in first B major, then C major. This is followed by the appearance of theme C, set in tonal areas suggestive of B-flat and A. Nearly all of the tonal areas heard in the Adagio are found in the E-flat melodic minor scale (with the exception of the tritone, A).

The harmonic language of the Final is the most straightforward of the five movements, composed in the following harmonic progression: BM – Em – BM – Bb Mixolydian – BM. Vierne contrasts the vivacious B major refrain with the return of the second cyclic theme in E minor in the first episode. The second section of the tripartite form introduces a third theme, a beautiful carillon melody set in the mode of B-flat Mixolydian as once again Vierne introduces modality into a tonal structure. The local rondo form falls away in the third and final section as Vierne alternates the carillon theme with the refrain as he returns to B major. Nevertheless, the composer alludes to the preceding rondo form by interspersing the tonic key with brief harmonic tangents. The symphony concludes in a virtuosic coda derived from the refrain.
CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION ET ALLEGRO

2.1 Overview of Themes and Formal Structure

As the title suggests, Vierne composes the first movement in sonata form with a slow introduction.\(^{38}\) Composed in the key of B minor, Vierne crafts the entire first movement from the two cyclic themes, juxtaposing them in the Introduction then presenting them as dueling partners in the sonata form of the Allegro. Vierne develops both themes over the course of the movement; nevertheless, he primarily focuses on the transformation of the first theme, foreshadowing it in the Introduction, then expanding it in the Allegro. Originally presented in B minor, the theme appears in multiple keys during the development section. Vierne concludes the Allegro with a final statement of the first theme in a mode suggestive of the parallel major, with the exception of the minor sixth scale degree.

The opening motive of the first theme appears in mm. 3-4 of the Introduction, pausing on G then repeating with the 7-6 suspension figure (see Figure 2.1). The melody then unravels into a descending chromatic sequence. While this sequential figure is not part of the theme, it foreshadows the second

\(^{38}\) In the Sixth Symphony Vierne combines the Introduction and the Allegro into a single movement. In the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, the introductions are composed as individual movements. Nevertheless, the introductions to these three symphonies are assigned a slow tempo marking and have the same function, that is presenting the two cyclic themes of the symphonies.
half of the theme as it appears in the *Allegro* in its contour (a descending sequence of an ascending figure) and its inclusion of all twelve tones of the chromatic scale. The key center of the theme as heard in the *Introduction* is implied through emphasis on the dominant rather than the tonic, namely the secondary dominant/dominant motion of E-sharp/F-sharp. While the theme contains all three notes of the B-minor triad, they are strategically placed so that the B is de-emphasized. It is not until the *Allegro* when the first cyclic theme is presented in full that it becomes associated with the tonic harmony.

![Music notation]

Example 2.1: *Introduction et Allegro*, theme 1, mm. 3-4

The enigmatic second theme also includes all twelve tones of the chromatic scale (see Figure 2.2). Harmonized in a five-voice homophonic texture consisting primarily of augmented chords, Vierne obscures the preceding references to B minor.\(^{39}\) These qualities, combined with the slower tempo, lend the theme a languid, serpentine character. The theme also evokes traditional elements with its four-bar phrase structure and its chorale-like harmonization, a common trait in the organ works of composers such as J.S. Bach and Felix Mendelssohn. Nevertheless, Vierne constructs the melody in such a way that the four-bar phrasing is unclear.

\(^{39}\) Kasouf, 163.
The Introduction presents the two themes in two distinct sections with their own tempo markings and time signatures (see Figure 2.3). Vierne suggests the key of B minor in the opening material and in the conclusion of the presentation of the first cyclic theme, evading the full establishment of the tonic key until the beginning of the Allegro.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vierne, Symphony VI: I. Introduction, binary form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.3: Introduction, structure

The Allegro adheres to the typical structure of sonata form as the composer divides the movement into three main sections: exposition, development, and recapitulation (see Figure 2.4).40 Vierne constructs the first

40 Long, 53. Long designates this Allegro as a sonata-toccata form, where a sonata-allegro form is pervaded by a type of perpetual motion figure (usually a broken-chord pattern). According to Long, this toccata figuration is so distinctive that it becomes an integral part of the main theme. In the Sixth Symphony, Long labels the first cyclical theme of the first movement as the toccata theme, with the countersubject in the manuals at mm. 32-35 functioning as the main theme. These designations are problematic for multiple reasons. First, the first cyclic theme is developed extensively in both its original form and in inversion in the Allegro as well as in the subsequent movements of the symphony, while this countersubject only appears in the exposition and the recapitulation of the Allegro as an accompaniment to the full presentation of the first theme. This lack of development runs contrary to the treatment of the main theme of a typical
section as a double exposition with the first theme in the tonic and the second theme in the relative major, each theme presented twice in their respective keys. The development ensues exploring material from the previous section as the composer modulates to several keys: F-sharp minor (v), G minor (vi), A minor (b-vii), the mode of B-flat (b-I), D-flat major (b-iii), and A major (b-VII). Vierne’s deviations from the key structure of a typical sonata form are found primarily in the development section. While he is conventional in his modulation to tonal areas such as the dominant and the submediant, he does not shy from mode mixture (or even secondary mixture) through the use of keys outside the B minor scale, such as D-flat major and brief modulations to multiple modes centered around B-flat. The recapitulation serves as a simultaneous return to the tonic and to the original form of the main theme. After reiterating the second theme in the parallel major, Vierne concludes the Allegro with a final statement of the opening half of the first theme in a virtuosic codetta in B major.

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sonata-allegro movement in Vierne’s organ symphonies, rendering Long’s designation inaccurate. Second, the first cyclical theme, while consisting largely of fast-moving sixteenth notes, is not a true perpetual motion figure as found in the Finals of Vierne’s Third and Fifth Symphonies. Third, the first theme disappears and reappears to dialogue with the secondary theme and the inverted form of the first theme, while a usual Vierne toccata-figure pervades the majority of the movement. The application of the sonata-toccata form may be appropriate for certain movements within Vierne’s organ symphonies, particularly in regards to the majority of the Finals; however, the form has been erroneously applied to the Allegro of the Sixth Symphony.
Vierne, Symphony VI: I. *Allegro risoluto*, sonata-allegro form

<table>
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<th>Recapitulation</th>
<th>Coda</th>
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</table>

Figure 2.4: *Allegro*, structure

The *Allegro* revolves around the evolution of the two themes presented in the *Introduction*. The first theme becomes the main theme and is heard in both its original form and inversion (see Figure 2.5). Vierne employs the principle of thematic transformation by lengthening the melody to eight measures and expanding the tessitura to two octaves. The theme divides neatly into two groups of four measures, with both halves revolving around the interval of a sixth.\(^{41}\) The first half rises by a series of sixths to the mediant (simultaneously emphasizing the tonic), while the second half descends in a chromatic sequence of decorated sixths, finishing with a chromatic ascent to F-sharp. Like its first presentation, the theme contains all twelve chromatic tones. Vierne uses the first half of this theme as the first cyclic theme, for it is this series of ascending sixths which pervades all five movements of the symphony, a common thread which guides the listener through the labyrinthine moods of the work.\(^ {42}\) Indeed, Vierne only uses

\(^{41}\) The presentation of the main theme of the *Allegro* in full in the pedals is similar to the presentation of the main theme of the vivacious Final of Vierne’s First Symphony.

\(^ {42}\) The second half of the first cyclical theme appears only in the *Scherzo*.  

29
the opening half of the theme when he introduces it in inversion during the development section.

![Figure 2.5: Allegro, theme 1, mm. 32-39](image)

The second cyclic theme as heard in the Allegro serves as another example of thematic transformation. In the Introduction, the second theme was accompanied by an abrupt change in time signature from 6/8 to common time. Here the second theme conforms to the compound meter associated with the first theme, undergoing both rhythmic and melodic alterations while still maintaining the original key (see Figure 2.6). While Vierne omits two of the twelve chromatic tones in this version of the theme, he also expands it from four to six measures in the following phrase structure: a, a’, b, b’. This expansion consists of a “transformed repetition” accomplished through the addition of an ornamental figure (appoggiatura) followed by the reiteration of the material of the second bar a whole step higher, as seen in m. 65. Nevertheless, the theme maintains its signature opening syncopation as well as its balanced structure, as the six-bar theme may be divided into three equal groups. Together, these modifications give the second theme a lyrical and even mischievous character. The first two
measures of the theme also appear in inversion during the course of the
development section.

Figure 2.6: Allegro, theme 2, mm. 63-68

The two themes of the Allegro are also characterized by their distinct
harmonic accompaniments and counter themes. Vierne typically harmonizes the
first cyclic theme in the tonic with either a pedal point or a countersubject of
block chords or arpeggios. Indeed, this block chord countersubject appears at the
beginning of both the exposition and the recapitulation, as well as multiple times
during the development. Similarly, the inversion of the first theme during the
development section is harmonized using a dominant pedal point.

By contrast, Vierne accompanies the second theme with the horizontal
outlining of the dominant in multiple melodic voices, including brief pedal points
decorated by a neighbor tone figure. However, the linear harmony of the theme
does not coincide with the accompaniment, resulting in an unstable, tonally
ambiguous texture. The pedal points, while obscured by stepwise chromaticism
in the upper voices, serve as the primary clue to determining the key of the
second theme.
Thus, Vierne uses both the original and inverted forms of the first theme as a type of tonal anchor, while the second theme serves an antagonistic purpose. The first theme works in harmony with the accompaniment, while the second theme is more independent, carrying the harmony away from the tonic key into a chromatic, contrapuntal texture. Vierne’s association of the first theme with stability and the second with ambiguity pervades the entire symphony.

2.2 Analysis

The symphony begins with an ascending arabesque of sixteenth notes in 6/8 on the Récit, not unlike the opening of the Moderato from Widor’s Symphonie romane. This arabesque serves a dual purpose: the delay of the establishment of the key center, and the foreshadowing of the first theme. However, it is only after the appearance of the first theme that the listener becomes aware of their parallel contours, such as the first notes of each group of sixteenth notes (E-sharp—F-sharp, C-sharp—D) and the shared goal of G (see Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7: Introduction, m. 1
The arabesque also suggests the key of B minor by emphasizing the dominant through the secondary dominant/dominant motion of E-sharp/F-sharp. The melodic line traces its way upward, reiterating itself an octave higher before coming to rest on the interval of a third on the mediant. The first cyclic theme is heard in the left hand, emerging out of the contours of the arabesque. The right hand adopts a countersubject in parallel thirds in m. 3 suggestive of B minor. However, Vierne evades the establishment of the tonic key by concluding the theme on G (see Figure 2.8). The theme subsequently collapses into a descending chromatic sequence, interrupted by a short rhythmic motive which returns in the Allegro. However, the motive is also short-lived, transforming into a series of languid descending eighth notes harmonized in a chromatic texture. This winding sequential pattern, combined with the interruption of the rhythmic motive, weakens the statement of the first theme. The passage concludes with a half-diminished chord on the tonic.

Figure 2.8: Introduction, mm. 1-3

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43 Page C. Long, “Transformations of Harmony and Consistencies of Form in the Six Organ Symphonies of Louis Vierne,” D.M.A. diss. (University of Arizona, 1963), 35. According to Long, a common feature in Vierne’s organ symphonies is a descending or ascending chromatic scale segment which momentarily obscures the feeling of tonality, especially in the bassline.
A rapid scalar figure transitions the texture into the reiteration of the preceding material in the lower register as the first theme sounds in the pedal. Vierne concludes the passage with a half cadence on F-sharp, anticipating a resolution to B minor. There is a dramatic pause, marking the end of the exposition of the first theme.

The composer prepares the entrance of the second theme with a simultaneous change in tempo, time signature, and texture: the time signature switches to common time and there is an abrupt change in tempo to Lento. While there is no change in key signature, the tonal goal set up at the end of the first section is foiled by the ensuing chromaticism. Vierne states the second theme and then immediately repeats it so as to reinforce it in the memory of the listener. Vierne emphasizes the tritone amidst the dense texture, as the bassline to both statements begins and ends on F-natural. The theme builds to a climax in m. 28 as the F-natural in the pedal is contextualized in a German augmented-sixth chord in B minor. The sixteenth-note motion of the opening returns, arpeggiating the harmony as Vierne adds the reeds of the Positif and the Grand Orgue to the registration. The first theme returns in full force at a triple forte in m. 32, marking the beginning of the Allegro risoluto. It is here that Vierne reinterprets the F-natural as E-sharp as the pedal point becomes the first note of the theme.

44 The second half of the theme sounds predominantly a half-step below its first appearance.
The affiliation of the first theme with the tonic key is apparent from the opening of the Allegro. Vierne accompanies the exposition of the theme with a countermelody in the manuals consisting of block chords in thirds and sixths outlining a tonic triad, decorated by neighbor and passing chords. Although the sequential second half is harmonized in a passage of unstable chords featuring the use of cross relations (such as the abrupt switch from B-natural to B-flat in the manuals at m. 36, and a similar motion in m. 37), the theme concludes with a half cadence on F-sharp in the tonic key.

Vierne immediately repeats the first theme in the right hand while the accompaniment alternates between chordal and imitative material. The theme begins in the tonic key, yet B minor is swiftly overturned as the second half of the theme is underpinned by a chromatic descent in the pedal. This descent, finishing on D-natural, serves as the springboard for the transition into the second exposition. The chordal texture returns in the manuals in an ascending motion, twice elaborating a harmony on D as the pedal falls first to A-flat then to F-natural in a series of chords defined more by color than function.

45 This countermelody was foreshadowed in the right-hand accompaniment at mm 3-4 of the Introduction.
46 Long, 31. According to Long, the major-minor third conflict is used in all six organ symphonies either melodically or harmonically.
47 The double statement of a theme in each exposition is a common feature in Vierne’s sonata-allegro movements, reinforcing it in the ear of the listener.
48 The chord on A-flat may be interpreted as an eleventh chord, or as a major-minor-major ninth chord with a suspension figure, D-C. However, the neighbor group figure in the top voice in the preceding series of diminished chords (C–E-flat) suggest an arrival on D rather than on C. Similarly, the eleventh chord on D at m. 51, a minor seventh with a major eleventh, creates
Vierne briefly recalls the opening of the first movement with the reiteration of the
the first theme as heard in the Introduction above a stepwise ascent in the
bassline. The pedal rises from F-sharp to A as the texture modulates to D major.49
There is a swift change in color as the Grand Orgue, Pedal, and Positif divisions
are reduced to foundation stops, and, with a slight retard, the Allegro arrives at
the exposition of the second theme.50

Vierne adheres to the traditional harmonic scheme of sonata form with the
exposition of the first theme in the tonic key and the second theme in the relative
major. However, the composer portrays the key of the second exposition through
emphasis on the tonic rather than the dominant. As previously discussed, the
texture of the second theme is more contrapuntal, comprising multiple
autonomous voices outlining the harmony of A major. Vierne accompanies the
second theme with a series of countersubjects, the most significant of which is a
short rhythmic motive found in the left hand and in the pedal. The significance of
the motive lies in its harmonic function, elaborating a pedal point on A (see m.

an augmented fourth between D and G-flat while also possessing an implied example of cross
relations with the inclusion of both G-flat and F-natural.

49 Vierne pauses briefly on the Neapolitan in the bassline in mm. 55-56, obscuring the
trajectory of the pedal. However, the Neapolitan functions as a passing tone rather than a
harmonic goal.

50 This is the first of many instances in which Vierne uses the colors of the organ to
differentiate between the two themes. In the Allegro, Vierne primarily registers the first theme
using the full organ (the Grand Orgue coupled to the Positif and the Récit, accompanied by all
three manuals coupled to the pedal), while the second theme is heard on the Positif coupled to the
Récit. Furthermore, in the development section the first theme is heard in inversion on the Récit.
Another indirect allusion to the key of D major occurs in m. 71 where the first statement of the theme ends with a cadence on E (the secondary dominant of A). Vierne also alludes to the dominant in m. 71, where he introduces a countermelody in the top voice outlining a seventh chord on A. As the second exposition concludes, Vierne weaves a variant of the opening of the second theme in diminution (without syncopation) into the sequential figures of the manuals, first in the soprano at m. 75, then in the alto at m. 76 (see Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9: Allegro, mm. 75-76

Vierne uses the return of the first half of the first cyclic theme on the Grand Orgue to pivot into the development section. Although the theme outlines the tonic of D major, Vierne avoids the resolution of the dominant pedal

51 This motive previously appeared as part of the tail of the first theme in the Introduction (see mm. 7 and 17), yet here it has switched allegiance.

52 The return of the first theme is significant for this is the first appearance of the version of the theme as found in every movement of the symphony. For this reason, one may designate this version as the essence of the first cyclic theme. Indeed, the full version of the first theme of the Allegro is not heard again until the recapitulation. It is also worth noting that the first theme is primarily allotted to the Grand Orgue (to which the Positif and the Récit are also coupled), while the second theme is largely allotted to the Positif (to which the Récit is coupled). One exception to this is found at m. 142 where the second theme appears in the pedal, to which the Grand Orgue, Positif, and the Récit are coupled.
point from the previous section. Instead, he pervades the texture with multiple chromatic inflections of the submediant. Ultimately, his repeated emphasis on B-flat in both the theme and the accompaniment prevents the establishment of the relative major as the tone is subsequently respelled as A-sharp in an augmented triad on D. Vierne subsequently uses the augmented harmony to pivot into F-sharp minor, the first key of the development section. The augmented triad resolves outward to the dominant-seventh harmony of the new key, though each tone resolves independently of the others: D to C-sharp in m. 81, F-sharp to E-sharp in m. 82, and A-sharp to B in m. 84 (see Figure 2.10). However, it is the resolution in the pedal from D to C-sharp which marks the beginning of the development.

The development section comprises 82 measures and features the following key areas: F-sharp minor, G minor, B-flat minor, A minor, a modal

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53 Kasouf, 164. According to Kasouf, the chromaticism of both the second theme and its accompaniment justifies labeling the second exposition as written in a mode centered on D rather than in the key of D major. However, the multiple pedal points on A and the return of the first theme in the key of D major justifies labeling the tonality of the second exposition as a prolonged dominant chord in the key of D major, with a brief secondary dominant motion at m. 70.
variant of B-flat major, D-flat major, and a modal variant of A major (see Figure
2.11). This harmonic scheme serves as the backdrop for the alternation of the
original and inverted forms of the first theme, with the brief return of the second
theme in D-flat major in mm. 134-151.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
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<th>103</th>
<th>120</th>
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<td>Bb</td>
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</table>

Figure 2.11: Allegro, development section, structure

Vierne begins the development section with two statements of the inverted
form of the first theme, first in the dominant key, then in the key of the
submediant. Similar to the exposition of the second theme, the composer implies
the key through emphasis on the dominant as the pedal resolves from D to a
prolonged pedal point on C-sharp. The first theme enters on the Récit in almost-
exact intervallic inversion (see Figure 2.12). Vierne disguises the theme as a false
third melody within the bi-thematic sonata form by transforming the rhythm of
the theme into a series of lilting eighth notes. This “new” melody appears three
times during the development section in alternation with the theme in its original
version. Vierne further characterizes the inverted form of the theme with an
imitative figure as the alto voice enters the texture on the second beat in a loose
canon at the octave (see Figure 2.13). The harmonic structure of the inverted
theme corresponds to the pedal point, outlining a C-sharp major triad and concluding on a dominant seventh harmony.54

![Figure 2.12: Allegro, theme 1, inverted, mm. 82-87](image)

Vierne modulates away from F-sharp minor using the inverted form of the second theme in the pedal. As the key signature changes to G minor, the deceptive resolution of the bassline from C-sharp to D is repurposed as the dominant in the new key (see m. 92 of Figure 2.14).55 The composer repeats the opening material of the development section (mm. 81-91) in the key of the submediant (mm. 92-102). However, this time the concluding dominant-seventh harmony resolves to tonic with a traditional V-i motion in the pedal in mm. 102-

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54 Long, 30. Canonic imitation is a common feature in the organ music César Franck, suggesting that these brief octave canons in the organ music of Vierne stem from the influence of Franck.

55 Unlike the first theme, the second theme appears in exact intervallic inversion without any rhythmic alterations.
The arrival of G minor marks a significant moment in the macro harmonic structure of the movement, as Vierne resolves the harmony of D major (implied by the pedal point on A) from the exposition of the second theme (see Figure 2.15).

![Figure 2.14: Allegro, mm. 89-96](image)

The Allegro briefly returns to harmonic stability as the original form of the first theme returns in imitation at the octave on the Grand Orgue beneath a tonic pedal point. Vierne uses the dotted rhythm from the conclusion of the first theme
to modulate to the key of B-flat minor while the bassline ascends a chromatic seventh from G to F. As the theme is reiterated in the new key in the pedal, the composer suggests the opening texture of the *Allegro* with a chordal ostinato outlining a tonic triad. Vierne once again uses the dotted figure as a modulatory vehicle, and the motive returns in the pedal in m. 115 in a sequence loosely outlining a whole tone scale (see Figure 2.16). Reinterpreting the E-flat in the pedal in m. 118 as D-sharp in the subsequent measure, Vierne modulates to the key of A minor for the return of the inverted first theme. As the theme is heard on the *Récit* in canon, the composer pervades the texture with perpetual-motion neighbor figure.\(^{56}\) Similar to its previous appearances, the theme outlines an E major triad and ends twice on an E dominant-seventh chord.

![Figure 2.16: Allegro, mm. 115-120, bass line reduction](image)

The composer uses the perpetual-motion figure to modulate to the next section: a brief reiteration of the original form of the first theme in a mode centered on B-flat (See Figure 2.17).\(^{57}\) Vierne destabilizes the melody through

\(^{56}\) The use of F-natural in the ornamental figures in the pedal at mm 122 and 125 give this section of the development a Phrygian tone.
mode mixture, for while the theme sounds predominantly in B-flat major, Vierne keeps the sixth scale degree in the minor mode. Meanwhile, the pedal ascends chromatically from E to A-flat in a modulation to D-flat major.

Figure 2.17: Allegro, mm. 129-134

The change in key signature to D-flat major at m. 134 signals the return of the material from the exposition of the second theme. The melody begins on the sixth scale degree, while the accompaniment emphasizes the dominant harmony.

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57 The composer omits the inverted second theme from this transition. Nevertheless, the sequential figure in the alto voice bears a strong resemblance to the syncopated figure heard in the Adagio at the pickup to mm 73-75. The Adagio focuses primarily on the exploration and development of the second theme in both its original form and in inversion.

58 The alteration of the minor third to the major third at the conclusion of the first theme anticipates the transformation of the same theme at the conclusion of the Allegro.
of A-flat major. Vierne avoids a literal repetition of the exposition as he abridges both statements of the theme. Instead, he replaces the second half of the melody with a series of sequential figures derived from the thematic material. The theme is heard twice, first on the Positif, then in the pedal, concluding with a V-I motion in the key of D-flat major in m. 149, one of the few points of arrival within the development section.

As Vierne enharmonically reinterprets D-flat as C-sharp, the key signature changes to A major and the first theme reasserts itself on the Grand Orgue. The texture thins and the melody once more oscillates between major and minor, featuring an augmented fifth and a major seventh (see mm. 152-155 of Figure 2.18). The theme is joined by a new countersubject on the Grand Orgue and a rhythmic motive on the Positif, both outlining an A major triad. However, the pedal fights against the establishment of the key as it rises and falls in a chromatic stepwise ostinato. The texture modulates and the theme attempts to assert itself a second time in a mode centered on B-flat. As the theme finishes, Vierne transforms the concluding dotted rhythm into an ostinato, directing the harmony back to the tonic key via an arpeggiated diminished-seventh chord on

59 Kasouf, 165. According to Kasouf, there are no stabilizing pedal points or ostinatos in the statement of the second theme in the development section of this Allegro. However, there are brief pedal points on A-flat which confirm the key of D-flat for the statement of the second theme in the development.

60 Kasouf, 165. The ternary form of the development consists of the alternation between the first theme and the second theme, with stronger emphasis on the first theme. While Kasouf is correct about the form of the development section, he is incorrect in assigning a key to the first theme at m 152. He believes that the first theme returns in F-sharp minor at m 152. However, both the accompaniment and the theme itself suggest A major, even though the key is never confirmed due to the chromatic ostinato in the pedal.
the leading tone (enharmonically spelled as B-flat). The pedal makes a final stepwise ascent before disappearing as the composer anticipates the return of the first theme.\footnote{Vierne’s omission of the pedal and his use of a churning ostinato alludes to the transition between the \textit{Introduction} and the \textit{Allegro}.}

![Figure 2.18: Allegro, mm. 152-157](image)

The recapitulation begins with the reiteration of the full form of the first theme in the pedal in B minor.\footnote{Here, the phrase “the first theme ... in full” refers to the full form of the theme as it was heard at the opening of the \textit{Allegro}, not its introductory form nor the various treatments it received during the development.} The final section of the \textit{Allegro} features a return not only to the themes in their original forms and the original key, but also the repetition of much of the material from the exposition. Indeed, several
transitional passages and countersubjects are shared by the opening and closing sections, such as the chordal countersubject to the first theme. Nevertheless, Vierne foils the expectations set up by the exposition as he reiterates the first theme in a slightly modified form in the mediant key rather than in the tonic. The alterations to the theme do not change its character, for it maintains its minor-key identity (unlike its modal appearances in the development). At first the accompaniment reflects the key of the theme, yet slowly the harmonic stability unravels as the chromaticism of the left hand pervades the other voices. The opening motive of the first theme strives to reassert itself in the pedal via multiple false starts. However, the theme has also been tainted by the preceding chromaticism as the ascending perfect fifth is exchanged for a tritone. The registration is reduced, and the opening motive appears once more on the Grand Orgue before unraveling in a series of sequences.

Vierne shifts into the recapitulation of the second theme using a perpetual-motion ostinato akin to the opening accompaniment of Schubert’s Gretchen am Spinnenrade. The key signature changes to that of the parallel major, and the composer states the theme accompanied by the same rhythmic motive and counter themes as the exposition. As one might expect, Vierne begins the theme on the sixth scale degree while harmonizing it in a disguised dominant-seventh chord on F-sharp. The composer repeats the theme in the same key, then segues

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63 The complete theme refers to the first theme as originally stated at the opening of the Allegro.

64 See mm. 189-191 of the Allegro.
into the coda via a chromatic stepwise descent in the pedal ending on the Neapolitan.

The coda serves as the resolution of multiple harmonies in the micro- and macro-harmonic structure of the movement, marking the resolution of both the Neapolitan from m. 209 and the prolonged dominant harmony from the recapitulation of the second theme. As the pedal Trumpets the opening half of the first theme, Vierne does not fully transform the melody into major, keeping the sixth scale degree in the minor mode. Thus, Vierne saves the full transformation of the theme for the Final. The melody changes into a virtuosic B major bell motive as the manuals sound out a series of tonic chords with a 7-6 suspension, an allusion to the ascending seventh of the first theme.\(^6\) The Allegro finishes with a series of punctuated tonic chords. For the first time in his organ symphonies, Vierne adds a scale-degree six to the tonic chord, adding an extra flair of color to the final cadence.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) The dominant seventh harmony is more obvious at m 192. Then the left hand reaches up in a series of chromatic parallel thirds while the dominant harmony is continued via a pedal point on F-sharp at m. 194.

\(^7\) Ibid.

\(^6\) It is possible that the composer may also have included the sixth scale degree in the final tonic chord as an allusion to the number of the organ symphony. Nevertheless, this is pure speculation.
CHAPTER 3

ARIA

The previous chapter described the foundation of the Sixth Symphony as resting upon the juxtaposition of opposites, specifically in regards to the two cyclic themes. One theme reflects characteristics of instrumental music, the other, vocal music. The composer does the same in the titling and construction of the first two movements of the symphony. The first movement is composed in sonata-allegro form, a structure associated since its inception with instrumental music. By titling the second movement “Aria,” a form primarily associated with solo voice, the idea of contrast is writ large across the first half of the symphony.68 A closer examination reveals that Vierne appears to have put a great deal of consideration into the naming of this movement, for the genre with which it is associated determines its most fundamental characteristics.

Vierne alludes to the genre of the aria in his choice of theme: a beautiful, tragic melody played on the 8’ Trompette on the Récit (see Figure 3.1) This theme is fundamentally characterized by its lyricism. Similar to the first theme of the Allegro, it possesses a broad ambitus and contains eleven of the twelve chromatic

68 Jack Westrup, et al, “Aria,” Grove Music Online; Oxford Music Online (Oxford University Press) Accessed 9 December 2016; (http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.library.nd.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/43315). An aria typically refers to any closed lyrical piece for solo voice with or without instrumental accompaniment, either independent or forming part of an opera, oratorio, cantata, or other large work. It has also been applied to instrumental music and usually implies that the piece was written on a vocal model.
tones. In addition, while the first theme of the Allegro consists of a series of ascending sixths, a closer examination of the underlying structure of the theme reveals a heavily decorated chromatic stepwise descent of a sixth. In this respect, the theme is also derived from the second theme of the first movement, as both are fundamentally characterized by stepwise motion. The Aria centers upon the transformation of this theme. Indeed, Duruflé described the Aria as the climax of the Sixth Symphony: “In this endless, ceaselessly expanding and always recurring melody, the composer confides a secret to us — a loud invocation, a pathetic outcry of the heart. Perhaps one can see this movement as a reflection of the bitter fate that plagued him throughout his life.” When the theme returns later in the symphony Duruflé later refers to the melody as a “dark nightmare.” This endless, recurring melodic cry of which Duruflé speaks forms the heart of the Aria.

69 Kasouf, 167. Kasouf observes that that the omitted twelfth tone, D-sharp, in the first setting of the theme, is the eleventh tone in the second setting (m. 12). Likewise, the omitted twelfth tone, B-sharp, in the second setting, is the eleventh tone in the first setting (m 9).

70 See mm. 6-9.

71 The theme of the Aria also resembles the languid rhythm of the second cyclic theme especially as it appears in the Introduction, contrasted against the rhythmic energy of the first cyclic theme in both the Introduction and the Allegro.

72 Vierne, Helga Schauerte-Maubouet, Sixth Symphony, xviii.

73 Ibid. The theme is heard again in the B section of the Adagio.
Vierne opens the *Aria* not with the main theme but rather with a five-measure homophonic introduction resembling a modal chorale (see Figure 3.2). The gentle ascent of the melody in the top voice serves as a charming foil to the descending arc of the main theme. Unlike the homophonic setting of the second theme in the *Introduction*, the chordal texture is unmistakably diatonic. However, once again, the composer reveals his preference for a tonal language galvanized by modality as the lilting melody in the top voice is harmonized in a series of seventh- and ninth-chords akin to the impressionistic style of Debussy. In addition, the bassline ascends in a stepwise Phrygian scale on D, while the harmony oscillates between the two inflections of the second scale degree. Vierne further characterizes the modal chorale using a registration comprising the eight-foot *Principal*, *Salicional*, and *Bourdon* on the *Positif* division, resulting in a gentle, shimmering haze, a welcome respite after the stormy *Allegro*.

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74 Kasouf, 166. Kasouf states that this introductory section is a purely harmonic idea. However, this section is dominated by the melody in the top voice, the ascending arc of the top voice counterbalancing the descending arc of the main theme. That being said, the harmony and texture accompanying each melody play an important role in their characterization.

75 Ibid.
Vierne also alludes to the vocal genre in the structure of the movement. An aria is typically composed in an A-B-A’ format. However, Vierne is far too clever to follow this structure in such a textbook fashion. Instead, he takes a subtler route, introducing the theme in what may be described as a double exposition labeled A and A’. In the following B section, Vierne continues to develop theme A rather than introducing new material.\textsuperscript{76} The theme winds its way through several

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{76} Walton, 110; Kasouf, 166. Kasouf designates the form of the Aria as A-B-A. Walton describes the form of the Aria as follows: A, A’, development of A, and a coda using the first cyclic theme and significant material from the A section. The pedal holds the key to the labelling of this last section. The dominant pedal point from the opening A section serves as a guide in determining the surrounding harmonic landscape. Similarly, the return of the A in the pedal at m. 71, marks a return (however brief) to the home key, though the texture is quickly destabilized. The dominant pedal point does not resolve until m. 79, after which the subsequent material may be labeled as a codetta.
\end{itemize}
keys before indirectly returning to the key of D major at m. 71 with the
reappearance of both the pedal point on A and the original form of the main
theme. Here Vierne creates the sense of a *da capo* form through allusion rather
than literal repetition by reintroducing and juxtaposing two-measure fragments
from the A section.

Yet a sense of proportion is maintained as each A section
comprises seventeen measures while the development section is almost twice as
long at thirty-five measures (see Figure 3.3).

<table>
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<th>Vierne, Symphony VI: <em>Aria</em>, A-B-A’ form</th>
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<td><strong>Key</strong></td>
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Figure 3.3: *Aria*, structure

The harmonic trajectory of the movement similarly corresponds to the *da capo*
format of the movement as both A sections are composed in the key of D
minor while the B section modulates to several different keys. Similar to the
*Allegro*, Vierne relies heavily on the pedal and the accompaniment to establish
tonal centers, frequently employing pedal points and arpeggiated harmonies.
Both A sections feature prolonged pedal points on A as Vierne reinforces the key
through emphasis on the dominant rather than the tonic. In the B section the

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77 It may be said that the form of the *Aria* imitates that of a sonata-allegro movement in
that it consists of a mono-thematic exposition, development, and recapitulation. However, while
multiple keys are explored in the development section, the *Aria* lacks the significant feature of key
contrast inherent to the sonata-allegro form.
composer explores multiple chromatic inflections of the sixth scale degree, modulating to tonal areas centered on B-flat and B. After a brief return to the key of D, Vierne modulates to E and E-flat in another allusion to the Phrygian mode. The first cyclic theme makes a brief appearance in G-sharp minor in mm. 67-68 before Vierne modulates back to the tonic key for the conclusion of the movement.

Unlike the Introduction, there is little tonal ambiguity to the opening of the Aria. Composed in the key of D minor, the chordal introduction begins with an opening root position ninth chord on D. The chromaticism of the previous movement returns with the entrance of the theme. However, the key of the harmonization of the theme in the A sections is discernible from several factors: multiple pedal points on A as well as the entrance of the theme on A at m. 6; the outlining of a D minor triad in the pedal at mm. 8 and 11; and the half cadence on an A major triad at the conclusion of both A sections. Thus, while it is heavily disguised both by the modal writing at the opening chordal introduction and the chromaticism of the theme and its accompaniment in the left hand, the tonic key of the Aria is undoubtedly D minor. Nevertheless, Vierne accomplishes this disguised tonality through the autonomy of the upper voices. Similar to the exposition of the second theme in the Allegro, the voices move and resolve independently of one another so that the lines never simultaneously arrive on A major. Thus, while the harmony of A major is horizontally implied, it is vertically delayed until the cadences at mm. 17 and 34.
The composer’s treatment of the theme of the *Aria* is best described as transformed repetition.\(^78\) This treatment closely resembles that of the main theme from the *Moderato* of Widor’s *Symphonie romane*. One may recall Widor’s description of his handling of the theme in the *Avant propos* to this symphony: “There is only one way to impress on the listener’s memory a theme so fluid: that is to repeat it constantly.” In the *Aria*, Vierne adopts this idea as his creed, including the theme in the texture throughout the movement. While Widor maintains musical interest in the *Moderato* of the *Symphonie romane* through key changes as well as brief departures and returns to the theme, Vierne takes a different route. The composer states the theme several times beneath a pedal point on A, elaborating the theme a little more each time. As the theme spins out in its third statement in m. 13, the pedal finally exerts itself, falling to C then proceeding upward in a broken, chromatically disguised Phrygian scale.\(^79\) This passage is then repeated and extended, but the brief sojourn away from the pedal point is short-lived. The harmony falls back to A major and there is a dramatic pause. The composer then repeats the chordal introduction and the theme, though this time the manuals for the theme and its accompaniment are reversed so that each sounds in the previous register of its counterpart.

\(^{78}\) Long, 56-58. Alternatively, Long refers to this form of melodic composition as “continuous expansion,” a compositional process in which a single theme is the source of the main melodic ideas of the entire movement. Variety is achieved through variation, extension, and truncation.

\(^{79}\) See the pedal line at mm 12-13.
The B section serves as an extensive development section. While Vierne changes neither the key signature nor the registration, the theme is repeated at various scale degrees as it cycles through tonal centers emphasizing chromatic inflections of the sixth and second scale degrees. Thus, the main theme of the Aria undergoes a series of transformations similar to those of the first cyclic theme in the Allegro. Meanwhile, the shape and the contour of the accompaniment remains largely unchanged, lilting and chromatic. Beginning on E, the first statement of the theme keeps the exact contour of its original appearance for the first two measures before trailing off beneath a gentle rocking motion in the pedal emphasizing the tonal center of B-flat. The theme then winds back up the scale, and the previous four measures are sequenced note-for-note in the key of B major.

It is not until the third statement of the theme on F-sharp that the theme begins significantly to change shape (while keeping its opening motion of a descending leap). The harmonic motion also changes, alternating between chromatic inflections of seventh chords on D and A-flat in a dramatic emphasis of the tritone. One might expect this arrival on D to bear more weight, considering it is theoretically the first arrival in the home key of the movement. However, the harmonic surroundings — the tonicization of B and the neighbor motion of D to A-flat in the pedal — diminish the aural impact of the arrival on D. Nevertheless, the D still functions as the prevailing tonal center, for A-flat is still defined by and

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80 Once again, Vierne relies on the bassline to establish the key. However, it is worth noting that in m. 35 the bassline of the left hand outlines a stepwise descent from B-flat to F, though the chromaticism makes it impossible to determine the tonality until the pedal entrance at the pickup to m. 37.
dependent upon D. Thus, Vierne does not intend A-flat as a pure color chord, in
the style of impressionism, even though it is outside the bounds of traditional
tonal harmony.

In m. 46 the A-flat harmony is repurposed in a V-I modulation to the key
of D-flat. The melody proceeds to keep the general contour of the theme before
spinning out in a sequence of sixteenth notes. The line continues to rise, soaring
up to a B before alighting in the key of E. It is at this moment that the listener
receives the satisfaction of a substantial point of arrival. Vierne repeats the
material from mm. 43-46 in the key of the supertonic and, as before, he
transforms the seventh chord on the tritone (B-flat) into a dominant chord in a V-
I modulation to the key of E-flat major. Vierne’s use of both inflections of the
second scale degree within the harmonic trajectory of the Aria serves as another
example of the use of the Phrygian mode.

As the pedal outlines a third on E-flat, the theme spins out in a string of
rising sixteenth notes. However, the arrival in the tonal center of E-flat is short-
lived as Vierne uses a Phrygian cadence in m. 59 to modulate back to E just as the
melody reaches its zenith on D. Nevertheless, the composer continues to stress
the dual inflection of the second scale degree as the stepwise third in the pedal
proceeds to fluctuate between F-sharp and F-natural. The harmony begins to
modulate away from E beginning in m. 63, where Vierne introduces a brief pedal

\[81\] The modulation first to E and then to E-flat serves as another example of the influence
of the Phrygian scale on the Aria, in this case writ large across the B section. In addition, the dual
inflection of the second scale degree is manifested in the motion of the pedal, oscillating first
between between F-natural and F-flat, then between F-natural and F-sharp as the tonality shifts
back to E.
ostinato which pushes the harmonic trajectory towards G-sharp minor in preparation for the reintroduction of the first cyclic theme.

A series of descending figures ensues in the right hand as the melody tumbles down in a whole tone scale (mm. 59 and 61), a motion counteracted by the rising whole tone figure in the alto voice. Vierne uses a winding sequence of sixteenth notes to transition into the return of the first cyclic theme in m. 67. Set against the shimmering flute registration on the *Grand Orgue*, the theme is heard in the key of G-sharp minor (see Figure 3.4). The key of the theme is reinforced by the accompaniment: a neighbor motion in the pedal harmonized as an alternating first inversion G-sharp minor triad and a major-minor seventh chord on A-sharp. The rocking third at the conclusion of the first cyclic theme meanders down in a sequential figure, which serves as a bridge to the A’ section.

Figure 3.4: *Aria*, mm. 66-70
As previously mentioned, the composer constructs the *Aria* in an A-B-A’ form through the return of fragments of the opening material rather than as a literal repeat. Vierne further veils his compositional technique by switching the order of the motives, bringing back the pedal point on A and the opening two phrases of the main theme in its original key. He pauses dramatically after the F-sharp. Vierne then reintroduces the first two measures of the chordal theme registered using the *Salicional* and the *Unda maris* stops on the *Positif*. In addition, the chordal theme is underpinned by a D-flat major scale in the bass (as opposed to the previously heard Phrygian scale). There is another pause followed by the return of the pedal point on A. However, here Vierne transposes both the theme and its accompaniment, the theme up a half step, the accompaniment up a whole step. There is a third emphatic pause, then the chorale theme is repeated one last time, transposed to the tonal center of F.

At last the prolonged pedal point of the opening A sections resolves to the tonic with the arrival of the D in the pedal in m. 79, marking the beginning of the codetta. The accompaniment registration is reduced to the *Octave grave et aiguë* on the *Positif*. The first cyclic theme resurfaces on a haunting solo stop known as the *Ophicléide* on the *Récit*. Unlike its previous statement, it is colored by the

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82 The registration specifically calls for the *Core françois ou Ophicléide* on the *Récit*. According to the liner notes from Martin Jean’s recording, the *Ophicléide* is a stop found only on American and British organs, instruments to which Vierne was exposed during his recital tours abroad. Thus, the Sixth Symphony also serves as an example of the influence of foreign instruments upon Louis Vierne as a composer and orchestrator.
same species of mode mixture found in its last appearance at the conclusion of the Allegro: a predominantly major mode save for the lowered sixth scale degree. The theme rises to a lilting third on D, set against a countersubject consisting of a series of parallel sixths. This countersubject outlines a D major chord with an added B-flat, reflecting the implied harmony of the theme and, by extension, its instability. As before, the rocking third serves as a transitional device, continuing to dabble in mode mixture as it slips from F-sharp to F-natural before tracing its way to A where it finally comes to rest in a D major chord. The composer finally resolves the flatted sixth scale degree of the cyclic theme in the right hand in a pungent 6-5 suspension, and the Aria comes to a close veiled in mystery.

83 These descending parallel sixths serve as a motivic companion to the first cyclic theme, as they are also found in the accompaniment to its previous appearance at mm 67-69.
CHAPTER 4

SCHERZO

The Sixth Symphony continues with a sprightly Scherzo in G minor. According to Duruflé, Vierne intended for the third movement to depict the fiendish characters adorning the visage of the composer’s cathedral: “The Scherzo, although wishing to jest, neither succeeds in finding a true gaiety nor makes one forget the somber nightmares that haunt the Aria. Instead, the composer, with a sparkling verve, depicts the diabolical giggles of grimacing gargoyles.”  

Jeremy Filsell has described the conclusion of the Aria of the Sixth Symphony as a “musical sunset of static luminosity.”  

If the Aria is the sunset, then the Scherzo is Vierne’s version of Mussorgsky’s Night on Bald Mountain, complete with impish gargoyles, though more mischievous than menacing. Indeed, marked “Vivace,” and composed in the sprightly time signature of 6/16, the movement serves as both a light-hearted interlude between the symphony’s two slow movements and a welcome respite after the severity of the Allegro and the dark mystery of the Aria. Nevertheless, Vierne permeates the whimsy of the Scherzo with complicated rhythms and chromaticism which, together, lend the

84 Smith, 567.

movement a touch of the grotesque similar to that found in the second movement of Mahler’s Fourth Symphony.\footnote{It is worth noting that, more so than Vierne, Mahler is known for blending the traditions of vocal and instrumental music within the context of symphonic forms, expanding upon the precedent set by Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. For example, in the Fourth Symphony, Mahler includes a setting for solo soprano and orchestra in the last movement.}

The Scherzo is built upon the alternation of two themes: the first cyclic theme and a new theme unique to this movement. The latter, theme A, comprises two motives, each of which is defined by a rhythmic profile resulting in the alternation between duple and triple meter within the 6/16 time signature (see Figure 4.1).\footnote{Kasouf, 169. These chordal tone clusters typically contain 11-12 of the chromatic tones which, according to Kasouf, behave chromatically rather than serially. In the liner notes to his recording of the complete Vierne organ symphonies, Martin Jean describes theme A as the collapse of the second cyclic theme into a series of tone clusters. While there is not substantial evidence to prove such a claim, it is legitimate to say that theme A is reminiscent of the second cyclical theme in its narrow span and its use of stepwise chromaticism.} The first motive is composed in duple meter and consists of an upward sweeping arpeggio of a seventh chord. This opening arpeggio leads through stepwise voice leading into the second motive, a triple section consisting of three sets of three chromatic staccato chord clusters. The upper F-sharp functions like a G-flat, leading down to F. Meanwhile, the B-flat functions like an A-sharp, moving up to B. The second cluster harmony leads directly back to the same arpeggio. However, the A-flat in m. 4 functions like a G-sharp, moving up to A, while the E-sharp and the C-sharp remain fixed as F-natural and D-flat, respectively. Thus, the second cluster harmony links the two key areas of the opening phrase (see Figure 4.1). This type of voice governs the behavior of the theme throughout the A sections.
Figure 4.1: *Scherzo*, Theme A, mm. 1-4, harmonic reduction

Vierne further characterizes theme A with a distinct sentence structure consisting of two phrases functioning in an antecedent-consequent relationship. Typically comprising four or eight measures, these phrases may be subdivided into two-measure segments. In the first phrase, the second set of two measures generally serves as a repeat of the two preceding it. The consequent phrase is constructed of either four or eight measures usually comprising a type of chromatic sequential figure. These sequential figures, combined with the chromatic chord clusters, lend the theme a highly modulatory character. In addition, Vierne distinguishes theme A with a cornet registration which, combined with the vigorous rhythm of the staccato chords, results in a dazzling virtuosity not unlike that of the *Scherzo* movement from Mendelssohn’s Octet (1825).
Theme A is contrasted with theme B, a form of the first cyclic theme played on the Récit using the Basson-Hautbois (see Figure 4.2). Unlike the Aria, here Vierne uses a variation of the first cyclic theme as heard in the exposition of the Allegro — in other words, in its antecedent-consequent form, as theme B divides equally into two sets of eight measures, ending in a half cadence on the leading tone. Nevertheless, the principle of thematic transformation is still at work. In the Scherzo the composer rhythmically displaces the theme so that the opening pickup falls on the strong beat while the rocking third functions as a syncopation. Furthermore, Vierne sets the theme in a series of even staccato notes broken up into groups of two by sixteenth rests. This staccato treatment and rhythmic displacement, combined with the registration using the almost comical Basson-Hautbois, lend the theme a devilish character.
Figure 4.3: *Scherzo*, Theme B

The chordal, perpetual-motion figuration of theme A becomes the accompaniment to theme B as Vierne once again associates the first cyclic theme with harmonic stability. Similar to the presentation of the theme at the opening of the *Allegro*, Vierne harmonizes the first half of the melody in the tonic, while the second half is harmonized in a modulatory sequence. The right hand accompaniment adopts a two-bar stepwise diatonic ascent from the dominant to the tonic harmonized in a series of open fifths (a continuation from the conclusion of section A). Meanwhile, the pedal assumes a four-bar chromatic stepwise descent from the tonic to the subdominant. In this way the composer simultaneously emphasizes both the two-, four-, and eight-measure phrase structure pervading the entire movement while indirectly reinforcing the new key. Vierne employs the same accompanimental strategy for the majority of the presentations of theme B within the *Scherzo*. 
Rather than developing the two themes, Vierne alternates them in an expanded binary structure using the following key structure: Gm — Em — Am — E-flat m — F-sharp m — Bm — Gm (see Figure 4.4). While he continues to emphasize local tertiary relationships through modulations to the mediant and multiple chromatic inflections of the submediant, he also highlights the super tonic and the leading tone. It is worth noting that if the keys of the Scherzo are reordered as they occur within the span of the octave, one finds that they fall within the ambitus of eight half-steps from E-flat minor to B minor. The interval of a minor sixth, a significant interval in the structure of the first cyclic theme, also comprises eight half steps. The significance of this ambitus is further bolstered by the fact that E-flat also serves as an enharmonic spelling of D-sharp. In addition, the Scherzo contains six keys, another possible example of the influence of the numbering of this particular symphony upon its harmonic and melodic design.

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88 Long, 51, 62; Kasouf, 169. As is the case with many of the middle movements of Vierne’s organ symphonies, scholars disagree over the form of the Scherzo. However, some of this discrepancy stems from the attempts of scholars to force the structure of the movement into a standard form such as sonata-allegro rather than allowing for compositional originality or a formal hybrid. Long notes that this movement is composed in a sonata-allegro form, while Kasouf designates the work as a free rondo form. The chief argument against its designation as a sonata-allegro movement is its lack of thematic development. Instead of developing the themes (as found in the Allegro), Vierne alternates between simple restatements of the themes with frequent changes in key. Furthermore, there is no true recapitulation but rather Vierne composes an abridged return to the opening figuration in the tonic key of G minor. Kasouf’s labelling of the Scherzo as a rondo form is also problematic. A rondo, at its simplest, is typically represented as A-B-A-C-A, with the A section or rondo theme usually recurring in the tonic key and the episodes modulating to related keys. In addition, the episodes of a rondo usually introduce new themes. The Scherzo revolves around two themes, and there is not enough diversion from either theme for the movement to function as a rondo form (unlike the Final, which is composed in a classical rondo form).
The harmonic language of the Scherzo is the least classical in its tonal organization. The texture of the A sections is ambiguous and modulatory, for while each section begins with a tonic arpeggio emphasizing the harmonic minor mode, Vierne subsequently obscures the tonic through sequential figures and complex voice leading within chromatic chord clusters. In addition, although the arpeggio of the tonic harmony returns multiple times, he often includes multiple chromatic inflections of the mediant (albeit sometimes enharmonically spelled) within the figure. The key of the A sections is further disguised by Vierne’s inclusion of multiple whole tone passages. By contrast, the B sections are characterized by tonal stability as the composer harmonizes the first cyclic theme predominantly in the tonic key.

The Scherzo opens with a return to the driving force of the Allegro at a virtuosic 100 to the dotted eighth note. The swift tempo, combined with the quick manual changes and the mischievous themes lend the third movement an almost jovial brilliance in spite of its exclusive use of minor tonalities. Theme A bursts forth in G minor, the ascending arpeggio on the slightly louder Grand Orgue 89.  

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89 Kasouf, 171.
followed by its counterpart of chord clusters on the \textit{Positif}. The initial arpeggio motive serves a double purpose. First, Vierne subdivides the A sections into smaller units of eight and twelve measures through the departure from and return to the tonic arpeggio and its subsequent staccato chords (see Figure 4.5). Second, he commonly associates the initial arpeggio of each subsection with the tonic key. While appearing in different modes over the course of the A sections, the arpeggio typically outlines a harmony on the tonic, anchoring the tonal center amidst the chromatic sequences and chord clusters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vierne, Symphony VI: Scherzo, section A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.5: Scherzo, section A, structure

The opening antecedent phrase concludes with the repeat of the first two measures of theme A. The consequent ensues with a descending sequence leading to a cluster chord on the Neapolitan of A-flat in m. 8. The A-flat subsequently resolves to G, and Vierne begins subsection “b” with the return of the opening

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid. Kasouf claims that the first A section of the \textit{Scherzo} has a ternary structure. However, since the composer appears to create subsections within the A sections of the movement through the departure from and return to the ascending arpeggiated seventh chord, theorists must take into account the return of this figure at m. 29 after the sequence and transposition found in subsection “c.” While subsection “d” continues in the vein of subsection “c” in many respects (in this case, the held notes in the left hand and the descending parallel thirds in the right), the material is original enough to merit its own subsection. The phrase structure also indicates a new subsection, with an antecedent comprising four measures (similar to the prior antecedents) and a consequent of twelve measures as found in subsection “b”. This combination creates an overarching division of the first A section into two subsections each twenty measures in length, creating a structure of classical, balanced proportions.
material. The pedal enters the fray in the consequent phrase, underpinning a sequence of diminished-seventh chords moving in staccato, stepwise motion. The material of the consequent of subsection “b” looks both backwards and forwards: backwards in that it reflects the previous consequent phrase, for both consist of descending sequential figures; forwards in that both manuals preview the upcoming B section with a chordal texture in the right hand and a short rhythmic figuration in the left. Vierne sequences the consequent material up a whole step in mm. 17-20, and subsection “b” concludes with a diminished harmony on the leading tone to D.

Vierne begins subsection “c” with an arpeggiated seventh chord on G in m. 21. Although the arpeggio includes multiple chromatic inflections of the mediant (see Figure 4.6), Vierne confirms the tonic key by concluding the phrase with a half cadence on D in m. 24. The phrase is subsequently sequenced in a brief tonicization of the Neapolitan, enharmonically spelled as G-sharp.
Subsection “d” opens with a brief return of the harmonic minor, this time as a first inversion seventh chord on B. However, the texture drifts even further afield harmonically as Vierne initiates the transition into the B section. The pedal and the right hand become dueling partners, moving in contrary motion as the bassline initiates a stepwise chromatic ascent. The left-hand features multiple short pedal points, first on G and then on F, anticipating a Phrygian resolution to E in the next section. The accompaniment arrives at a hollow sonority, an open fifth on B. This open fifth serves as the dominant to Section B as the key signature changes to E minor.

Section B comprises two statements of the first cyclic theme in the submediant key, first in the left hand and then in the right. As previously discussed, the harmonization of theme B of the Scherzo serves as an example of Vierne’s horizontal emphasis of a vertical function (the tonic) in multiple,
independent musical lines. Though the manuals and pedal all suggest the key of E minor, Vierne avoids their vertical alignment until mm. 60 and 64 of the reiteration of the theme in the right hand. The sixteenth-note pulse of the preceding section continues in the right hand in a stepwise diatonic ascent from B to E, harmonized as a series of fourths and fifths. Meanwhile, the bassline outlines a chromatic fifth from E to A. Vierne places the first cyclic theme in the left hand, displacing the rhythm so that it is paradoxically synchronized with the bassline. However, while the composer harmonizes the first half of the theme in the tonic, the accompaniment to the sequential second half is modulatory, featuring multiple tritones as well as augmented and diminished harmonies.

Vierne concludes the first statement of theme B with a half cadence on the leading tone, then reiterates the theme in the right hand with slight alterations in the accompaniment. The pedal continues its contrapuntal partnership with the right hand, ever moving in contrary motion with the theme. However, both accompaniment figures assume a more diatonic tone as the pedal figure pauses on B and the first two phrases of the theme cadence briefly in the tonic. Using an augmented-sixth chord in a type of Phrygian resolution to E, Vierne pivots back to theme A in the key of A minor (see Figure 4.7).
Theme A returns without substantial alterations as Vierne continues to create subsections through the return of the ascending arpeggio motive (see Figure 4.8). Nevertheless, Vierne creates variety by fragmenting and reordering material from the previous A section in the new key. As found at the beginning of the movement, the opening arpeggio outlines a harmonic minor-seventh chord on the tonic. However, here Vierne abridges the antecedent to two measures and the consequent to six measures. This tonic arpeggio is reiterated in m. 81, marking the beginning of subsection “b” as Vierne reiterates the sequence of diminished-seventh chords from the previous A section. This passage concludes with a diminished harmony on D-sharp, the secondary dominant to E.

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91 For example, subsection “f” consists of material previously heard in subsections “d” and “a” while subsection “g” contains material from subsections “c” and “b.”
Subsections “c” and “d” largely follow the patterns previously set by their counterparts in the preceding section. Vierne completes Section A’ with an open fifth on B-flat as the texture modulates to the key of E-flat minor.

Vierne, Symphony VI: Scherzo, section A’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
<td>Am</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>A – V/Ebm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.8: Scherzo, section A’, structure

Section B’ comprises four statements of theme B with a brief interlude between the second and third statements (see Figure 4.9). The first statement functions as a transposition of the first statement of the first cyclic theme in the previous B section. However, the composer abruptly veers into F-sharp minor for the second statement. The theme finishes and a series of sequences ensues as the texture modulates to the mediant key. Vierne subsequently reiterates the theme in B minor, the sequential second half concluding with a return to the tonic key.

Vierne, Symphony VI: Scherzo, section B’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>a’</th>
<th>b</th>
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<td>145</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>169</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
<td>Ebm</td>
<td>F#m</td>
<td>modulatory</td>
<td>Bm</td>
<td>Gm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B, inv.</td>
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</tbody>
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Figure 4.9: Scherzo, section B’, structure

The final statement of theme B occurs in inversion featuring all twelve of the chromatic tones. The pedal and the left hand resume their dueling stance,
moving in contrary motion. The theme finishes on the Neapolitan of G and the
texture catapults back into the opening material of the Scherzo in the tonic key.
Rather than defaulting to a complete restatement of the A material, Vierne
devises a strategy similar to that of the Aria, creating a rounded form through
abridged, modified quotations from the opening A section. Nevertheless, the
composer also introduces new material, an ornamental falling arpeggio figure in
the pedal.

The Scherzo concludes with a lengthy coda. Although the harmony arrives
in the tonic at m. 193, the movement is propelled forward by the insistent
staccato pedal point on G. Simultaneously, the manuals assume a series of rising
and falling staccato chords harmonizing a sequence of suspension/neighbor
figures. The pedal comes to rest on the tonic while the motion continues in the
manuals in multiple whole-tone sequences, a series of alternating chordal and
scalar passages. The final chordal sequence climbs inexorably higher, halting on a
G minor triad. Meanwhile, Vierne finally resolves the Neapolitan from the
conclusion of the last statement of the first cyclic theme, the pedal descending
from A-flat to G.92 The sun is rising and the misshapen beasts, having finished
their romp, have returned to their perches along the rooftop of the sacred edifice.

92 Kasouf, 171. Kasouf describes the final cadence as a Neapolitan sixth moving to tonic G
minor. However, the final cadence actually uses a root position Neapolitan rather than first
inversion.
Vierne connects the Adagio to the vocal tradition through the organization of the movement into an A-B-A’ pattern; the use of multiple lyrical themes; and the composer’s evocation of the symphonic writing of Wagnerian opera. The mischievous themes of the Scherzo are forgotten as Vierne conjures “a profound meditation, an eloquent lyricism, a romantic exuberance.”

The movement revolves around the interplay of three themes: theme A, a version of the second cyclic theme; theme B, yet another version of the first cyclic theme; and theme C, a third theme loosely derived from that of the Aria. Duruflé’s description of the Adagio may correspond to these three themes, theme A serving as the “profound meditation,” theme B as the “eloquent lyricism,” and theme C as the “romantic exuberance.” Like the Aria, Vierne composes the Adagio in an A-B-A’ form, with the A’ section functioning as an abridged return to the opening material. Here the second cyclic theme is the primary focus as Vierne uses theme A as the principle material of the outer sections, while themes B and C are heard within the context of the middle section (see Figure 5.1).

93 Smith, 567.
94 Vierne, Helga Schauerte-Maubouet, Sixth Symphony, xviii.
95 The Aria is organized according to a 2:1 ratio (the B section composed at twice the length of the A section), while the Adagio is composed according to a 3:2 ratio.
Thus, Vierne brings the two cyclic themes into direct contact with each other for the second time within the context of a single movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vierne, Symphony VI: IV. Adagio, A-B-A’ form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subsection</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
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</table>

Figure 5.1: *Adagio*, structure

The last time the composer presented the second cyclic theme was in the recapitulation of the *Allegro*, set in a sequence of lilting sixteenth notes in a 6/8 time signature. In the *Adagio* Vierne recalls the theme as heard in the *Introduction*, setting it in languid quarter notes harmonized in a chromatic four-voice texture. In addition, Vierne uses all twelve chromatic tones in the exposition of the theme in both A sections.\(^{96}\) The theme appears in multiple forms, namely the original form, the inverted form, and a hybrid which combines these forms into one sinuous melody (See Figures 5.2 and 5.3).\(^{97}\) Vierne’s

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\(^{96}\) The twelve chromatic tones are included in both the introduction and the second statement of theme A of the *Adagio*, implying that they are inherent to the theme in its complete form.

\(^{97}\) Kasouf, 172. According to Kasouf, this combination of the second theme in its original and inverted forms is a technique commonly associated with serialism. However, while inversion is included within Schoenberg’s serialist treatments, this is neither a defining quality of nor an exclusive practice within serialism. Furthermore, the inclusion and combination of inverted and original forms of a theme cannot be attributed solely to serialism. On the contrary, this technique is a feature in the music of numerous composers including Dietrich Buxtehude (such as his *Praeludium in E Minor*, BuxWV 142) and J.S. Bach (such as his chorale preludes on *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*, BWV 659-661).
treatment of theme A in the Adagio is similar to that of the main theme of the Aria. Once again, he uses the strategy of transformative repetition, a compositional technique in which he considerably varies the presentation of the theme, expanding and truncating all three versions over the course of the movement.

Figure 5.2: Adagio, Theme A

Figure 5.3: Adagio, Theme A, inversion

The accompaniment to theme A also resembles that of the second theme in the Allegro as Vierne uses his method of displaced resolution to avoid the clear establishment of a tonal center. However, while the voices of the accompaniment occasionally aligned in their resolutions in the Allegro, Vierne takes this method to new extremes in the Adagio. Just as he resolves a dissonance in one voice, he simultaneously introduces a new dissonance in another (see Figure 5.4). All of these features combine to create a melody that is both labyrinthine and unsettling to the listener.
Vierne derives theme B from the first half of the first cyclic theme, and, like the Scherzo and Allegro, associates it with tonal stability. In the Adagio the melody is heard in both its original and inverted forms and is subject to melodic as well as rhythmic alterations. The melodic alterations are slight: the augmented fifth is replaced with a minor seventh, and the 7-6 suspension figures are omitted in the second half of the theme (see Figure 5.5). However, with the exception of these modifications, the structure of the theme resembles that of the theme as heard in its final statement at the conclusion of the Allegro.\footnote{Indeed, the first appearance of the theme in the Adagio and its final statement in the Allegro are in the same mode: B major with a flat scale degree six and seven.} The theme is immediately followed by its inversion, though not in the same key, instead outlining the secondary dominant of F-sharp. Like the original form of the first cyclic theme, the inversion undergoes its own melodic modifications as it modulates away from B major. Meanwhile, Vierne modifies the rhythm of the theme, displacing the melody by a sixteenth note so that it is syncopated with the accompaniment. In addition, he lengthens the conclusion of the theme from four bars to six. Similar to the theme’s accompaniment in the Allegro, Vierne
underpins theme B with pedal points and arpeggiated chords emphasizing the tonic. Thus, the composer continues to juxtapose the two cyclic themes, one irregular, meandering, and chromatic, the other balanced and diatonic.

Figure 5.5: *Adagio*, mm. 79-84

About halfway through the B section, theme B disintegrates into the newly composed theme C, a soaring melody set against a lush chromatic backdrop. As mentioned previously, the first statement of theme C follows the general contour of the main theme of the *Aria*, a solo melody tumbling downward then soaring up as it is repeated with considerable ornamentation. The melody is subsequently transformed as it modulates away from its original key. This theme serves as an example of the sublime melodies for which the organ music of Vierne is renowned, while also aesthetically tipping its hat to the lyricism of the music of César Franck and Richard Wagner. The theme also combines features from both preceding melodies: its balanced proportions, conceived over the length of four
measures, imitate those of theme B, while its winding melody imitates that of theme A. The accompaniment to theme C resembles that of theme B as Vierne continues to establish tonal centers using pedal points and arpeggiated harmonies, though this time highlighting the dominant rather than the tonic (see Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.6: Adagio, mm. 103-106

The da capo format of the Adagio is reflected in the overarching key structure. The A sections, though tonally ambiguous, are composed in the key of E-flat minor, while the B section modulates first to B major and then to C major before venturing further afield to tonal areas suggestive of first B-flat, then A (see Figure 5.7). Vierne establishes keys throughout the movement primarily through emphasis on the dominant rather than the tonic. This is especially true in the A sections, both of which open with inverted pedal points on B-flat. Similarly,
Vierne indicates the harmonization of theme C using pedal points on first F, then E. The composer limits his use of a clear tonic harmonization to theme B. Although the tonic appears within the accompaniment of theme A, Vierne de-emphasizes the harmony by placing it on a weak beat so that it sounds like a passing chord rather than a goal.

Figure 5.7: *Adagio*, harmonic reduction

The movement begins, not with theme A, but with a solitary inverted pedal point on B-flat. The B-flat is bold, indeed almost brazen, registered using the vibrant hues of the eight-foot *Fonds, Hautbois*, and *Trompette* stops on the *Récit*. The theme enters two measures later on the dominant, winding its way downward in the inverted form of the second cyclic theme. The next phrase comprises the melody in its original form starting on C, foreshadowing the modulation to F minor in m. 53. Vierne elongates the theme using a sequential figure, concluding the melody on an F-flat in a tritone with the manuals. The composer subsequently reiterates the theme in the right hand as he reverses the thematic forms, starting with the original version and following it with its inversion and subsequent extension. Although the composer continues to vary the order of the forms of theme A, it is barely noticeable to the listener due to its stepwise chromaticism. The melody climbs upward, the tension building into an
impassioned cadence on the leading tone in m. 32.99

Vierne briefly relaxes the tension of theme A with a short interlude. A chromatic solo soprano line, marked *a piacere*, materializes out of the cadence, rising to G then falling to A-flat, where the accompaniment returns, ending with a dominant-seventh chord on B in a direct quotation from the prelude to Act I of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* (See Figure 5.8). This interlude serves as a harmonic tangent from the tonic key.

![Figure 5.8: Adagio, mm. 36-39](image)

Theme A returns in the tonic key in m. 40 beginning on the fifth scale degree. Although Vierne harmonizes the opening of the theme with a root position tonic triad, he de-emphasizes the harmony by introducing the accompaniment on the second beat of the measure. The theme once more builds to a dramatic cadence, this time on D-sharp. An embellished version of the

99 More specifically, Vierne cadences on a first inversion, half-diminished minor ninth chord on the leading tone.
previous interlude ensues, concluding on C-sharp.\textsuperscript{100}

Vierne subsequently reintroduces theme A in its original form in the key of F minor. This time theme A dramatically ascends to G-flat (F-sharp) where it is expanded through the introduction of a counter motive in the middle voices. The theme pauses briefly on the dominant in a half cadence, then the four measures are sequenced as the harmonic tension eases into a cadence on the chromatic mediant, A-natural.\textsuperscript{101}

The tonic key is abruptly restored with the return of theme A in inversion starting on B-flat. The original version of the theme follows in the pedal, yet it is overshadowed by a new countermelody in the soprano voice: a capricious, stepwise motive derived from the signature syncopation at the beginning of theme A. The harmonic tension mounts as the counter melody ascends to G in an impassioned half cadence over a pedal point on the leading tone. Thus, Vierne leaves the first A section unresolved.

Section B is implicitly retrospective in its modulation to the key of B major, its presentation of the first cyclic theme, and its corresponding diatonic accompaniment. All of these qualities are found in the first movement of the

\textsuperscript{100} The final chord of theme A at mm 41-42 sounds as though it wants to resolve to D minor. Though the composer thwarts the listener’s expectations and does not resolve the chord, the E in the top voice receives its desired resolution, arriving at F (enharmonically spelled as an E-sharp). However, a sense of resolution is completely undermined since the underlying harmony does not follow suit.

\textsuperscript{101} Similar to the Allegro, this moment in the Adagio serves as another example of Vierne’s use of tertiary relationships within individual movements in the Sixth Symphony: the most dramatic statement of the theme within the A section opens on an F minor sonority, pauses on a C major seventh chord, and then concludes on an A minor ninth chord.
symphony.\textsuperscript{102} Even the opening improvisatory arabesque recalls that of the 
\textit{Introduction} with its steady stream of sixteenth notes and its registration using 
the \textit{Hautbois} on the \textit{Récit} (see Figure 5.9).\textsuperscript{103} The G in the top voice from the 
previous cadence recurs throughout the arabesque, falling a minor sixth to a 
pedal point on B. Vierne accompanies the pedal point with the return of the first 
cyclic theme (theme B) on the \textit{Grand Orgue}. It is within the context of theme B 
that the G-natural from the previous half cadence resolves to F-sharp in a B 
major sonority (see Figure 5.10).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.9.png}
\caption{Adagio, mm. 76-79}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{102} As previously discussed, the use of diatonicism and tonic pedal points along with the 
first cyclic theme is a prominent feature in the development section of the \textit{Allegro} as well as in the 
B sections of the \textit{Scherzo}.

\textsuperscript{103} It is tempting to interpret this arabesque as a type of recitative given the operatic 
nature of the movement. However, while certainly improvisatory in style, the marking \textit{a tempo} 
and the slight acceleration into the downbeat of m 79 argues against such an interpretation.
The tonal ambiguity of the preceding section vanishes as the theme is accompanied by a tonic pedal point and a series of chromatic B major arpeggios. The diatonic accompaniment to theme B serves as a welcome contrast to the serpentine chromaticism of the A section. Interestingly, Vierne changes the G-natural to a G-sharp in the second phrase of the theme, perhaps anticipating the modulation which occurs in the subsequent inversion of the theme. It is also worth noting that this is the first time that Vierne has altered the sixth scale degree to the major mode. Nevertheless, the significance of this transformation is de-emphasized by the chromatic arpeggios in the left hand.

Without hesitation, Vierne follows the original theme with its inverted form, outlining the secondary dominant of F-sharp as the texture modulates via an
augmented-sixth chord to the key of C major. Just as the composer seems to have lulled the listener into a sense of stability, he introduces another disorienting element: a newly composed counter theme of falling suspension figures. Though Vierne harmonizes the theme in the tonic, the suspension figures and the rhythm of the counter theme sound in direct opposition to the syncopated theme B in the pedal. Similar to the harmonization of theme A, the resolution of the two themes never coincides, and the harmonic stability achieved at the arrival of theme B begins to unravel.

Once again, Vierne uses the inverted form of the theme as a pivot, modulating via a dominant-ninth chord to the tonal center of B-flat (suggested by the ostinato in the left hand and the pedal point on F).\textsuperscript{104} The remnants of the diatonic constraints of the first cyclic theme are cast aside as theme B collapses into a sumptuous fantasia. An exquisite melody, theme C, emerges in the right hand over the pianistic texture beneath a new stepwise countermelody in quarter notes. Vierne repeats the theme with ornamentation, then transforms it as he shifts to a harmony on E, suggesting the tonal center of A major through his characteristic emphasis on the dominant. This large-scale dominant motion is further emphasized by half cadences on first D-sharp and then F-sharp (a large-scale neighbor group figure). The B section concludes with multiple short cadential figures suggesting a return to C major, pausing first on G, then on B. However, the key signature reverts to that of E-flat minor, signaling the arrival of

\textsuperscript{104} Kasouf, 174. According to Kasouf, the B-flat tonal center creates an over-arching dominant relationship for the return of theme A on B-flat as the texture modulates back to E-flat minor for the concluding A’ section.
the A’ section.

In the final measures of the Adagio, romantic exuberance gives way to contemplation. Unlike the Aria, the return to the A material of the Adagio is more literal than implied. The opening inverted pedal point reappears, registered using the Cor de nuit, the Voix humaine, and the tremolo on the Récit. Theme A enters as before in the pedal in its inverted form. However, the ensuing original form of theme A and its extension (a literal repeat of the material from the beginning of the movement) are heard not in the pedal, but rather in the manuals in octaves set in a similar homophonic texture. The theme weaves its way downward, settling on a six-measure pedal point on the Neapolitan, E. Vierne magnifies the tension of the E by re-harmonizing it in a series of augmented chords outlining a stepwise ascent in the top voice. The ascent reaches its zenith with a bi-tonal cluster chord on D, a moment as suspenseful as the ending of the first A section.

There is a brief moment of silence before the B-flat pedal point returns, shimmering in its registration of Gambe, Voix céleste, and Octave grave. The tonal ambiguity of the A section finally dissipates as Vierne reintroduces the original form of theme A in the pedal, beginning and concluding on the tonic. The luminous ending of the movement includes a 4-3 suspension and a Phrygian cadence in E-flat major, the resolution to tonic once more colored by the addition of the sixth scale degree.
CHAPTER 6

FINAL

Vierne completes his Sixth Symphony with a virtuosic tour-de-force in the key of B major. In his review of the Fifth Symphony, op. 47, French critic Jean Huré described the essence of the work as the “victory of joy over pain.” The same could be said of the Sixth Symphony as the severity of the previous movements dissolves in a Final filled with a youthful exuberance reminiscent of that of the First Symphony. According to Duruflé, it is within the last pages of this particular work that the listener perceives Vierne’s optimistic spirit, an outlook the composer maintained to the end in spite of a life fraught with hardship.

The form of the Final functions as a type of hybrid, combining rondo form with an overarching tripartite structure. The movement contains four themes: two new themes, themes A and C, and the two cyclic themes, themes B and D. While both cyclic themes are present, their appearances are brief. Theme B, a variant of the second cyclic theme, serves as an episode between two statements of theme A. Similarly, theme D, a modified version of the first cyclic theme, is overshadowed as it is heard simultaneously with theme C. Instead Vierne chooses

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105 Martin Jean. According to Jean’s liner notes, the critic Huré added, “I promised Vierne to curse him bitterly if, with such talent, he should again write so perfect a work to express such pain and anguish in the course of forty-seven pages of very beautiful music.”

106 Vierne, Helga Schauerte-Maubouet, Sixth Symphony, xviii.

107 Kasouf, 177.
to focus upon the interaction between the two newly-composed melodies: the brisk, dazzling theme A which serves as the refrain of the rondo, and theme C, a modal, lyrical, melody first heard in the second episode (mm. 105-209). This theme becomes the foil to theme A as the composer proceeds to alternate and fragment the two melodies. The Final ends with a coda based upon the material from theme A, concluding the symphony in ecstatic joy.

The rondo form of the Final unfolds in the following schema: A – B – A’ – C – A” – C’ -- A’” – C” – A’’’ (see Figure 6.1). The composer combines the rondo form with an overarching tripartite form consisting of three equal parts approximately 110 measures in length.\textsuperscript{108} The tripartite form is reinforced by the harmonic trajectory of the movement, with the two outer sections beginning and ending in B major, and the middle section composed predominantly in the mode of B-flat Mixolydian (see Figure 6.2).\textsuperscript{109} The first section (mm. 1-104) is further organized into a miniature tripartite schema, consisting of the exposition of theme A in B major, the departure to theme B in a contrasting chromatic framework composed in E minor, and the return of theme A in the tonic key. The second section (mm. 105-209) consists of a triple exposition of theme C in the mode of B-flat Mixolydian, which is followed by a thirteen-measure transition. Vierne completes the large-scale tripartite form with the return of theme A in the tonic key of B major for the third section (mm. 223-310). Here the rondo form

\textsuperscript{108} Walton, 118-120.

\textsuperscript{109} Although the movement is composed in B-flat Mixolydian, the middle section features the key signature of E-flat major.
begins to give way as the remainder of the movement consists of the alternation of phrases of themes A and C after the third episode. While the final overarching section is characterized by tonal stability, Vierne creates harmonic interest through brief modulatory excursions away from the tonic key using material derived from theme A. Nevertheless, the composer creates a rounded form through the recall of the opening material in the coda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vierne: Symphony VI, V. Final, tripartite form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Key</td>
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<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
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Figure 6.1: *Final*, structure

Though the movement contains four themes, the momentum of the *Final* is principally derived from themes A and C. Both themes comprise twenty-four bars in length, yet are highly contrasting in character. Theme A is organized into the following phrase structure: a-b-a’-c, with the first three phrases (each four measures in length) serving as an antecedent to the twelve measures of the fourth phrase. Theme A is propelled forward by two chordal, rhythmic motives: a series of sixteenth-note neighbor motions followed by multiple syncopated leaps. The theme is underpinned by a pedal ostinato imitating pulsing timpani. As

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110 This ostinato motion B-F#-B in the pedal recalls the opening motive of the theme of the *Final* from Vierne’s First Symphony. This theme is also first presented in the pedal.
previously mentioned, this theme serves as the refrain of the rondo (see Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2: *Final*, Theme A
Vierne re-introduces the second cyclic theme as theme B in the first episode. Though rhythmically transformed, the melodic structure of the cyclic theme imitates that of the theme as heard in the exposition of the second theme in the Allegro. Nevertheless, the characteristic syncopation from the opening motive disappears, having been assumed into the preceding melody. Theme B serves as a contrasting intermediary to theme A due to its tonal obscurity. Though the episode is composed in the key of E minor, the theme oscillates between an emphasis on E and E-sharp in the first half and sequences chromatically in the second half. Vierne reinforces the ambiguous nature of the theme with an equally chromatic accompaniment. Nevertheless, theme B continues in the vein of the preceding theme in its balanced, eight-bar structure and its rhythmic profile of sixteenth notes. While the return of the second cyclic theme is brief, it is significant due to its cyclic character and its contrast with the subsequent diatonic refrain, which is reinforced by the harmonic tension of theme B (see Figure 6.3).

111 Kasouf, 177.

112 Ibid.
The second episode features the introduction of theme C, a lyrical melody reminiscent of that of Vierne’s *Carillon de Westminster* from the *24 Pièces de Fantaisie*, op. 54. Consisting primarily of quarter notes leaping in thirds and fifths, the theme is composed in the following phrase structure: \(a - a' - b - b' - c - c'\). Although the episode features the key signature of E-flat major, the theme and its accompaniment are composed in B-flat Mixolydian as evidenced by the inclusion of multiple A-flats in the melody as well as in the accompaniment, and the extensive use of B-flat pedal points in both the first and the second expositions. The emphasis of theme C on the dominant of E-flat major is well suited to its repetition in the tonic key later in the movement when Theme C is combined with Theme D, which emphasizes the tonic (see Figure 6.4).

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\[113\] The first two presentations of the theme feature long pedal points at the end of multiple phrases.
In the third episode Vierne combines Theme C (in the right hand) with the first cyclic theme (theme D, in the pedal). For the first time, the first cyclic theme is heard in the key of B major with a raised sixth scale degree. As in the Adagio, the composer uses only the first half of the theme, stating it in its original form followed by its inversion. The composer also draws from the Scherzo in the rhythmic contour of the theme, as he once again places the opening note on a strong beat in a syncopated series of eighth and quarter notes. As found throughout the symphony, the original form of the theme emphasizes the tonic, while the inverted theme stresses the dominant. Nevertheless, rather than using the inverted form as a point of modulation (as found in the Adagio), here Vierne elects to keep both forms of the theme in the tonic key, ornamented with multiple leading tones in the second phrase. The elongated rhythms and the complete transformation of the first cyclic theme into the major mode coincides with the dominant-emphasis of theme C, resulting in a harmonious combination of the two melodies (see Figure 6.5).
The harmonic trajectory of the Final is rudimentary compared to that of the preceding movements, unfolding in the following plan: BM, Em, BM, B-flat Mixolydian, and BM. This surprisingly straightforward harmonic scheme is primarily due to Vierne’s inclusion of numerous tonic pedal points, the diatonic character of three of the four themes, and the similarly diatonic accompaniment. The final section of the tripartite Final serves as a prime example of Vierne’s use of brief harmonic tangents within an overarching key area. After the presentation of theme C in B-flat Mixolydian, Vierne modulates back to the tonic. The remainder of the movement features theme C set in the key of B major, yet Vierne intersperses the last section with digressions into tonal areas such as E-flat, D, and B-flat (enharmonically spelled A-sharp) using material from theme A. These tonicizations are brief, yet create harmonic interest while simultaneously heightening the drama of the alternation of the two themes.

Vierne’s compositional strategy is readily apparent from the beginning of the Final. The movement opens with a short four-measure introduction featuring swift stepwise motion in double octaves chromatically moving from D-sharp to F-sharp. This declamatory figure serves as a modulation from the conclusion of the

Figure 6.5: Final, Theme D
previous movement in E-flat major (now enharmonically spelled as D-sharp) to the dominant of B major.\(^{114}\) There is a brief pause followed by the exposition of theme A, harmonized primarily in the tonic and reinforced by the tonic-dominant motion of the pedal ostinato.\(^{115}\) However, the composer thwarts the expectations of the listener, pausing at the end of the second phrase of the theme on a G dominant-seventh chord, feigning a modulation to C major. The fourth phrase, beginning on a dominant-seventh chord on G, passes through a series of vibrant seventh chords with occasional added ninths, ending with a modulation back to the tonic via a German augmented-sixth chord in m. 22. Although the first A section concludes with an V - I motion in the pedal, the dominant motion in the pedal is decorated by the progression vi - IV – V – I in seventh and ninth chords in the manuals. The manual progression is repeated over the dominant pedal point, and section A concludes with an imperfect authentic cadence in B major in m. 27.

The chromatic style of the Allegro and the Scherzo returns in the first episode of the Final. The tonally ambiguous theme B is heard in the right hand accompanied by a perpetual-motion figure which serves both as a countersubject and a harmonization to the theme. A series of arpeggiated parallel thirds, sixths, and sevenths simultaneously forms a chromatic countersubject descending in

\(^{114}\) Martin Jean.

\(^{115}\) Kasouf, 176.
stepwise motion. Vierne repeats theme B in the pedal, while the perpetual motion figure continues as a series of staccato diminished-seventh chords in the manuals. Though there is little sense of a local harmonic trajectory, the diminished-seventh chords are not random, harmonizing a series of counter motives in the top voice of the right hand.

The theme concludes on B (harmonized as a half diminished-seventh chord) which immediately resolves to C, marking the beginning of the transition from the first episode back to the refrain. In essence, this transition consists of a disguised stepwise ascent from C to G in the bass. However, Vierne disguises this ascent using a series of alternating pedal points and arpeggios harmonized as a series of seventh chords. The composer obscures the progression even more by interpolating fragments of theme B. As the B material ascends over a pedal point on G, it transforms into a new sequential figure derived from theme A prolonging a dominant-seventh chord. Vierne uses a series of augmented-sixth chords to shift the harmony from G back to B major, marking the return of the refrain.

The composer reinforces the diatonic character and the harmonic stability of theme A thanks to the preceding chromaticism of the second cyclic theme. The opening A section is reiterated almost verbatim save for the addition of a brief sixteenth-note arpeggio motive at the cadences of the first two phrases. However,

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116 The ascending motion in arpeggiated parallel thirds at m. 30 of the Final mimics the ascending motion in parallel thirds in the left hand in mm. 64 and 66 of the Allegro during the exposition of the second cyclic theme.

117 Vierne accomplishes this transition through a series of sequential figures alternating between an arpeggio figure and material derived from theme B.
the second A section concludes with a deceptive cadence on an E-sharp half-diminished seventh chord. Vierne re-spells the E-sharp as F, and the pedal propels the harmony forward in an ascending stepwise line. The harmony pauses on a B-flat dominant-seventh chord, demanding resolution to E-flat major.\textsuperscript{118}

Vierne segues fluidly into the second episode using the rhythmic motive of theme A. As the transition concludes with the timpani motive in the pedal, the rhythmic figure immediately migrates to the manuals, sounding in an octave on B-flat. The motive then assumes a perpetual motion figure in an inverted pedal point on the tonic in the mode of B-flat Mixolydian. The majestic theme C enters in the pedal. Although the theme highlights the dominant as well as the lowered seventh scale degree, the opening and concluding phrases finish with pedal points on the tonic. These pedal points are accompanied by a series of counter melodies loosely derived from the carillon theme.

Theme C migrates to the right hand for the second exposition, during which the left hand assumes an Alberti figuration and the pedal a rising and falling ostinato. The harmony becomes less stable as Vierne reintroduces chromatic inflections into the texture. Nevertheless, the cadential pedal points on B-flat are maintained. The second statement of the theme concludes on a B-flat dominant-seventh chord in m. 182.

The return of the timpani figure in the pedal carries the movement into the third reiteration of the carillon melody, this time dressed in a homophonic texture and once more accompanied by a tonic pedal point. However, the theme

\textsuperscript{118} Kasouf, 177.
is repeatedly interrupted as the conclusion of each phrase is followed by the interjection of the pulsing timpani figure. This figure undermines the harmonic stability as it outlines a chromatic stepwise descent, modulating from B-flat first to A, then to A-flat, carrying the theme along with it. The final phrase of the theme cadences above a tonic pedal point in G major. Nevertheless, Vierne initiates another transition using the timpani figure of the pedal, catapulting the bass into an E-flat pedal point and modulating back to the B major refrain using a seventh chord on A-sharp in first inversion (enharmonically spelled as a half-diminished chord on G).

The third section of the overarching ternary form begins with an abridged statement of the refrain. The third phrase begins in B major, per usual; however, this time Vierne places the theme in both the pedal and the manuals beneath an inverted pedal point on F-sharp. The harmony seems to move towards B-flat major as the pedal migrates first to E-flat and then to F in a series of major-minor seventh chords. However, the harmony swerves back to the tonic key for the third episode. Theme D is introduced in the pedal, accompanied by theme C in the right hand, and the tonal progression becomes more linear than vertical, the left hand arpeggiating a series of seventh chords in the key of B major. Theme D finishes two-thirds of the way through the statement of theme C, after which the pedal assumes an ascending chromatic line. Although Vierne uses this ascending line to feign a modulation away from the tonic key, the theme still manages to conclude on F-sharp in an unstable first inversion B major harmony.

Until now, theme A served as both the refrain and the source of harmonic stability, reinforcing the tonic between episodes of harmonic and thematic
exploration. However, following the third episode, theme C becomes the tonic anchor of the third section, while theme A assumes a subsidiary role, interpolating itself between statements of theme C in brief modulatory excursions. It would seem from this observation that theme C briefly assumes the role of the refrain within the third section of the ternary form as it becomes associated with both the tonic key and tonal stability.

The weak cadence in B major in m. 262 is swiftly undermined as the pedal drifts down to D. Material derived from theme A sounds in the manuals above the timpani figure, outlining a chromatically ornamented D major-minor seventh chord. Vierne sudden shifts to a B-flat major-minor seventh chord as theme A once more pervades the pedal as well as the manuals. The B-flat subsequently functions as a leading tone, re-transitioning the harmony back to B major.

Meanwhile, theme C returns in octaves in the manuals, fragmented as Vierne interrupts each phrase with a four-measure interjection of A material. These interjections are not functional, but rather are used to create rhythmic and harmonic contrast to theme C, emphasizing first the leading tone (enharmonically spelled), then the dominant, and finally the lowered sixth scale degree.\footnote{The reiteration of the A material in a dominant-seventh chord on G (the lowered sixth scale degree), also features multiple scales in the pedal suggesting the mode of G-Mixolydian.} The first two phrases of theme C feature the same accompaniment, an inverted pedal point on the dominant and a virtuosic series of B major scales in sixteenth notes in the pedal.\footnote{The reiteration of the A material in a dominant-seventh chord on G (the lowered sixth scale degree), also features multiple scales in the pedal suggesting the mode of G-Mixolydian.} Vierne harmonizes the third and fourth phrases of
theme C in the subdominant, alternating arpeggios and inverted pedal points outlining an E major triad (still accompanied by B-major scales).

The fifth phrase of theme C begins firmly in the tonic, yet the pedal pushes the harmonic trajectory off course at mm. 306-307 as C-sharp slides up to D, launching the final pedal scale and the final phrase of theme C simultaneously into the Neapolitan key of C major. Nevertheless, the pedal redirects the harmony back to B major in m. 309, leaping to a pedal point on E in a half-diminished seventh chord, which serves as a portal to the tonic key in a coda derived from the opening A material. The Final concludes with a highly ornamented plagal cadence, the resolution to tonic featuring a bell-like toccata motive in the pedal accompanied by a series of thirty-second note flourishes in the manuals. The tumbling pedal line finally comes to rest in a thrice sounding B major chord with an added sixth scale degree, a colorful addition to the tonic harmony.

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120 Kasouf, 179. According to Kasouf, it is in this last section that Vierne’s pedal technique reaches a new zenith of virtuosity: “The pedals of the organ can no longer be thought of as simply providing harmonic foundation. They have now reached a melodic-virtuosic status equal to manual dexterity.”
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In a manner similar to that of Johann Sebastian Bach, Vierne combines seemingly disparate elements into a cohesive whole, absorbing them into a highly individual compositional style. The Sixth Symphony stands at the apex of his development as an organ composer due to his incorporation of increased chromaticism within carefully proportioned themes and forms, coupled with his inclusion of multiple twentieth century influences.

In his Sixth Symphony, Vierne draws from the past as well as the present while simultaneously asserting his own voice as a composer. Traditional elements include Vierne’s use of contrapuntal textures; the balanced structure of multiple themes in the Allegro, Scherzo, and Final; and the use of sonata-allegro (complete with a slow introduction), da capo, and rondo forms. However, Vierne’s treatment of form also reflects the influence of the nineteenth century. The exploration of the limits of traditional structures such as sonata form was a common practice among many nineteenth century composers including Beethoven, Brahms, and Liszt. Vierne demonstrates this explorative approach most convincingly in the combination of rondo and tripartite forms in the Final. Other nineteenth century influences include Vierne’s use of the cyclic principle, thematic transformation, the organization of the keys of individual movements according to a tertiary scheme, and the incorporation of various elements of vocal and instrumental music into a symphonic form, not unlike Beethoven’s Ninth
Symphony.¹²¹

Twentieth century elements are also numerous. The harmonic language of the Adagio alludes to that of Wagnerian opera (with even a direct quotation from the prelude to Act I of Tristan und Isolde), and similar passages are found in the Allegro and the Final. Meanwhile, Vierne introduces elements of impressionism through the use of modal versions of the first cyclic theme, the Phrygian and Mixolydian modes in the Aria and the Final, respectively, and whole tone passages within the Allegro, Aria, and the Scherzo.¹²² Specifically, Vierne uses these whole tone passages as modulatory devices in both the development section of the Allegro and the A sections of the Scherzo. By contrast, Vierne also uses the whole tone scale to temporarily suspend tonality in the B section of the Aria. Finally, Vierne incorporates elements of dodecaphony in his use of all twelve tones of the chromatic scale within both themes of the Introduction, the first theme of the Allegro, the second theme of the Scherzo, and the first theme of the Adagio. Thus, rather than seeking to emulate a particular school such as serialism or impressionism, Vierne absorbs aspects of each into his own compositional style.

¹²¹ The influence of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is found in another symphonic organ work, namely César Franck’s Grand Pièce Symphonique, Op. 17 as well as in the Organ Sonata no. 1 in F Minor of Felix Mendelssohn. Franck’s allusion to multiple themes in the final section of the piece imitates Beethoven’s dramatic recall of previously heard themes in the last movement of his Ninth Symphony. Mendelssohn’s Organ Sonata no. 1 also pays tribute to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, combining vocal and instrumentals forms by including a German chorale within the first movement and titling the third movement, “Andante Recit,” an interlude alternating solo lines and modulatory chordal passages.

¹²² Vierne also imitates impressionism as found in the visual arts in his preference to compose in tonal structures blurred by chromatic inflections, counterpoint, and short harmonic deviations
Vierne appears to have taken great pains in the formal organization of the Sixth Symphony as an examination of the structuring of the individual movements shows a close attention to proportion particularly in the Aria, the Scherzo, and the Final. Vierne composes the A and B sections of the Aria according to a 2:1 ratio, with the A sections at seventeen measures and the B section at thirty-five measures. Similarly, the Scherzo alternates themes A and B in sections of forty measures and thirty-two measures. Although this alternation seems to fall away in the B’ section, a closer examination reveals that the pattern covertly underpins the remainder of the movement as eight-measure transitions connect sixteen-measure statements of theme B. In a similar way, Vierne organizes the tripartite structure of the Final into three equal sections approximately 104 measures in length (excluding the coda).

Vierne’s compositional style as represented in the Sixth Symphony includes a particular emphasis on the interval of the sixth. He constructs the first cyclic theme using three minor sixths while also rhythmically emphasizing scale degree six in the tonic key. Gradually, the composer transforms the theme from B minor to the parallel major over the course of the symphony. Similarly, the melodic contour of the theme of the Aria outlines a descending minor sixth. The Scherzo contains a total of six keys, which, when arranged within the ambitus of an octave, span the interval of a minor sixth. The Adagio also emphasizes the sixth in its harmonic trajectory, modulating from E-flat minor to B major (the E-flat functioning as an enharmonic spelling of D-sharp). Vierne saves the complete transformation of the first cyclic theme into major for the Final, altering G to G-sharp during its final statement in mm. 239-254.
The use of thematic transformation forms an essential component of Vierne’s Sixth Symphony, and thus, begs an interesting performance question. As previously mentioned, although many individual movements from Vierne’s symphonies have become staples in standard recital repertoire, it is rare to hear a complete Vierne symphony in a single performance. As a result, in the case of the cyclic works, the listener hears the cyclic themes out of context and the component of thematic transformation is lost. For this reason, just as it is detrimental to extract and perform a single movement from a work such as Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony or Berlioz’ Symphonie fantastique, it is equally detrimental to do the same in the case of Vierne’s Sixth Symphony and his other cyclic works.

The Sixth Symphony of Vierne marks the zenith of the development of his harmonic language as represented in the organ symphonies. However, it also serves as an implicit profession of hope in the midst of suffering. Given Vierne’s belief in music as a reflection of the interior life of the composer, it comes as little surprise that his music is often characterized by severity, for his life was plagued with innumerable hardships. Nevertheless, one may similarly infer from the Sixth Symphony that Vierne courageously held on to hope in spite of his trials, for

123 Smith, “Louis Vierne.” To quote Smith, “The professional frustrations [Vierne] experienced, along with the problems in his personal relationships, which were fraught with betrayal, caused Vierne to suffer depression alongside his near-blindness, ill health, bereavement (he lost his son and brother in World War I) and perpetual financial difficulties. Nevertheless, he was not without benefactors, and numerous wealthy and titled patrons effectively subsidized his work for years at a time.”
hardship dissolves into ecstatic joy in the *Final.* Furthermore, the transformation of the first cyclic theme from minor to major in the last pages of the symphony may serve as an image of Vierne himself and his hope in the afterlife as described by the apostle John in the book of Revelations: “And God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain ... for the former things have passed away. And he who sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” (Revelations 21:4-5)

\[124\] Smith, 295. Although he was not a devout Catholic, Vierne was a believer, confessing in his *Souvenirs,* “To the high mission that was entrusted to me I have brought, for want of anything better, all the fidelity and sincerity of my heart as an artist and a believer.”
APPENDIX A

CATALOGUE OF CYCLIC THEME 1

A.1: Introduction, Theme 1, mm. 3-4

A.2 Allegro, Theme 1, mm. 32-39

A.3 Allegro, Theme 1, inversion, mm. 82-87
A.4: Allegro, Theme 1, mm. 209-213
A.5: *Aria*, Cyclic Theme 1, mm. 66-70

A.6: *Aria*, Cyclic Theme 1, mm. 79-82
A.7: Scherzo, Theme B, mm. 41-56
A.8: Scherzo, Theme B, inversion, mm. 169-184
A.9: Adagio, Theme B, mm. 79-84

A.10: Final, Theme D, mm. 239-254
APPENDIX B

CATALOGUE OF CYCLIC THEME 2

B.1: Introduction, Theme 2, mm. 20-23

B.2: Allegro, Theme 1, mm. 63-68

B.3: Allegro, Theme 2, mm. 89-91
B.4: *Adagio*, Theme A, mm. 3-6

B.5: *Adagio*, Theme A, inversion, mm. 7-10

B.6: *Adagio*, Theme A, mm. 152-159

B.7: *Final*, Theme B, mm. 29-36
APPENDIX C

CATALOGUE OF ADDITIONAL THEMES

C.1: Aria, Theme 1, mm. 1-5

C.2: Aria, Theme 2, mm. 6-9
C.3: Scherzo, Theme A, mm. 1-8

C.4: Adagio, Theme C, mm. 103-106
C.5: *Final, Theme A*
C.6: Final, Theme C
### Vierne, Symphony VI: I. Introduction, binary form

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#### D.1: I. Introduction

### Vierne, Symphony VI: I. Allegro risoluto, sonata-allegro form

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#### D.2: I. Allegro
### Vierne, Symphony VI: *Aria*, A-B-A' form

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### D.3: *II. Aria*

### Vierne, Symphony VI: *Scherzo*, expanded binary form

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<td>Ebm, F#m, Bm, Gm</td>
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### D.4: *III. Scherzo*
Vierne, Symphony VI: IV. Adagio, A-B-A’ form

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<td>Fm, Ebm</td>
<td>BM</td>
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D.5: IV. Adagio

Vierne: Symphony VI, V. Final, tripartite form

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D.6: V. Final
BIBLIOGRAPHY


