

**Interpretative and Performance Principles Applied to the Works of  
César Franck: a Portfolio of Recorded Performances and Exegesis**

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## ABSTRACT

The submission consists of two CD recordings and a supporting exegesis.

The research aims to investigate the processes of developing an interpretation together with associated performance issues. The principles of interpretation and performance are discussed in the exegesis, especially the process of developing an interpretative concept and of realising it in performance. More specifically, it addresses interdependence of analytical and intuitive approaches to a performed work. As part of this, the researcher presents a personal view of the nature of the performer/audience relationship, discusses aspects of practice and explores the special challenges of ensemble performance.

This provides a backdrop to a more detailed discussion of the works of César Franck, especially the importance for the performer of understanding his use of cyclic forms.

The major argument of the exegesis lies in the idea that the analytical approach to a musical work does not suffice for its full comprehension and therefore should not eliminate an exploration of such properties of music that can only be grasped by the musical intuition of the performer.

The exegesis draws on the personal ideas of the researcher, who has found the research time as a convenient way of putting different thoughts together in a systematized and structured form. The researcher also makes references to the work of other scholars/performers including Eric Clarke, Elaine Goodman, Peter Hill, Roy Howat, Gregory Karl, Joel Lester, John Rink, William Rothstein and Paul Badura-Skoda.

## DECLARATION

This work contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution, and to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# INTRODUCTION

The research addresses the complexity of the issues encountered by the performer in the process of preparing a musical work for performance. It reflects upon the principles of interpretation in a broad context and explores the interdependence of the analytical and non-analytical processes that shape the performer's approach. It puts forward the argument that formal analysis and personal intuition are both essential ingredients of a successful performance.

Learning a musical composition is an ongoing process. It consists of two major elements: development of an interpretative concept and its subsequent rendition in performance. In turn, each element includes a succession of steps that makes the process logical and complete. Thus, the development of an interpretation commences with the first impression of a work, followed by a detailed process of analysis, which is eventually elaborated by the intuitive approach of the performer. The act of performance further involves the dimension of the performer/audience relationship through the performed work.

The main sections of the exegesis are as follows:

1. A discussion of broad principles of interpretation.
2. A reflection upon the process of performance as an embodiment of an interpretative concept.
3. Application of these principles to selected works of César Franck, as presented in the CD recordings.

The details of the recordings are as follows:

CD 1: Track 1 - *Prélude, Aria et Final* for piano

Tracks 2-4 - Quintet in F minor for piano and strings

CD 2: Track 1 - *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* for piano

Track 2 - *Prélude, Fugue et Variation* op.18 (piano transcription by H. Bauer)

Track 3 - *Danse Lente* for piano

Track 4 – Sonata in A for piano and violin

A comparative analysis of Franck's works reveals the existence of common compositional principles. The ideas of Gregory Karl <sup>1</sup> are used as a basis for exploring the psychological journey of the music as revealed through an analysis of the cyclic forms.

The exegesis draws on the personal experience and approach of the researcher, which has grown out of years of reflection upon different musical matters, the formulation of conclusions and their application in practice and performance. The exegesis also refers to the work of other musicians with whom the researcher feels a connection in a common line of thinking.

The choice of César Franck's music resulted from the researcher's deep appreciation of his musical language, the style of his piano writing and his use of a cyclic form, all of which challenge the performer physically while at the same time allowing her to create a psychological narrative.

## **BROAD PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION**

Interpretation is an individual perception of a musical work based on the performer's detailed study and analysis. By this definition, there are two factors that are important in the process of creating the interpretative concept. The first is the revelation of the main idea (the core of a musical work) through its formal analysis. The second is concerned with the development of a personal insight into the composition, based upon the combination of thorough study and the performer's musical intuition.

The first outline of an interpretation emerges through the processes of thinking over a composition, becoming aware of the alternative insights by listening to different performances of it, playing it through to sense its emotional atmosphere and developing a feel of one's potential as a performer within its structural frame. Thus, one constructs a scheme of priorities that helps to differentiate the components of the work that require close attention (including technical difficulties), as distinct from those that can temporarily be left out of focus. Then practice at the piano translates the ideas into concrete decisions concerning the treatment of style, touch and technique.

An initial impression of a work is a first attempt to identify its concept, which needs to be further justified or dismissed by the analytical findings. For the performer, the primary analysis of a work incorporates a definition of its form and the relationship between its structure and musical content. A study of the structure (especially when a large cyclic work is concerned) is directly related to the identification of a peak, a main climax, which will play the role of a hub of the whole composition, pulling all the other components towards itself. Then the highlights within its smaller sections can be found similarly. The



correlation between the structure and the concept of a composition lies in an understanding of the composer's choice of a specific form for the reflection of a specific idea. Thus, the form of a miniature is commonly used to incorporate a certain genre (a song or a dance), or a certain emotion. A cyclic form is used to 'tell a story', where the transformation of the images of the narrative is musically expressed through the transformation of the cyclic cells.

The next step is to undertake a more detailed analysis of the piece in order to articulate the elements of which the overall structure is comprised. For a composer, a score is a visual presentation of the composition at the final stage of the creative process, when the selected musical ideas are shaped into a coherent whole. For a performer, on the contrary, familiarization with the notation of a work and its implications is a starting point for developing an interpretation. The contour of an interpretation appears out of the compositional principles that are laid out in the way the piece is written. Therefore, a prime aim of analysis is to find those principles and turn them into specific stimuli for performance.

An important ingredient of this process is an investigation of musical texture. An understanding of the implications arising from the texture of a composition is crucial, as it gives the performer valuable hints for phrasing and articulation. Together with the composer's markings, the texture guides the performer towards an understanding of "the work's underlying organization" <sup>2</sup> and thus, towards a convincing interpretation. Quite often the composer's indications just confirm or emphasize a musical necessity discovered through analysis of the score. For example, if the initially transparent texture becomes dense due to gradually added inner voices, such layout will imply a *crescendo* whether it is marked by the composer or not.

In this context, Urtext editions are to be preferred. They allow the performer to see the texture, to work with it and come to their own conclusions without being distracted by editorial suggestions. Therefore, it leaves the performer free to explore a range of interpretative choices. Such choices include whether or not to follow strictly the composer's marks throughout a composition; where and why one might deviate from them; ways of establishing an inner connection with the expressive content of the piece; ways of identifying and resolving the technical challenges the work contains. It is advisable to consult other editions in order to familiarize oneself with alternative insights into the same piece, but this is best done after the interpretation has been developed. An edition, especially where the score is heavily marked, is itself an interpretation, perceived visually rather than through sound. It may be distracting at the early stage of work on a piece.

A scrupulous analysis, while important in providing a solid base for an interpretation, does not suffice for the successful execution of a work. Music contains an enigmatic element that must be preserved in performance. Many authors have touched upon this important matter. William Rothstein writes:

“Most listeners...do not go to concerts or listen to recordings to hear an analytical demonstration. Audiences...quite properly demand something else of the performer, something I can only call ‘magic’.”<sup>3</sup>

Paul Badura-Skoda states:

“...analytical knowledge is worthless if it is not brought together to form a whole, a synthesis of all the different aspects in the shape of a performance that strikes the listener as organic, a performance that no longer displays traces of long and laborious study.”<sup>4</sup>

John Rink makes a similar point: “Projecting ‘the music’ is what matters most, and all the rest is but a means to that end.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the goal of analysis is to inform a performer about the inner workings of a composition. However, there is a “difference between analytical truth... and dramatic truth; the performer needs to be concerned with both.”<sup>6</sup> A theoretical analysis should not be abstract and divorced from the musical substance of a work but should be a means of developing a personal insight into a performed work.

Every performer goes his/her highly individual way in forming a solid basis for an interpretation. This happens because the significance of a musical composition is often more profound than is suggested by its title. A work of genius departs from its creator’s initial thought by opening up many facets and hues for interpretation. An understanding of a piece comes from a knowledge about it. One may commence the study of a new work by gathering relevant information on the factors that led (or might have led) a composer to its creation. Even though it can be hard to determine exactly what was the composer’s immediate creative impulse, one can still learn about the circumstances that preceded and/or followed a work, as well as of the events in the composer’s life that might have occurred during a period of a creation. However, a performer goes past the general knowledge to find and project the details and shades that are meaningful to a particular performer in a particular piece. Therefore, there is a difference between the notion of understanding a work and its interpretation: being overall understood similarly, the same composition may yet be interpreted differently by different performers, or by the same performer at different stages of his/her career.

An analytical approach can neither encompass the entirety of a musical work, nor exhaust all the possibilities of its rendition. The enigma of music, though never fully decoded, can nevertheless be felt

by a performer and carried through to a listener by means of internalization of the musical content of a piece, through musical expression. Particularly relevant here is Eric Clarke's definition of *expression* as "a conscious and deliberate attempt by performers to make their interpretations audible." <sup>7</sup> A performer, thus, encounters the domain of the miraculous properties of music that cannot be formally analyzed or fully revealed from the notation of a piece. The performer is guided by means of his/her musical intuition, which is an instinctive knowledge about a work regardless of the outcomes of its technical analysis. On the other hand, intuition can be described as an "empathic identification with the work" <sup>8</sup> after it has been analyzed in detail. Some performers have more fully developed intuition than others but no one can achieve a deep understanding of the message a composition contains without elevating oneself to it spiritually and emotionally. A required balance is found when the intuition draws on the results of an analytical approach without being suppressed by it. Such balance ensures an interpretation that reflects the complexity of a work without bias towards either its overly emotional or purely rationalistic performance.

In summary, an interpretation of a musical work includes the investigation of the formal parameters of the composition such as its form, harmony and metric/ rhythmic organization. On the other hand, the musical intuition of the performer guides the analytical processes and cannot be underestimated. Thus, the initially embraced concept of a work becomes theoretically well-grounded, and eventually is transmitted in performance.

## PERFORMANCE

Performance can be defined as the execution of a musical composition in a private or public situation. It incorporates a rendition of a specific interpretation and personal view of the work. Being the ultimate result of studying a work, performance is also a creative process unfolding in time. While being physically involved in the delivery of a performed piece, the performer at the same time is making mental judgments as the performance unfolds. These judgments include the ways in which certain passages might have been or could be subsequently interpreted differently as a variant of a current interpretation. As Joel Lester writes: "... a performance is necessarily only a single option for that piece, delineating some aspects while excluding others – just like a single analysis." <sup>9</sup>

Such mental notes are priceless for a performer as they are derived from an immediate experience of a public performance. As a consequence of this, a performer's approach to the interpretation of a work may change. On the one hand, the evaluation of an interpretation by the performer depends on how well it works in the performance situation. On the other hand, time distance between performances may contribute to a new level of understanding and may bring about the necessity for an alternative approach. As an eventual embodiment of an interpretative concept, performance is a positive outcome of practice, where a balance is achieved between the hands being controlled by mind, and, in turn, mind relying on hands' skills.

Practice includes two paradoxical processes: broadening one's knowledge about a work on the one hand, and narrowing the ample possibilities for its presentation on the other. Active practice alternates with a time of relaxation and composure. "Practice needs to be interspersed with rest, during which the piece is 'forgotten'." <sup>10</sup> There is a sense in which a piece is never completely forgotten, but rather the concept is embellished on a subconscious level. The more thorough the work that has been done, the longer the time of rest that is required to reinforce the results of practice, and to set new goals. It proves to be essential to leave a space prior to a performance, so as not to over-sate one's feelings about a piece, and not to over-train one's hands.

The right proportion between a solid preliminary preparation and an ability to virtually 'plunge' into a performance is also important. A performer should strive to create an illusion that a performed work is born immediately 'under the fingers', anew and afresh. A sparkle of spontaneity on stage will contribute to the success of the performance.

Performance can become a part of practice should it take place in the middle of the process of preparing a piece. This is the case with an informal performance (for example, a home recital), which acts as a dress rehearsal for a bigger event. A number of the components incorporated into the performance are then approved or discarded by the performer. The goal of such a performance is to check whether:

- the elements are congruent in the context of the whole ("...any interpretation of a single passage must be borne out by the role of this passage within the larger structure." <sup>11</sup>);
- the dynamic plan and the rationale for choice of tempi are clear;
- the performer is confident in the realization of his/her intentions and has "...the resilience to withstand the physical demands and psychological stresses of public performance." <sup>12</sup>

Should a synthesis of all the components be found, then the performer feels ready for a public performance.

The nature of public performance reflects the complexity of the performer/audience relationship. There is a certain ambiguity concerning the performer's role in that relationship. On the one hand, the performer takes the role of a messenger, whose musical will leads the listener through the piece. As William Rothstein writes: "It is the performer who controls the way in which virtually every aspect of the work is conveyed to the listener." <sup>13</sup> On the other hand, an act of performance is a dissimulation of a performer's personality in a performed composition, when "... the ideal would be for the performer to be so involved with the music, and so possessed by it, as to be identified with either the composer or the work." <sup>14</sup> Once this condition is achieved, the notion of an interpretation as such disappears and an audience becomes convinced that it is the music itself that 'speaks' through the performer.

An inner bond becomes established between a performer and an audience through a performed composition. The significance of the piece for the performer will affect the way he/she conveys it to a listener. An audience, in turn, perceives the piece through the performer's ability to re-create the notated music in sound. It is further enriched by the listener's own imagination. As William Rothstein describes:

"... the performer synthesises this narrative from all he or she knows and feels about the work ; listeners, in turn, will construct their own narratives, guided by the performer. One performer's narrative may differ radically from another's for the same work, and not all will accord equally with the composer's intentions..." <sup>15</sup>

In a live concert situation, a performer deals with an audience as a body, consisting of a number of people. Reasons for attending a concert may vary between a desire to hear a favourite piece, a prominent performer or a particular work in an interpretation by that particular performer. In any case, a performed composition is a focus of the whole event, which presentation by a performer may or may not produce an impact on an audience. A motivated performance as a performance with a clear musical purpose, keeps a listener interested and involved. It must have a logical sense of inner development, where each section plays a part in the overall architecture and is reflected by an appropriate emotion. This impact can only be produced by a performance that has gone past a purely analytical search to further explore the miracle of music making. This kind of performance establishes a creative communication and elicits an emotional response from an audience.

An important part of the performer/audience relationship is the issue of performance anxiety. This problem relates to the performer's view of an audience and its role in performance. Performance anxiety

is not simply an abstract fear of public performance. It can be defined as a loss of enjoyment in the act of performance and is characterized by a difference in the inner sensations one experiences on stage compared to a practice situation. It may include a sudden feeling of insecurity and discomfort and/or doubting one's memory in the performance of a well-prepared piece. As mentioned before, a performer communicates with the audience via the performed piece, with which he/she develops a close personal relationship. As Roy Howat notes, it is our musical feeling that "remains the strongest and final link to what the composer sensed and heard before subjecting it to notation." <sup>16</sup> Thus, the performer aims to focus upon the music itself, retaining a feeling of stability from the time of practice, including a physical pleasure of contact with the keyboard. The strong bonds between a performer and a performed composition, a deep absorption into its musical contents, minimizes the risk of performance anxiety. It is often a fear of being judged that prevents one from freedom of execution on stage. Therefore, a performer should never assign to an audience the role of assessor, but instead treat it as a perceptive body only. In performance, both performer and listener are to be involved with and enjoy a performed work. Thus, in respect of performance anxiety, the work can function as a mediator, a protective barrier between a performer and an audience.

Performance is an outcome of a long and complex process of preliminary preparation. In an ensemble performance, a primary aim of individual players is to coordinate their single contributions into a common effort. Elaine Goodman draws a parallel between the roles of ensemble musicians and dramatic actors. She writes:

"Just as actors mould and adjust their characters to one another by playing up to and playing off each other's parts, so do musicians in ensemble performance. However, actors never lose sight of their own character, so the drama is at once defined by each actor as well as the combination of actors. The same is true in ensemble music, for each musician stamps the ensemble with his or her own identity, but also tries to blend in with the group." <sup>17</sup>

The relationship between the musicians of a chamber ensemble is based on their verbal and non-verbal communication. The first assists in developing their ability to select the most valuable and workable ideas out of the diversity of thoughts and suggestions coming from all members of the group. The second refers to issues of ensemble performance. There is both a mechanical and a creative approach in ensuring a group plays well together. The first way engages an application of physical gestures and hints, such as exchanging quick eye contact or a clear bow lead. It is reliable, yet can involve an inner tension unless supported by trust in each other's musicality and a musical affinity between the players. A performance based on a creative affinity is a most satisfying presentation of a chamber work. It creates the "illusion of synchrony" <sup>18</sup> that suffices for the perception of a piece as an integrated whole.

# INTERPRETATION OF CYCLIC FORM IN THE WORKS OF CÉSAR FRANCK

Reflection on the issues of interpretation and performance found its practical application in preparing and performing the piano and chamber works of César Franck. In the context of the above discussion, there were two major points for consideration:

- 1) an investigation of the common compositional principles of the works;
- 2) a consideration of the significance of cyclic form and its implication for interpretation.

The first point refers to undertaking a formal analysis of the works, and the importance of its conclusions for their interpretation. The second deals with the interpretation of a cyclic composition as a psychological narrative, and draws on the work by Gregory Karl “Music as plot: A study in cyclic forms.”

## Compositional principles in the music of Franck

A common compositional technique can be traced in many of César Franck’s works. A close observation and a comparative analysis of the compositions reveal certain principles that travel from one work to another, and can be defined as ‘cyclic’. The workings of the cyclic form are characterized by a specific element (melodic germ) used as a thread through the composition, recognizable and changeable in image at the same time. A similar process of organization can be seen on a larger scale, where the recurrence of compositional principles and thematic ideas can themselves be assigned the value of recurring cyclic ‘cells’. Therefore, one can speak of a cycle on a higher level. These principles, each of which is explored below, include:

- thematic similarities between works;
- textural layout;
- structural and dynamic plan;
- function of fugue in a cycle.

Thematic similarities can be observed in many different contexts.

a) The first phrases of both the *Aria* from *Prélude, Aria et Final* and the fourth movement of the Violin Sonata are shaped as an ascending up-beat followed by the descending motion (see example 1 and example 2 overleaf).

Example 1 César Franck, *Prélude, Aria et Final* (*Aria*, bars 16-18)



Example 2 César Franck, *Sonate für Klavier und Violine A-dur* (fourth movement, piano part, bars 1-2)

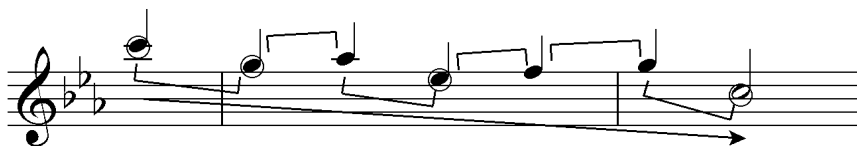


b) Both the theme from the fugue, inserted in the middle of the *Prélude* from *Prélude, Aria et Final* (bars 84-88)<sup>19</sup> and the choral theme of the *Choral* from *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* (bars 68-70)<sup>20</sup> have a descending melodic outline, evenness of pace and a similar intervallic structure (combination of wide and narrow intervals), see examples 3 and 4 below.

Example 3 César Franck, *Prélude, Aria et Final* (*Prélude*, bars 84-88)



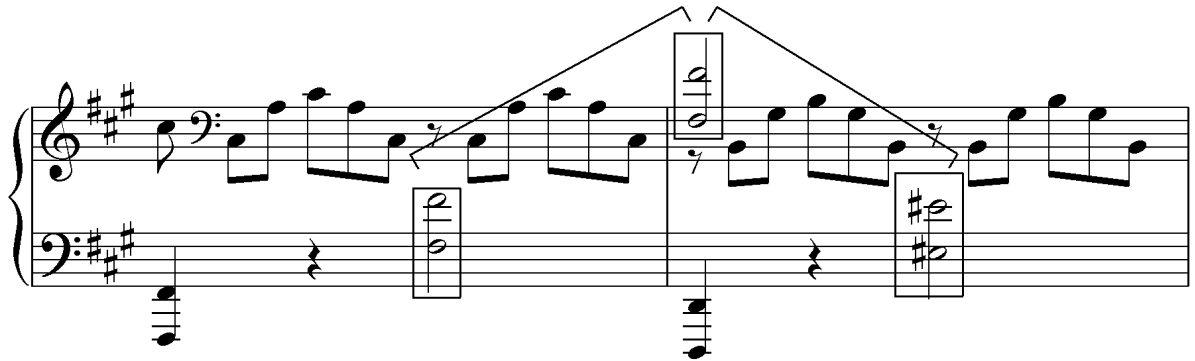
Example 4 César Franck, *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* (*Choral*, bars 68-70)



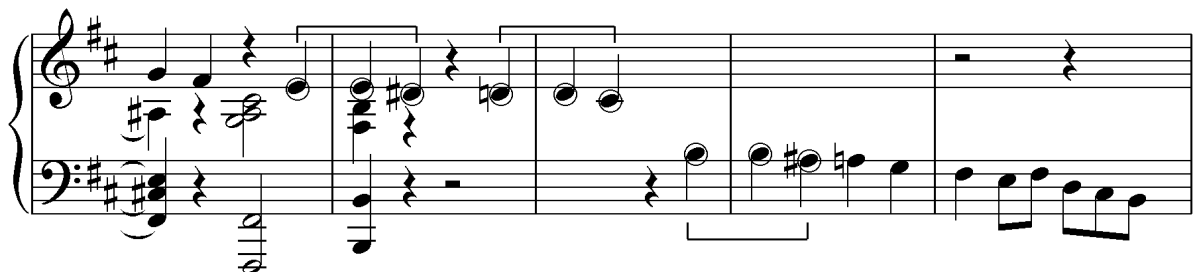
c) In the piano part of the third movement of the Violin Sonata, the first motif of the melody underlying the violin theme *dramatico* (bars 71-72)<sup>21</sup> is identical to the theme of the fugue in *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* (bars 157-161), but in augmentation and in a different key (see examples 5 and 6 overleaf).



Example 5 César Franck, *Sonate für Klavier und Violine A-dur* (third movement, piano part, bars 71-72)



Example 6 César Franck, *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* (Fugue, bars 157-161)



d) In the last movement of the Piano Quintet, the opening of the violin II part (bars 1-4) <sup>22</sup> contains in condensed form a melodic cell of the first subject of the second movement of the Violin Sonata (bars 14-15 of the violin part, see examples 7 and 8 below).

Example 7 César Franck, *Quintett für Klavier, 2 Violinen, Viola und Violoncello F-Moll* (third movement, violin II part, bars 1-4)



Example 8 César Franck, *Sonate für Klavier und Violine A-dur* (second movement, violin part, bars 14-15)



The observation of these thematic similarities allows one to grasp Franck's musical vocabulary and the consistency with which the principles are applied.

An example of common textural layout is found in the openings of the *Prélude* from *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* (bars 1-2, see example 9 below) and the second movement of the Violin Sonata (bars 4-9, see example 10 below). In both, the texture is presented in three layers: a bass, a melody (which is delayed by a rest, thus creating the effect of a syncopation) and a figuration.

Example 9 César Franck, *Prélude, Choral et Fugue*. Ernst-Gunter Heinemann, ed. München: G.Henle Verlag, 1995 (*Prélude*, bars 1-2).

Musical score for Example 9, showing the opening of the *Prélude* from *Prélude, Choral et Fugue*. The score is in G major, 3/4 time, marked *Moderato*. It shows the first two bars of the piece. The texture consists of three layers: a bass line in the left hand, a melody in the right hand that is delayed by a rest, and a figuration in the right hand. The first measure starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second measure continues the texture with a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking.

Example 10 César Franck, *Sonate für Klavier und Violine A-dur*. Monica Steegmann, ed. München: G.Henle Verlag, 1993 (second movement, bars 4-9).

Musical score for Example 10, showing the second movement of the Violin Sonata. The score is in A major, 3/4 time, marked *passionato*. It shows bars 4-9. The texture consists of three layers: a bass line in the left hand, a melody in the right hand that is delayed by a rest, and a figuration in the right hand. The first measure starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The second measure continues the texture with a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking.

An awareness and understanding of this type of texture suggests specific ways of handling it to project its musical potential. It must be noted that, in the *Prélude*, a performer's preoccupation with making the inner voice prominent could lead to ignoring the bass, and to unbalancing the whole pattern in favour of the right hand, in which the inner voice is contained. One should think more of the melody and the bass as moving in two parallel lines with separate entries (as if they were played on two organ manuals), rather than of the syncopation: that is, to consider their horizontal, not their vertical relationship.

A piano performance of the first subject of the second movement of the Sonata, mentioned above, should be approached from a similar perspective, with a substantial weight given to the bass notes in the left hand. Gregory Karl gives a valuable suggestion on the interpretation of this passage, based on his observation of its nature:

“...the opening sentence of the theme fuses agitation and frenetic motion with restrained and careful melodic contours, and these contradictory qualities suggest a range of interpretations of a particular kind: those involving the attempt to control a strong impulse, emotion, or other force.”<sup>23</sup>

Another example of textural similarity is the theme of the *Fugue* from *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* (bars 205-209; 355-361, see example 11 below) and the thematic material of the *Prélude*, which is re-introduced in the *Final of Prélude, Aria et Final* (bars 180-189, see example 12 overleaf). Both are reinforced by monumental chords accompanied by octave passages. The use of contrary motion in each case provides an additional sonority and splendour.

Example 11 César Franck, *Prélude, Choral et Fugue*. Ernst-Gunter Heinemann, ed. München: G.Henle Verlag, 1995 (*Fugue*, bars 355-361).

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system, starting at bar 355, shows a treble and bass clef with complex chordal textures and rhythmic patterns. A forte (ff) dynamic marking is present. The second system, starting at bar 358, continues the texture with similar chordal structures and includes performance markings: 'pochissimo rall.' (very, very slowly), 'dim.' (diminuendo), and 'cantando' (singingly).

Example 12 César Franck, *Prélude, Aria et Final*. Ernst-Gunter Heinemann, ed. München: G. Henle Verlag, 1991 (*Final*, bars 180-189).

Other sections reveal similarities of structural pattern and dynamic plan.

- a) The lyrical closings of the *Aria* from *Prélude, Aria et Final*, the first movement of the Violin Sonata and the second movement of the Piano Quintet are followed respectively by the anxious openings of the *Final* (*pp*), the second movement of the Sonata (*p*) and the last movement of the Quintet (*pp*). All appear in low dynamics as if sounding from afar.
- b) The same principle of an initial independence of the parts in their emotional statements, followed by their reconciliation is used in the openings of the third movement of the Violin Sonata (bars 1-13) and the first movement of the Piano Quintet (bars 1-27). In both cases the contrasting dialogue of the instruments (piano-violin in the Sonata, strings-piano in the Quintet) merges into the emotionally and dynamically unifying phrase.

Fugal writing forms an important part of *Prélude, Choral et Fugue*, *Prélude, Aria et Final* and *Prélude, Fugue et Variation*. The composer achieves an organic combination of polyphonic and homophonic material. In both *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* and *Prélude, Aria et Final*, the fugues commence in a strictly polyphonic pattern and then flow back into a homophonic texture. The same happens towards the end of the *Fugue* from *Prélude, Fugue et Variation* (piano transcription by H. Bauer)<sup>24</sup>, though it stays longer within the framework of the form. The fugue's theme is introduced in the link section preceding the *Fugue*. In *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* it is presented there in its entirety (bars 115-119). In *Prélude, Fugue et Variation* the melodic outline of its first phrase is contained in the first two bars of *Lento*.

The position and role of the fugue in the context of the cycles is different in each case. In *Prélude, Choral et Fugue* the *Fugue* is the last and most intense section of the work, with its theme appearing as a result of the preceding material. In *Prélude, Fugue et Variation* and *Prélude, Aria et Final* the fugue's position is intermediate, preparing the *Variation* as the most emphasized piece in the former, and beginning mysteriously in unison after a dynamic 'cut off' in the latter (bars 83-88 of the *Prélude*). The entries of all three fugues establish a 'dominant-tonic' relationship with the preceding material in the sense that the beginning of the fugue becomes a resolution of the foregoing dominant harmony.

The recognition of common compositional principles through a detailed analysis of the works contributes to:

- a) an understanding of the structure of those works in its entirety. Thus, the Piano Quintet and Violin Sonata are examples of "extended thematically unified multimovement works." <sup>25</sup> *Prélude, Choral et Fugue, Prélude, Aria et Final* and *Prélude, Fugue et Variation* are each created as a musical triptych with a masterly use of the form of fugue.
- b) an efficient method of practice. The inner workings of Franck's compositions are based on the same elements of his musical language. Therefore it is helpful and advisable to alternate a practice of the solo and the chamber works (a piano part) as carrying a common stamp of Franck's writing.

### **The role of psychological elements in interpretation of cyclic form**

Musicological investigation of cyclic form is an important part of analyzing César Franck's works. As Norman Demuth writes: "The cyclic form had for him become the natural means of expression and his instinctive knowledge and skill in variation made it perfectly logical." <sup>26</sup> However, an interpretation of a cyclic composition should go beyond a mere observation of its cyclic elements into a revelation of the particular emotional states that they represent. A major task for a performer lies in discovering and projecting a concept of the work arising from its structural characteristics.

The musical content of a large cyclic work reflects the "allegorical dramas of mental life." <sup>27</sup> A performer must understand the connection between the psychological elements of a cycle and its formal size and timing. The processes of comprehension and internalization of a work should ultimately result in bringing one's inner self into the performance. Thus, an abstract composition, the title of which only consists of the forms/genres it incorporates, becomes filled with a performer's personal insight. In this context, the work "Music as plot: A study in cyclic forms" by Gregory Karl, is relevant and highly recommended to

anyone interested in the matter. The author writes: "...some works of non-programmatic music concentrate large spans of *personal* experience in a condensed musical time frame." <sup>28</sup> He also writes:

"... if music – especially non-programmatic music – is dramatic, it is more often like allegorical drama in which musical units are analogous to psychic forces or to the mental impressions of external events. The plots of these allegorical dramas are the long-term struggles of psychological and emotional life..." <sup>29</sup>

Applying this point of view to the structure of Franck's Violin Sonata, Karl defines it as a "pattern of equilibrium – disruption – reestablishment of equilibrium..." <sup>30</sup> His description of the theme from the third movement of the Sonata <sup>31</sup> is an example of a psychological analysis of the music, an attempt to draw parallels between a human mentality and the musical idea. Thus, he creates a kind of a written interpretation, based on psychological processes rather than on a purely formal analysis of the passage.

The performances presented as part of this submission have been approached from the same perspective. By means of a transformation of the melodic cells and motifs in the course of a cycle, the musical ideas depict a journey of the human spirit. The path it travels is a search for a solution, through a controversy of doubts and suffering with hope and harmony, towards strength and reconciliation. Thus, on a conceptual and expressive level, the structure of the compositions is considered below.

### ***Prélude, Choral et Fugue***

#### *Prélude*

The *Prélude* establishes a narrative through a series of musical questions and answers. Harmonically, each question is represented by the dominant harmony whereas the answer is represented by the tonic. This connection between the harmonic and the expressive side reflects the musical content of the *Prélude*. The first four phrases of the piece finish on the unresolved dominant harmony. In the table overleaf they are referred to as four separately numbered questions. The resolution comes only in bar 7, which is referred to as an answer to the four previous questions. This kind of analysis allows the performer to shape the first seven bars of the piece more logically, aiming to create the need for a resolution through the buildup of the unresolved dominant harmonies. A similar pattern occurs in bars 16-23. Other examples show more immediate resolutions of the dominant harmony into the tonic.

Section A (bars 1-15)	bars 1-2	1 <sup>st</sup> Question
	bars 3-4	2 <sup>nd</sup> Question
	bar 5	3 <sup>rd</sup> Question
	bar 6	4 <sup>th</sup> Question
	bar 7	Answer
	bars 12-13	Question
	bars 13-14	Answer
	bar 15	Question
	bar 16	Answer
Section B (bars 16-41)	bars 16-17	1 <sup>st</sup> Question
	bars 18- 19	2 <sup>nd</sup> Question
	bar 20	3 <sup>rd</sup> Question
	bar 21	4 <sup>th</sup> Question
	bar 23	Answer
Section C (bars 42-56)	bar 42	Question
	bar 43	Answer
	bar 44	Question
	bar 45	Answer
	bar 46	Question
	bar 47	Answer
	bar 48	Question
	bar 49	Answer
	bars 50-51	Question
	bars 52-54 (1 <sup>st</sup> half)	'false' Answer (G# minor)
	bars 55-56	'true' Answer (return to B minor, main key)

### *Choral*

The choral theme represents the delayed answer to the first question of the *Prélude* (bars 1-2). Alfred Cortot makes an observation to the same effect: he describes the Choral as "...a second melody of different feeling, which answers the original cyclic theme, or imposes itself upon it." <sup>32</sup> Paul Liang also relates the two tunes by noting their melodic similarity. <sup>33</sup>

### *Fugue*

The theme of the fugue introduces a new element into the narrative. It may also be interpreted as the second answer to the questions posed in the *Prélude*.

In the *come una cadenza* section (bars 286-326) the recurrence of the pattern: question (*Prélude*) → answer (choral theme) takes place in the immediate neighbourhood. Then in bars 327-335 the choral

theme is reinforced by the use of canon, which leads into the collision of the choral theme with the fugue's theme in bars 335-343. The final statement of the choral theme in major mode represents the 'victory' of the choral theme as an outcome of that collision (bar 369 to the end of the work).

### ***Prélude, Aria et Final***

#### *Prélude*

On a conceptual level, the structure of the *Prélude* consists of statements 1 and 2 (bars 1-12 and 42-50 respectively) and the fugue section (bars 84-123). The development of their material initiates conflict. The conflict is dissipated by the recurrence of statement 1 (bars 171-189).

The *Aria* represents a song, in which conflict is postponed.

In the *Final*, conflict is renewed. The inserted theme of the *Aria* (bars 100-117) cannot settle the conflict, which is stopped only by the recurrence of statement 1 in a glorious setting (bars 180-203). A final reconciliation is achieved by a combination of statement 1 and the material of the *Aria* (bars 204-225). The latter eventually pacifies the ending of the composition (bars 226 to the end).

### **Piano Quintet**

The first movement sets up conflict through a collision of the contrasting themes (bars 193-233). At the end of the movement the conflict is left unresolved (*Tempo I. (Allegro.)*: bars 427 to the end).

The second movement represents a deviation from the conflict without providing a particular solution.

The third movement is a successful attempt to overcome the conflict. The 'echo' of the conflict in the final triumph (bar 502 to the end) is expressed through the major mode with lowered second and sixth degrees in bars 517-520.

### **Violin Sonata**

The first movement is an introduction, incorporating a question (bars 1-4) and a statement, which leads back into the question (bars 31-63; 89-96; 100-108), and creates an effect of serene uncertainty.

The second movement represents an action, followed by the third movement as a reaction to that action and a reflection. It poses a fusion of feelings with no solution.

The fourth movement brings about a reconciliation that comes with no effort (first subject). The turbulent action of the second movement is transformed here into confidence and triumph.



### ***Prélude, Fugue et Variation***

This contains the idea of a circle, which is introduced in the *Prélude*.

In the *Fugue*, the theme poses a question: out of the eight bars of the theme, seven bars presuppose a dominant harmony, whereas only bar 4 is resolved into tonic. The dominant pedal point, connecting the end of the *Fugue* to the beginning of the *Variation*, expresses the need for resolution.

The *Variation* represents an answer to the question of the fugue's theme, but not the solution. Instead, it refers back to the *Prélude*, using the same tune. A figuration of demisemiquavers, draping the melody, comes as a natural relief to the tension built up in the *Fugue*. Unlike the *Prélude*, a tonal plan brings the piece back to the main key of B minor. Thus, the *Variation* puts a 'full stop' at the end of the cycle. The circle is closed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The foregoing discussion has attempted to outline the conceptual framework that underpins the performances. The steps that a performer takes from familiarizing herself with a musical work, through scrupulous study and analysis combined with an intuitive way of comprehension, have been identified.

An interpretation of cyclic form through the psychological scenario it implies, has been given in the analysis of César Franck's works. The view of those works as a cycle on a larger scale has been presented through pinpointing the common compositional principles that they incorporate.

The researcher wishes to believe that the above material may help others in exploring and understanding the inner workings of music.

## NOTES

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2. Karl, 135.
3. William Rothstein. "Analysis and the act of performance." In *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*. J. Rink, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 218.
4. Paul Badura-Skoda. *Interpreting Bach at the Keyboard*. Trans. Alfred Clayton. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 213.
5. John Rink. "Analysis and (or?) performance." In *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*. J. Rink, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 56.
6. Rothstein, 218.
7. Eric Clarke. "Understanding the psychology of performance." In *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*. J. Rink, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 65.
8. Rothstein, 238.
9. Joel Lester. "Performance and analysis: interaction and interpretation." In *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*. J. Rink, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 199.
10. Peter Hill. "From score to sound." In *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*. J. Rink, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 142.
11. Karl, 34.
12. Clarke, 59.
13. Rothstein, 237.
14. Eric Clarke. "Listening to performance." In *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*. J. Rink, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 190.
15. Rothstein, 237.
16. Roy Howat. "What do we perform?" In *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*. J. Rink, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.
17. Elaine Goodman. "Ensemble performance." In *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding*. J. Rink, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 159.
18. Goodman, 155.
19. César Franck. *Prélude, Aria et Final*. Ernst-Gunter Heinemann, ed. (München: G.H. Henle Verlag, 1991).

All the subsequent references to this work will be made to this edition.

20. César Franck. *Prélude, Choral et Fugue*. Ernst-Gunter Heinemann, ed. (München: G.Henle Verlag, 1995).  
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All the subsequent references to this work will be made to this edition.
23. Karl, 188.
24. César Franck. *Prélude, Fugue et Variation*. Op. 18. Transcr. pour Piano par Harold Bauer. (Paris: Durand Editions Musicales, 1910).
25. Karl, 304.
26. Norman Demuth. *César Franck*. (London: Denis Dobson, 1949), 130.
27. Karl, ii.
28. Karl, 80.
29. Karl, 80.
30. Karl, 178.
31. Karl, 197.
32. Alfred Cortot. "The Piano Music of César Franck." In Cortot, Alfred. *French Piano Music*. Trans. Hilda Andrews. (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 72.
33. Paul Liang. *An Analysis of the Major Solo Piano Works of César Franck*. Doctor of Musical Arts Dissertation, Boston University, College of Fine Arts, 2002. (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 2007), 63.

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