

THE AMERICAN RECITAL TOURS OF JEANNE DEMESSIEUX  
A DOCUMENTATION OF HER PERFORMANCES

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Jeanne Demessieux (1921-1968) was a brilliant French organist, recitalist, and composer. One of a select number of European organists to tour America in the mid-twentieth century, she fascinated audiences with her phenomenal technique. Three transcontinental tours of America in 1953, 1955, and 1958 established Demessieux as one of the greatest products of the modern French organ school. She demonstrated her skill at improvisation and introduced to American audiences a number of her own compositions and those of other French composers.

The American recital tours offer extensive access to contemporary reaction to Demessieux's performances. By tracing her tours, examining her programs, and compiling critics' reviews of them, this document presents a detailed account of her performance style, technique, and influence on the American organ world. Through interviews and correspondence with persons who heard Demessieux in concert, this study introduces and documents heretofore undisclosed

personal reactions, opinions, and statements relating to her playing.

A biographical survey of Demessieux's life, her accomplishments, and her relationship with Marcel Dupré, places the American recital tours within the context of her illustrious but brief career. The study concludes with a discussion of her published organ compositions, with special emphasis placed upon those works Demessieux performed on her American recital tours.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	ii
Chapter	
1. HER EARLY CAREER . . . . .	1
2. THE 1953 AMERICAN TOUR . . . . .	16
3. THE 1955 AMERICAN TOUR . . . . .	31
4. THE 1958 AMERICAN TOUR . . . . .	45
5. HER FINAL YEARS . . . . .	69
6. HER COMPOSITIONS FOR ORGAN . . . . .	75
7. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AMERICAN TOURS . . . . .	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	89
APPENDIX 1: ORGAN SPECIFICATIONS . . . . .	93
APPENDIX 2: ORGAN COMPOSITIONS OF DEMESSIEUX . . . . .	100
APPENDIX 3: DISCOGRAPHY . . . . .	101

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## CHAPTER 1

### HER EARLY CAREER

Jeanne Marie-Madeleine Demessieux was born in Montpellier, France on February 13, 1921. Her mother, Madeleine Mézy, whose family was from Carmarque, married Etienne Demessieux, originally from the region of Drôme. There had never been a professional musician in either the Mézy or Demessieux families, but Jeanne's father, who was a high official in the S.N.C.F.,<sup>1</sup> played bugle and did some sketching and painting for pleasure. Her parents were of differing temperaments: her father was a happy and pleasant man, while her mother had a strong personality with a gloomy disposition.<sup>2</sup> Biographer Christiane Trieu-Colleney postulates that because Jeanne was raised by a calm and affectionate father and an emotional mother, she suffered from these diverse tendencies all her life. This dichotomy manifested itself in Jeanne by an excessive sensitiveness accompanied by a need to analyze and rationalize. She persistently gave the image of

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<sup>1</sup> Société nationale des chemins de fer français (National Society of French Railroads)

<sup>2</sup> Christiane Trieu-Colleney, Jeanne Demessieux: Une vie de lutttes et de gloire (Avignon: Les Presses Universelles, 1977), 12.

a double personality--that of the solitary church organist and that of worldly elegance.<sup>3</sup>

At the early age of three Jeanne had a passion for the violin, upon which she was taught the rudiments of music.<sup>4</sup> Soon Jeanne's sister Yolanda, a pianist and fourteen years her elder, replaced the violin with a keyboard in order to teach her the art of polyphony.<sup>5</sup> Yolanda, a former student of Isidore Philipp (1863-1958)<sup>6</sup> and organist at the church of St. Matthew in Montpellier, thus initiated and supervised Jeanne's early piano study.

An event that occurred at the age of three seemed to fortell the future virtuostic ability of the young Jeanne. Not wanting to leave her alone in the house, Jeanne's parents took her one night to the Montpellier theatre to see the opera Orpheus and Euridice of Gluck. Contrary to their expectations, the young girl did not sleep, but listened attentively. When the family returned home, Jeanne sang the aria "I have lost my Euridice" and amazed all hearers with her aural memory. After witnessing the young girl's innate

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<sup>3</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Denis, "Les organistes français d'aujourd'hui: Jeanne Demessieux," L'Orgue 75 (April/June, 1955): 37.

<sup>5</sup> Denis, 37.

<sup>6</sup> Philipp, a reknowned French pianist, was appointed piano professor at the Paris Conservatory in 1903 and remained there for more than thirty years.



ability. Yolanda was charged with teaching music to her.<sup>7</sup>

A prodigy at the age of four, she spent two hours daily practicing piano and devoted two hours to the study of solfège and musical dictation.<sup>8</sup> At five, she wrote her first composition and received her first taste of the organ.<sup>9</sup>

Sa soeur, organiste depuis l'âge de treize ans, amène un jour Jeanne aux vêpres à l'église Saint-Mathieu. Alors que l'office s'achève, l'enfant pleure car elle veut jouer la sortie. Cédant à son caprice, Yolande lui permet de jouer sur le deuxième clavier, ayant pris soin auparavant de tirer quelques jeux doux. Et Jeanne attaque sur le clavier de récit une étude de Chopin qu'elle exécute jusqu'au bout de mémoire! C'est la première fois qu'elle joue de l'orgue, elle a cinq ans et demi . . .

After requesting that she be removed from school because the teachers always repeated the same things, Demessieux actively prepared for entrance into the Montpellier Conservatory. In 1928 she entered an elementary solfège class and an intermediary piano class. On June 14,

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<sup>7</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 13-14.

<sup>8</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 15-16. Translation: "Her sister, organist since the age of 13, took Jeanne one day to vespers at the church of St. Matthew. Even though the office was finished, the child cried because she wanted to play the closing piece. Surrendering to her caprice, Yolanda permitted her to play the second keyboard, having taken care previously to pull a few soft stops. And Jeanne attacked the recit manual with a Chopin etude which she executed by memory! This is the first time that she played the organ--she was five and a half years old . . . "

1932, she won first prize in solfège and a week later she won first prize in piano by playing the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra by Charles-Marie Widor. Amazingly, even though she had forgotten her score in the emotion of the moment, Demessieux played this work that lasted more than half an hour by memory!<sup>10</sup>

To facilitate Jeanne's musical studies, the Demessieux family moved to Paris in October of 1932. After auditioning for the Paris Conservatory, Jeanne was exempt from the solfège courses. The renowned Conservatory teacher Lazare Lévy (1882-1964)<sup>11</sup> encouraged Jeanne to study piano with Lélia Gousseau to prepare for admission into his piano class. In October 1933 Demessieux was admitted into the Paris Conservatory, but, because Lévy's class was full, she enrolled in the upper piano class of Simon Riera.

Lévy praised Demessieux:<sup>12</sup>

C'est une lyre, une harpe, un génie.  
C'est la première enfant que je trouve  
aussi bien douée, à tel point que parfois  
elle me fait peur. Dernièrement elle m'a

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<sup>10</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 16-17.

<sup>11</sup> Lévy, a French pianist and pedagogue, studied with Diémer and succeeded Alfred Cortot as professor at the Paris Conservatory in 1920.

<sup>12</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 20. Translation: "She is a lyre, a harp, a genius. She is the first student that I have found so gifted, to such a point sometimes that she frightens me. Recently she brought me her latest compositions, small masterpieces, a marvel . . . a marvel . . . and I love this little one!"

apporté ses dernières compositions, des  
petits chefs-d'oeuvre, une merveille . . .  
une mervielle . . . et je l'aime cette  
petite!

The relationship of Riera and Demessieux was somewhat confrontational because of their differing artistic concepts. Despite this friction, in one eight-day period she succeeded in perfecting two of the transcendental etudes of Liszt, Sonata, opus 106, of Beethoven, the Sixth Hungarian Rhapsody of Liszt, the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue of Bach, and several etudes of Chopin.<sup>13</sup> All this at the age of twelve!

After Riera's retirement, Demessieux continued her studies with Magda Tagliafero (b. 1893).<sup>14</sup> Under Tagliafero's tutelage, Demessieux won the first prize in piano in July of 1938 by playing the Fantasy of Chopin.

Concurrent with her piano study, Demessieux studied harmony with Jean Gallon (1878-1959) and fugue with Noël Gallon (1891-1966),<sup>15</sup> winning first prize in counterpoint and fugue in July of 1939. Following this study, Jeanne naturally began her formal instruction in composition and was

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<sup>13</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Brazilian pianist Tagliafero began her concert career in 1908 and continued performing for seventy years. From 1937 she was on the faculty of the Paris Conservatory.

<sup>15</sup> The Gallon brothers were both instructors at the Paris Conservatory. Jean was harmony teacher at the Conservatory from 1919-49, where his pupils included Maurice Duruflé and Olivier Messiaen. Noël won the prix de Rome in 1910, was appointed solfège instructor at the Conservatory in 1920 and in 1926 became professor of counterpoint and fugue.

admitted into the class of Henri Büsser (1872-1973)<sup>16</sup> in November 1939. By October of the next year she had attained the first award of merit in composition.<sup>17</sup>

Continuing in the footsteps of her sister, Jeanne developed a desire to play the organ for church services. In 1933 she became "titulaire" at St. Esprit in Paris, a church that had just been completed in her neighborhood. She was initially charged with playing the harmonium, the only instrument in the church, but soon an organ was built according to the plans of Albert Alain.<sup>18</sup> Michel d'Argoeuvres, named Chapel master of St. Esprit in 1936, relates:<sup>19</sup>

C'est un magnifique édifice conçu dans le style néo-byzantin . . . Dans une tribune latérale, ce n'est plus un harmonium, mais un orgue dont peut disposer la toute jeune musicienne, instrument de si bonne facture, si bien adapté aux conditions acoustiques qu'il donne l'illusion d'un grand orgue. Il ne possède pourtant que quatorze jeux.

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<sup>16</sup> Büsser, a French composer, organist, and conductor, taught composition at the Paris Conservatory from 1930-48.

<sup>17</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 23.

<sup>18</sup> For specifications of the St. Esprit organ see Appendix 1.

<sup>19</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 37. Translation: "It is a magnificent building conceived in the Neo-Byzantine style . . . In a side gallery, there is no longer a harmonium, but an organ which can accommodate every young musician, an instrument of beautiful workmanship, so well adapted to the acoustical conditions that it gives one the illusion of a large organ. It possesses, however, only 14 stops."

It was this church that Demessieux would serve for nearly thirty years.

In the mid 1930s a famous relationship began between Demessieux and Marcel Dupré (1886-1971).<sup>20</sup> In 1935 the director of the Montpellier Conservatory felt it would be beneficial for Jeanne to work with Dupré after her harmony and piano studies had ended. The momentous meeting of the two musicians occurred on October 8, 1936 at Dupré's home in Meudon and was for Jeanne an unforgettable rendez-vous!<sup>21</sup> For this initial interview, which lasted an hour and forty minutes, Demessieux played Beethoven's Sonata, opus 106, on the piano. Moving to the organ<sup>22</sup> she played a Bach fantasy and continued by improvising on a theme given to her by Dupré; she recalled later that she improvised like one in a dream.<sup>23</sup> At the end of this successful interview, Dupré decided that he would take the young Demessieux under his

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<sup>20</sup> Dupré, a student of Diémer, Guilmant and Widor, won the prix de Rome in 1914. He was named organ professor at the Paris Conservatory in 1926 and served as its director from 1954-56. Dupré succeeded Widor as titulaire at St. Sulpice in 1934, composed a number of organ works, wrote instruction books, published editions of the complete works of Bach and the organ concertos of Handel, and was renowned as a teacher and recitalist.

<sup>21</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 24.

<sup>22</sup> The recital hall in Dupré's home at Meudon contained both a piano and an organ. For specifications of the organ see Appendix 1.

<sup>23</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 110.

artistic protection. Though her initial desire was to perform as a concert pianist, after meeting Dupré she soon had the dream of becoming a great organist.

For Jeanne and Dupré an exceptional relationship between teacher and student was born, a friendship filled with aesthetic emotions, exchanges of many ideas, and discoveries. Dupré soon saw Demessieux as his chosen disciple. He had already looked a number of times among his students for the one that he would baptize as his worthy successor--the one capable of passing on his pedagogical techniques, performing his compositions, concertizing throughout the world and preserving the heritage of the French organ school. But each time, his hopes had fallen.<sup>24</sup> He soon realized that Demessieux represented the faithful continuance of his ideal--"Guilmant, Widor, Dupré, Demessieux, ces noms résonnent au fond de lui . . ."<sup>25</sup>

Dupré instilled in Demessieux his pedagogical ideas and created for her a climate in which she could devote herself completely to the art of organ. Empowered with Dupré's "secrets" of pedal technique and her own flawless facility at the piano, she soon began to study the major organ repertoire. Dupré was a very demanding instructor and in January

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<sup>24</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 24-5. Translation: "Guilmant, Widor, Dupré, Demessieux, these names resounded in the depths of him . . ."

of 1936, he requested that Demessieux learn and memorize the three-movement E-flat trio sonata of Bach (BWV 525) in only fifteen days.<sup>26</sup> In January of 1939, Demessieux entered the organ class at the Paris Conservatory and won first prize in 1941. After this triumph, Dupré remarked that in his sixteen years of teaching at the Conservatory, only two of his students had received top organ performance honors in their first attempt: Olivier Messiaen and Jeanne Demessieux.<sup>27</sup>

Not only did Jeanne assist Dupré in the revision of organ works, including those of Bach and Handel, she became his assistant at St. Sulpice, where Dupré was organist titulaire, along with Jean-Jacques Grünenwald.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, Demessieux would never fulfill her dream of advancing to the post of titulaire at St. Sulpice. As Dupré had feared, the curate charged with marriages declared that it would be impossible to have a female as organist of the choir.<sup>29</sup>

After nearly ten years of study with Dupré, Demessieux premiered in recital on the organ at Pleyel Hall, playing her newly composed Six Etudes and improvising a symphony in four movements. Dupré organized over the next two years a series of twelve historic recitals on this instrument. In this

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<sup>26</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 111.

<sup>27</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 124.

<sup>28</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 26-7.

<sup>29</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 35.

series, Demessieux played by memory many of the great works of Bach (including the six sonatas), the complete works of Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Franck and a number of works of Widor, Dupré, and the contemporary school. Each recital concluded with an improvisation, each one in a different form.<sup>30</sup>

The Pleyel series was inaugurated on February 25, 1946, and the programs of the first year were entitled respectively: 1) J.S. Bach; 2) Felix Mendelssohn; 3) Franz Liszt; 4) Marcel Dupré; and 5) Contemporary French School. In her premiere recital Demessieux improvised a four-movement symphony (Allegro, Andante, Scherzo, and Final) on themes of Jean Gallon. Bernard Gavoty described this first recital: "Une organiste prodige? Non. Une prodigieuse organiste. C'est mieux. . . . Nul, sinon Dupré lui-même, n'est, à l'heure où j'écris capable de tels prodiges."<sup>31</sup> On Tuesday, October 28, 1947, Jeanne began the second series of six recitals, this time with varied programs. For these twelve recitals Demessieux learned and memorized over 1500 pages of music!<sup>32</sup>

The relationship between Demessieux and Dupré was very

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<sup>30</sup> Denis, 38-9.

<sup>31</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 55-6. Translation: "An organist prodigy? No, a prodigious organist--that is better. . . . None, not even Dupré himself, at the hour I am writing, is capable of such marvels."

<sup>32</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 54.



complex. Dupré, after having reached the summit of his artistic career, began to ask himself about the future of the art of playing the organ. Dupré saw in Demessieux the person who could carry on his ideals and become one of the greatest organists of the world. Above all Dupré believed he had encountered a talent who could become a virtuoso capable of interpreting his compositions exactly according to his directions, and an organist who could continue his high standards of teaching and performing.

Demessieux felt obligated to become the greatest organist in the world. Dupré had not only taken her under his wing, he had allowed her to win the first prize in organ at the Paris Conservatory on her first attempt, and with his assistance, she became one of the substitute organists at St. Sulpice. The first series of recitals at Pleyel Hall, organized by Dupré, became the springboard from which Demessieux would be able to conquer the entire world and begin her triumphant career as concert artist. Demessieux certainly felt that Dupré was instrumental to her success.<sup>33</sup>

A break between Demessieux and her maître Dupré occurred in 1946. Though no one can be certain of all the intricacies of this personal relationship or the reasons for its demise, it appears that the departure of Dupré for his 1946 United States tour marked the end of their artistic

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<sup>33</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 27-8.

understanding. Despite the exchange of letters an irreversible change in their destinies occurred. Differences arose due to the organization of concerts and the prospect of Demessieux next touring America. Essentially, Jeanne refused, in spite of the insistence of Dupré, to undertake the venture of going alone to the United States at this time without the assurance of excellent conditions.<sup>34</sup> This is a simplification of the situation, but most likely it was the first time that Demessieux had refused to do Dupré's bidding.

Though Dupré would have loved to "Americanize" her, Demessieux had too strong a personality to trace her career in the shadow of her maître. She certainly suffered from the delay in her launching of her career and was obligated to repress her thirst for the public and withhold the expression of her independence. The rupture of this relationship was made permanent by Dupré's refusal to be Jeanne's sponsor for her entrance to the S.A.C.E.M.<sup>35</sup> It seems that Demessieux was devastated over this break with Dupré: not only had she lost her best friend, but this great man had fallen from his pedestal.<sup>36</sup> Despite her personal problems with Dupré, Demessieux continued to admire his musical integrity and discussed his

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<sup>34</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 29-30.

<sup>35</sup> Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique (Society of authors, composers and editors of music)

<sup>36</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 30-31.

importance as teacher and composer in her article "L'art de Marcel Dupré,"<sup>37</sup> published four years after the falling-out.

When asked by Pierre Denis which of her teachers had influenced her most, Demessieux replied that all of her teachers had a profound influence on her artistic evolution. Léonce Granier, her piano professor at the Montpellier Conservatory, instilled a fervent love for the works of J.S. Bach and at the age of nine, had her transpose, by heart, the preludes and fugues of the Well Tempered Clavier. Magda Tagliafero developed Demessieux's sense of pianistic interpretation, which later facilitated her organ playing. Dupré, who dazzled her with his mental and technical command of the organ, impressed upon her a sense of discipline and introduced the large forms of composition. Henri Büsser taught Demessieux the art of orchestration and Noël Gallon was at the foundation of her compositional formation.<sup>38</sup>

In 1947 Demessieux published Sept Méditations sur le Saint Esprit and began concertizing throughout Europe. In that year, she became the first woman invited to give a recital at Westminster Cathedral in London and she toured Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. In 1948 she continued this active performance

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<sup>37</sup> Jeanne Demessieux, "L'art de Marcel Dupré" Etudes (April 1950). Trans. T. Marier, Caecilia 80 (November/December 1952): 6-14.

<sup>38</sup> Denis, 38.

schedule travelling to Germany, Holland, and numerous places in France. The following year she toured Spain and Portugal. In 1950, Demessieux was awarded the Grand Prix du disque de l'Académie Charles-Cros for her recording of "Trumpet Tune and Air" of Henry Purcell.<sup>39</sup>

As a teacher, Demessieux had occasionally substituted for Dupré at the Paris Conservatory since 1946. Her first appointment occurred in 1950 when she was nominated to the organ professorship at the Nancy Conservatory. In teaching, as in other fields, she was a success. After just two years at Nancy, her organ studio grew from five to eighteen students and three of her students achieved the first prize in organ.<sup>40</sup> In 1952 she was nominated to and eventually accepted the organ position at the Royal Conservatory in Liège, Belgium, succeeding Ch. Hens. Fernand Quinet, director of the Conservatory, wanted to introduce his country to the French tradition of organ playing and return to the long-forgotten teaching principles of Lemmens. The interview for this position lasted three days and Demessieux was required to improvise both a symphony and a prelude and fugue, perform several major organ works, demonstrate her pedagogical techniques, and write an essay on organ-building.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 69.

<sup>40</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 39.

<sup>41</sup> Denis, 39.

Careful research has offered no information concerning Demessieux's preparation for her American tours. Undoubtedly, she had some contact with Bernard Laberge, who arranged Dupré's American tours. The three transcontinental tours of America that Demessieux made between 1953 and 1958 were greatly significant in establishing Demessieux's status as master organist, improviser, and composer.

CHAPTER 2  
THE 1953 AMERICAN TOUR

Colbert-LaBerge Concert Management, based in New York City, announced the first transcontinental tour of Jeanne Demessieux in the October, 1952 issue of the Diapason<sup>1</sup> and the November, 1952 edition of the American Organist.<sup>2</sup> In February and March of 1953, Demessieux made her American debut in New York, Pittsburgh, Boston, Oakland, and several other cities. Her first live exposure to the American public occurred on the January 31, 1953, broadcast over WQXR radio and its affiliated stations. In association with the American Guild of Organists, WQXR broadcast a series of recitals from Temple Emanu-El in New York City. Demessieux's program was:

Trumpet Tune	Purcell
Chorale Prelude: "When We Are in Deepest Need"	Bach
Fugue in G Major (Gigue)	Bach

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<sup>1</sup> Diapason 43 (October 1952): 9.

<sup>2</sup> American Organist 35 (November 1952): 389.

Pastorale

Franck

"Dogme" from Seven MeditationsDemessieux<sup>3</sup>

Upon her arrival in the United States an interview in the New York Herald Tribune revealed that after her debut recital in New York City, Demessieux would go on a twenty-five-concert tour of the country. She had learned from memory the entire organ literature of Bach, Franck, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Handel, and all but the last two compositions of Dupré, a total of between 1,000 and 2,000 works. Not only was her repertoire vast, but she was so confident in her ability that she left all of her scores in France.<sup>4</sup>

The American debut of Demessieux in recital was on February 2, 1953, at Central Presbyterian Church in New York City with the following program:

Trumpet Tune	Purcell
Prelude and Fugue in A Minor	
"The Old Year Has Passed Away"	
Fugue in G Major (Gigue)	Bach
Pastorale	Franck
Variations from <u>Symphonie gothique</u>	Widor

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<sup>3</sup> Diapason 44 (January 1953): 1. For this and subsequent programs, I have kept the original language and forms of composers' names to reflect the style and spirit of the original program. I have standardized punctuation and capitalization for consistency of presentation.

<sup>4</sup> Paul V. Beckley, "Organist Plays 1,000 to 2,000 Works by Heart," New York Herald Tribune, February 1, 1953.

Banquet céleste	Messiaen
Fifth Study, Repeated Notes	
Dogme	Demessieux
Cadence	Berveiller <sup>5</sup>
Group of improvisations on submitted themes <sup>6</sup>	

Demessieux's début recital was reviewed in the leading organ periodicals of the day. M. Searle Wright of the Diapason felt her playing was representative of the Grand French manner--big line, simple cleancut phrasings, steady tempi and clarity of part reading and articulation general.<sup>7</sup> Editor of the American Organist, T. Scott Buhrman, was similarly impressed with her concept of articulation and praised her crisp and fearless staccato.<sup>8</sup>

If we have ears to hear with, a close scrutiny of how Miss Demessieux uses staccato, only rarely perverting the organ to its mud-thick legatos, will do much to revolutionize the funereal organ recital and, if we have the good sense to watch our repertoire better, revive the organ as

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<sup>5</sup> Jean Berveiller (d. 1976) was a French organist, composer and colleague of Demessieux. Throughout her American tours Demessieux programmed his organ works, which include Cadence, Epitaphe, Mouvement, and Suite in four movements. Cadence is a virtuosic pedal study dedicated to Demessieux.

<sup>6</sup> The New York Times, February 1, 1953.

<sup>7</sup> M. Searle Wright, "Jeanne Demessieux in American Debut at New York Recital," Diapason 44 (March 1953): 38.

<sup>8</sup> T. Scott Buhrman, "Jeanne Demessieux Recital," American Organist 36 (February 1953): 59.



an instrument of beauty rather than torture. . . . [She illustrates the] finest staccato to come out of Europe since Joseph Bonnet.<sup>9</sup>

She impressed American concert-goers with her phenomenal pedal technique, all the more astonishing due to her very high French heels.<sup>10</sup> Not only her pedal technique, but her physique impressed one reviewer:<sup>11</sup>

Miss Demessieux has legs and she's not ashamed of them; they're shapely, and they dance around the pedalboard with never a miss; she's a little girl, very young, and has, evidently, so much good sense that nothing matters but her music. No lady can sit on an organ bench without showing how her shoes are attached to the rest of her, and Miss Demessieux apparently didn't give a darn; I like honesty.

The aforementioned reviews differ in their appreciation of Demessieux's utilization of the colors of the organ. Wright was not particularly impressed with her registrational choices:<sup>12</sup>

Demessieux, like many of her many French compatriots, seems to be satisfied only with the most sharply contrasting stops

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Bonnet (1884-1944) studied organ with Guilmant at the Paris Conservatory, became titulaire at St. Eustache in 1906, and succeeded Guilmant as organist of the Concerts du Conservatoire in 1911. Bonnet made his American debut in New York in 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Female French organists of the mid-twentieth century commonly played the organ in shoes with heels of two or more inches. Conventional American heels are about one inch high.

<sup>11</sup> Buhrman, 59.

<sup>12</sup> Wright, 38.

available, regardless of the timbre of individual voices and their blend or lack of blend in combination or opposition. The result is the use, both for ensemble or solo playing, of the biggest, hootiest flutes, the edgiest reeds, etc.

In the same recital, another reviewer felt Demessieux used the organ more effectively:<sup>13</sup>

Franck you can have; one of his least interesting pieces, but Miss Demessieux none the less used it [the Pastorale] to teach Americans another lesson they've tried to forget, namely that a mess of colors is not nearly so good as clear-cut pure colors. She contrasted reeds against flutes . . . the flutes were unclouded by the addition of unnecessary supplementary voices, the reeds were ditto.

At Central Presbyterian Demessieux played a few of her own compositions. First, "Repeated Notes" from her Six Etudes is "grand concert music; it invites the Pedal to come up out of the 16' sub-basement and have a frolic in the living room with the rest of the family. And it has something musical to say too, and says it entertainingly."<sup>14</sup> "Dogme" from Sept Méditations sur le Saint Esprit received mixed reviews: "Dogme is typical contemporary noises, made as ugly as possible; don't blame that on Miss Demessieux; she's contaminated by the spirit of the age."<sup>15</sup> Another reviewer

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<sup>13</sup> Buhrman, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Buhrman, 60.

<sup>15</sup> Buhrman, 60.

was complimentary.<sup>16</sup>

Mlle. Demessieux's own "Dogme" proved an imaginatively written work in a big rhapsodic style. The composer's striking use of polytonal textures lends an exciting vitality to her music. What the French lack in imagination regarding registration they surely make up in their fertile harmonic consciousness.

Performing in the tradition of her maître Marcel Dupré and other French organists, Demessieux concluded all of her American concerts with an improvisation on submitted themes. In her New York début she improvised a three-movement symphony based on three themes submitted by M. Searle Wright. Mr. Wright comments:<sup>17</sup>

The fugue which crowned the improvised work was a genuine fugue complete with an exciting stretto in which the subject (an angular one) was managed in augmentation with the right foot alone, while the left provided a counterpoint to the brilliant manual parts.

Not all American concert-goers were in awe of French improvisations. Buhrman tartly writes:<sup>18</sup>

Since public improvisations are more of a sham than I'm willing to waste time on, I walked out after two or three minutes of it, though this time the improviser did stick to the theme, at least while I was listening. I hope the organ world will

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<sup>16</sup> Wright, 38.

<sup>17</sup> Wright, 38.

<sup>18</sup> Buhrman, 60.

grow up and abolish this childish nonsense; never once among all the improvisations I've suffered through--including Dupré's--have I heard anything worth the effort of hearing.

Above all, Demessieux performed her recitals professionally and without the manufactured flair of many keyboardists. As one reviewer writes:<sup>19</sup>

Before going to the bench, Miss Demessieux faced her audience and recognized them by a courteous bow, then went to her job without attempts to fool anybody with the usual tricks of all too many concert performers. . . . One thing always annoys me, and a lot of other organists too, is a player's making a silly show of himself or herself when playing ffff organ, trying to make the audience think it's harder to play ffff than pp. Observe this young lady and you'll be delighted with her honesty. Only once or twice did she fling a hand off the keyboard at the release of a ffff chord, and then it was only the left hand, never the right.

In a letter to her parents, addressed February 5, 1953, Demessieux declared that her first American recital was "un grand retentissement."<sup>20</sup> She reported to her parents that the organ at Presbyterian Church was beautiful<sup>21</sup> and that the American Organist sent her a very flattering letter regarding

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<sup>19</sup> Buhrman, 59.

<sup>20</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 195. Translation: "a resounding success."

<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to know the specifications of what Demessieux considered a "beautiful" organ. A complete stop-list of the organ at Central Presbyterian can be found in Appendix 1.

her début concert.<sup>22</sup>

Following an engagement on the six-manual organ at the Wanamaker store in Philadelphia, Demessieux played a recital on February 10 at the Pennsylvania College for Women in Pittsburgh. The program, sponsored by the Möller Organ Company, included:

Toccata and Fugue in D Minor	Bach
Chorale Prelude	Bach
Concerto in G Minor	Handel
Pastorale	César Franck
<u>Symphonie-Passion</u>	Dupré
Epitaphe	Berveiller
"Les Rameaux"	Langlais
Chorale Prelude: "Ubi Caritas"	Demessieux
Study for Octaves	Demessieux
Improvisation upon a given theme <sup>23</sup>	

Fred Lissfelt reviewed the program:<sup>24</sup>

She represents not only an important church [St. Esprit, Paris] but a great tradition in French organ playing, avoiding the many sensational effects that other nations attain through brilliant registration, and holding firm to clarity

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<sup>22</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 195.

<sup>23</sup> Fred Lissfelt, "Organist's Recital Lauded," Pittsburgh Press, February 10, 1953.

<sup>24</sup> Lissfelt.

of technique and a suave assurance in the art of improvisation, all of which she demonstrated well in her program.

Demessieux played the following program at First Methodist Church in Peoria, IL:

Trumpet Tune	Purcell
Prelude and Fugue in A Minor	J.S. Bach
Chorale: "The Old Year Has Passed Away"	J.S. Bach
Fugue in G Major (Gigue)	J.S. Bach
Third Chorale in A Minor	César Franck
Variations from <u>Symphonie gothique</u>	Widor
Banquet céleste	Olivier Messiaen
Fifth Study: Repeated Notes	Jeanne Demessieux
"Dogme" from <u>Méditations sur le Saint Esprit</u>	Jeanne Demessieux
Cadence (Study for pedal dedicated to Jeanne Demessieux)	Jean Berveiller
Improvisation on a submitted theme <sup>25</sup>	

The recital was reviewed by Evabeth Miller and she writes:<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "Paris Organist Will Play for Peorians Today at 4," Peoria [IL] Journal Star, February 15, 1953.

<sup>26</sup> Evabeth Miller, "Immense Organ Court is Played by Small Parisienne," Peoria [IL] Journal Star, February 16, 1953.

Legend says that after the great Emperor Charlemagne had an Arabian organ brought to Aachen in the year 812, people were so impressed by its soft sweet tone that one woman died of the sheer ecstasy of hearing it.

Nothing like that happened Sunday afternoon in First Methodist Church, but it well could have, if that were a real measure of the exalted beauty of organ music, for Mlle. Jeanne Demessieux of Paris provided such tone, as well as a great deal else, in a remarkable concert program. . . .

One could not help thinking, too, particularly as the Widor music filled the crowded church in the late afternoon, that here was being heard a musician in the line of direct descent of greatness. For Mademoiselle Demessieux had played three Bach selections, and it was Widor who had edited the complete works of Bach with his pupil, the great organist-theologian-missionary doctor, Albert Schweitzer; and it was Widor who taught Marcel Dupré, who succeeded him at the Paris church of St. Sulpice; and it was Dupré who taught this young woman who has been organist of the Eglise du Saint Esprit in Paris since she was 12 years old.

She looked almost like a timid child as she came through a balcony door to take her place at the organ console, a slight figure in a simple, circular-skirted dress of light green silk, her short slightly auburn hair brushed back into a halo. Once seated, she proceeded as calmly as if she were playing something as simple as a spinet. But there the simplicity ended. . . .

In the first half, listeners were perhaps more enveloped in the music than in the technique of its production, but as the second portion began they became gradually more and more aware of the technical skill they were witnessing. Mademoiselle Demessieux' pedal work was nothing short of astounding, her intensity of feeling and sureness of concept in each work were conveyed by a technical mastery that got its only visibly dramatic expression in

her hands, which had the graceful eloquence of a ballerina's hands in their approach to some passages.

The Peoria recital concluded with the characteristic improvisation. For this recital, Demessieux improvised a prelude and fugue on the chorale "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." She remained faithful to the theme's motive "as she embroidered on it elaborately and with considerable fullness, giving thrilling development to the fugue portion."<sup>27</sup>

She played a recital on March 8 at the First Methodist Church in Oakland, CA. Richard Montague remarked:<sup>28</sup>

Demessieux's playing possesses all possible virtues. It is accurate, rhythmic, sensitive, dramatic, clear, chaste, vigorous and intelligent. One is impressed above all by her sureness and maturity. Her nuances seem always inevitable and affectation is unknown to her.

After various other recitals across the country, including Canton, OH, Dallas, Boston, New Orleans, and even Brantford, Canada,<sup>29</sup> Demessieux concluded her first American tour, as it began, with a recital at Central Presbyterian Church in New York City. The program on March 22 included:

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<sup>27</sup> Miller.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Montague, "News of the American Guild of Organists--Northern California," Diapason 44 (April 1953): 14.

<sup>29</sup> No programs are available for these recitals.



Overture from the 29th Cantata  
 "We Thank Thee, God" J.S. Bach

First Concerto in G Minor G.F. Handel  
 Larghetto Adagio  
 Allegro Andante

Fantaisie on  
 "Ad Nos, Ad Salutare" Franz Liszt  
 Prelude Fugato  
 Recitativo Finale  
 Andante

"Ubi Caritas" from Twelve Chorale Preludes  
on Gregorian Themes Jeanne Demessieux

Etude en tierces Jeanne Demessieux

"The World Awaiting the Savior"  
 from Symphonie-Passion Marcel Dupré

Improvisation on a Submitted Theme<sup>30</sup>

The recital was reviewed by Virgil Thomson in the  
New York Herald Tribune:<sup>31</sup>

French organ playing has been one of the musical glories of our century; and Jeanne Demessieux, who played an organ recital last night in the Central Presbyterian Church, is clearly a light in that glory. All evening long your reviewer, who has known most of the great organ playing of our time, from that of Widor and Bonnet and Vierne through Dupré to Messiaen, could only think of those masters as company for this extraordinary musician and virtuoso. . . .

Miss Demessieux's work as a composer appeared, from the two selections offered (a chorale-prelude on *Ubi caritas* and a

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<sup>30</sup> Taken from original program.

<sup>31</sup> Virgil Thomson, Music Reviewed: 1940-1954 (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 363-5.

Study in Thirds) to be skillful and musically sophisticated. It was not possible to gather from them any characteristic profile of individuality. Neither was anything of the kind manifest in her improvisation beyond perhaps an assurance of taste, intelligence, and technical skill of the highest order. She improvised, as is the French custom, in the Baroque forms, including a dazzling Toccata. Since the theme composed for her by Seth Bingham did not lend itself easily to fugal treatment, she omitted the customary fugal finale and finished her series of improvisations quietly with a poetic variation based on thematic alterations.

Notable throughout the evening were the soloist's elaborate and subtle treatment of registration and her powerful rhythm. No less subtle and no less powerful were her phraseology and her acoustical articulation. Accustomed, no doubt, to compensating for the acoustical lags and other echoing characteristics of France's vast cruciform churches, all stone and glass, she employed to great advantage in the smaller but similarly reverberant walls of the Central Presbyterian a staccato touch for all rapid passage work involving bright or loud registration. This device kept the brilliance clean; and its contrast with the more sustained utterance of broader themes gave a welcome variety, a contrapuntal dimension. We are not used here to so dry an articulation, to so striking a clarity in organ playing. I must say that the fine brightness of the registration possibilities in the organ she was playing on aided the artist, as a good French organ also does, to avoid the muddy noises that so often pass for serious organ execution.

Last night there was no mud anywhere, only music making of the most crystalline and dazzling clarity. Every piece had style, beauty, gesture, the grand line. And perhaps the grandest line of all, the richest color and the most dramatic form were those of Liszt's magniloquent Fantasy. I wonder why organists play this work

so rarely. Is it too hard to learn?  
Surely not. Miss Demessieux swept through  
it, as she did everything else, from  
memory.

Fred Haley was also present at the March 22 recital at  
Central Presbyterian:<sup>32</sup>

I do remember being overwhelmed by the  
technical virtuosity, the splendid musi-  
cianship and the poetic moments as well as  
the heroic ones. The registrations were  
complicated and efficient--made for ex-  
treme clarity--but were not as orchestral  
as Farnam tradition had accustomed me and  
my friends to. Also at a time when Ameri-  
can women organists were wearing unbecom-  
ing floor length concert dresses with  
harem pants underneath (always excepting  
Catharine Crozier), Mlle. Demessieux was  
gowned in the height of Parisian chic--the  
New Look was still new then!

Demessieux wrote in her journal that the church was so  
full during her second recital in New York that they had to  
turn people away. She also felt the evening had a feverish  
ambiance.<sup>33</sup>

Demessieux reflected during her tour that she was  
indeed travelling in a magnificent country. She found  
Louisiana hot and humid, though the scent of magnolia  
blossoms could take place of any sickness in your heart.  
Texas was a bit more savage, more dry and full of horses and  
cows. She found it humorous that Texans brag that they are

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<sup>32</sup> Letter from Fred Haley, Oklahoma City, OK, to Laura  
Ellis, March 12, 1991.

<sup>33</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 196.

but a drop of oil, when the state is full of oil.<sup>34</sup>

Little time for relaxation awaited Demessieux upon her return to Europe. In a letter to her sister she states: "Après l'Amérique, j'ai dû repartir presque aussitôt pour l'Irlande et l'Angleterre, non sans avoir bondi à Liège entre temps pour mes cours . . ."<sup>35</sup>

In 1954 Demessieux travelled to Scotland, playing in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, Wales, London, Holland, and Belgium. In July, she taught ten courses in improvisation in Dublin, and then played a recital at the Royal Festival Hall in London.<sup>36</sup> It was also in 1954 that Dupré assumed the interim post of director of the Paris Conservatory after the death of Claude Delvincourt. This left the organ professorship of the Conservatory open--a job Demessieux would have loved to assume. She applied for the job, knowing that she would most likely never get the position due to her irreversible disagreement with Dupré.<sup>37</sup> True to her expectations, Demessieux was never offered the organ professorship at the Conservatory.

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<sup>34</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 195-6.

<sup>35</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 197. Translation: "After America, I had to set out almost immediately for Ireland and England, having a trip to Liège in the meantime for my teaching . . ."

<sup>36</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 65

<sup>37</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 73-74.

CHAPTER 3  
THE 1955 AMERICAN TOUR

In the February 1954 edition of the American Organist, Colbert-LaBerge Management announced the return of Jeanne Demessieux to America for another series of recitals. The youthful French organist, who amazed hearers on her first tour, would make another transcontinental tour of the United States during February and March of 1955.<sup>1</sup> The tour, which opened in Glen Falls, NY, included recitals in New York City, Syracuse, Seattle, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

Unfortunately, Demessieux's voyage to the United States on the ship Liberty did not begin well. On the second day of travel she wrote in her journal of severe seasickness. The sea was very rough and the shutters for the portholes had to remain closed.<sup>2</sup>

Upon disembarkment in New York, Demessieux met with a representative from the Colbert-LaBerge management firm. Like many performers she was disenchanted with the technical details involved in making any recital tour a success. The papers, schedules, tickets, reservations, contracts, programs

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<sup>1</sup> American Organist 37 (February 1954): 60.

<sup>2</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 198-9.

to modify, last minute engagements, and finances were things that Demessieux would rather not be bothered with. As a performer she had to keep track of the smallest detail, including schedule changes of trains and other unforeseeable events. Despite these technical details, Demessieux realized the virtuoso had to present a wonderful if not impeccable recital.<sup>3</sup>

Demessieux began her 1955 American tour in Glen Falls, NY, on February 6. Despite newly fallen snow, a large number of people attended this premier recital. Unfortunately, Jeanne found there an "orgue énorme et laid. <<Un fromage!>> me dit son titulaire."<sup>4</sup> Her program included the following selections:

Toccata in F Major	Bach
"Come now, Saviour of the Heathen"	Bach
Second Concerto in B Flat Major	Handel
Maestoso	
Allegro	
Adagio	
Andante	
Second Chorale in B Minor	César Franck
Allegro (from Sixth Symphony)	Ch. M. Widor
Intermezzo (from the Suite)	Jean Beraud

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<sup>3</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 198-199.

<sup>4</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 199. Translation: "enormous and ugly organ. 'A cheese!', the titulaire told me." For specifications of the organ see Appendix 1.

Triptyque  
 Prélude  
 Adagio  
 Fugue

Jeanne Demessieux

Improvisation on a submitted theme<sup>5</sup>

Demessieux performed the "Cadence" of Jean Berveiller as an encore.

Demessieux arrived in New York on February 7 for a return engagement at Central Presbyterian Church. Her program included:

Fantasy & Fugue in G Minor	Bach
"Blessed Jesus We Are Here"	Bach
Fugue in C	Buxtehude
Concerto 10	Handel
B Minor Canon	Schumann
Redemption ( <u>Interlude Symphonique</u> )	Franck
Son. 2: Scherzo	Vierne
"Paix"	Demessieux
"Dieu parmi nous"	Messiaen <sup>6</sup>

T. Scott Buhrman, editor of the American Organist once again penned a colorful review:<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Taken from original program.

<sup>6</sup> T. Scott Buhrman, "Jeanne Demessieux Recital, American Organist 38 (March 1955): 85.

<sup>7</sup> Buhrman, 85-6.

A concert organist is much like a host entertaining his friends; in both cases the first aim, outside an educational or penal institution, should be to give the friends, first a personal welcome, second something they'll enjoy. Miss Demessieux, presumably one of the great contemporary French organists, bowed courteously enough when she first appeared before her friends who were spending an hour--or two or three or four--to hear her and enjoy the musical feast she would presumably offer; but when she returned to the room after a ten-minute intermission she didn't even nod to those friends. . . .

The first half of the program was played on hard & loud Diapason & mixture combinations; even the Blessed Jesus was done that way, devoid of any touch of tenderness; also the middle Handel Concerto movement--though in spite of its hardness & loudness it still had something of happiness in it, which much of Handel's organ music has. Recital began 12 minutes late.

The first enjoyable music was Schumann's, the righthand part played delightfully on strings, the answering lefthand on a loud flute for reasons I couldn't understand; the contrast was too violent. I think organists are tired of music, and in Central Presbyterian they are fooled dynamically because no artist could conceivably want so much music as loud as it hits the audience. There is no beauty in loudness. . . .

Naturally I do not know, but I believe Miss Demessieux must be one of the very finest French organists; now if she would make her music sound as charming and delightful as she herself certainly is, you couldn't ask for anything finer. She has everything in the world she needs excepting enough conceit to break away from the binding traditions of the organ world and constitute herself instead a hostess offering her friends the choicest bits of enjoyment possible to put together in a musical feast.



Demessieux herself felt there was a large audience at the recital. After the concert the audience presented flowers to her and then she had to do her least favorite thing--greet and converse with the concert-goers.<sup>8</sup>

A recital at Grace Methodist Church in Harrisburg, PA, followed on February 10. Even though the organ was in bad condition and the combination action refused to work,<sup>9</sup> Demessieux reflected in her diary: "le concert où le contact avec le public fut particulièrement juste (en jouant, je pensai subitement: <<S'il fallait renoncer à cela, je ne pourrais jamais.>>)"<sup>10</sup>

Despite the mechanical problems with the organ, a "large audience greeted Mlle. Demessieux and were greatly impressed by her technical perfection, profound musicianship and eloquence of interpretation."<sup>11</sup> Her program included:

Toccata in F Major	Bach
"Come Now, Savior of the Heathen"	Bach
Second Concerto in B Major	Handel

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<sup>8</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 200.

<sup>9</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 200.

<sup>10</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 201. Translation: "a concert where the contact with the public was particularly right (in playing I thought suddenly: "If it were necessary to give this up, I never could.")"

<sup>11</sup> Irene Bressler, "News of the American Guild of Organists--Harrisburg, PA," Diapason 46 (April 1955): 15.

Second Chorale in B Minor	Franck
Allegro, from Sixth Symphony	Widor
Intermezzo from Suite	Jean Berveiller
Triptyque	Demessieux
Improvisation on submitted themes <sup>12</sup>	

Of her improvisation Irene Bressler writes:<sup>13</sup>

. . . three themes written by Donald Clapper, organist of the Pine Street Presbyterian Church, were handed Mlle. Demessieux.

. . . it was evident that she had caught the germ of her art of improvisation from her teacher Marcel Dupré. Whether one likes the modern idiom or not, it is ever a thrilling experience to follow the many moods displayed and always the grand, full organ climax.

After travelling by train, Demessieux played a recital at Syracuse University on Saturday, February 12th. She found there an excellent organ of three manuals in the neo-classical style (ca. 1950). The recital was a success, but few people attended because of the blustery winter weather.<sup>14</sup> No program has been found for this recital.

Though the concert was a success, the car ride to the university proved to be difficult. On the way to the university, the car Demessieux was riding in got stuck in a snow-

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<sup>12</sup> Bressler.

<sup>13</sup> Bressler.

<sup>14</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 201.

drift. She and the other occupants had to brave the snow and wind on foot to make it to the school in time for the recital.<sup>15</sup>

In a letter to her sister dated February 15, Demessieux related that the present tour was going extremely well. She felt that the present tour of America was going exactly as the preceding 1953 tour, but now she was more experienced.<sup>16</sup> Again she expressed impatience with the constant demands upon the touring performer. She reluctantly accepted the invitations for dinners and receptions not because they were pleasurable for her, but because she knew they were required of her. She realized she had to be gracious whether she was fatigued or not. "Quant au sourire, il est la pire de fatigues: il faut l'avoir constamment . . . je gagne mon argent par mille efforts qui ne sont pas seulement celui de jouer."<sup>17</sup>

A recital on Friday, February 18 was a great success with many people attending. Demessieux concluded the concert with two encores.<sup>18</sup> On Saturday February 19th, Demessieux's

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<sup>15</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 201.

<sup>16</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 202.

<sup>17</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 202-3. Translation: "As for smiling, it is the worst fatigue: it is necessary to smile constantly . . . I earn my money by a thousand efforts that include not only playing."

<sup>18</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 203.

journal entries for the 1955 American tour came to an end due to lack of time. She wondered if the journal for her next tour would continue through the last concert.<sup>19</sup> Further correspondence to her parents and sister provides information concerning the rest of the tour.

On February 28, Demessieux played the following program at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, WA:

Toccata in F Major	Johann Sebastian Bach
Chorale: "Dearest Jesus, We Are Here"	Johann Sebastian Bach
Fugue in C Major	Dietrich Buxtehude
Tenth Concerto in D Minor	George Frederick Handel
Adagio--Allegro--Allegro	
Scherzo (Second Symphony)	Vierne
Redemption ( <u>Interlude Symphonique</u> )	César Franck-Jean Berveiller <sup>20</sup>
Intermezzo (from the Suite)	Berveiller
"Paix" (from <u>Seven Meditations sur le</u> <u>Saint Esprit</u> [sic], Paris)	Jeanne Demessieux

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<sup>19</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 204.

<sup>20</sup> Demessieux performed "Redemption (Interlude-Symphonique)" throughout America on her 1955 tour. The program for this recital reveals that the idea of an organ transcription of this work was suggested by Mlle. Cecile Boutet de Monvel (1864-1940), cousin and interpreter of Franck. Demessieux played from the unpublished transcription of Jean Berveiller.

"Dieu parmi nous"

Olivier Messiaen

Improvisation on an Original Theme  
(submitted by George McKay,  
University of Washington)<sup>21</sup>

On March 2, Demessieux spent the day with Darius Milhaud and his wife at Mills College in San Francisco, performing for students and professors. Milhaud asked Demessieux to play one of her works for him, and she delighted him with a fugue. Milhaud then presented Demessieux a scholarly theme upon which to improvise another fugue. He was very astonished and said that he had seen a similar improviser<sup>22</sup>--most likely referring to Dupré. While in California she took time to do some sight-seeing, travelling by car along the coast of the Pacific and visiting the forest of ancient sequoias.<sup>23</sup>

After various recitals in the Midwest, including the Ascension Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, WI, Demessieux played in Chicago. The March 7 recital at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Chicago was sponsored by the Chicago Club of Women Organists and attracted several hundred people. The program included:

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<sup>21</sup> Taken from original program.

<sup>22</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 204.

<sup>23</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 205.

Fantasie and Fugue in G Minor	Bach
Chorale Prelude: "Blessed Jesus We Are Here"	Bach
Fugue in C Major	Buxtehude
Concerto	Handel
Allegro from Symphony 6	Widor
Redemption	Franck
Scherzo from Symphony 2	Vierne
"Paix" from <u>Seven Meditations on the Holy Spirit</u>	Demessieux
"Dieu parmi nous"	Messiaen
Improvisation on submitted themes <sup>24</sup>	

The recital was termed "a brilliant display of virtuoso technique" even though the "Handel Concerto was interrupted twice by a loud *point d'orgue* which had not been planned either by the composer or the performer, but Miss Demessieux did not appear to be flustered."<sup>25</sup>

A recital at the Cathedral in Washington, D.C. on March 15 at 8:30 p.m. included the following selections:

Toccata in F	Bach
Chorale Prelude	Bach
Concerto No. 2	Handel

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<sup>24</sup> Diapason 46 (April 1955): 42.

<sup>25</sup> Diapason 46 (April 1955): 42.

B Minor Chorale	Fränck
Fantasy on "Ad nos, ad salutarem"	Liszt <sup>26</sup>

On March 18th Demessieux played the following recital on the 1927 E.M. Skinner organ at the Toledo Museum of Art:<sup>27</sup>

Fantasy and Fugue in G Minor	J.S. Bach
Choral Prelude: "Blessed Jesus, We Are Here"	J.S. Bach
Fugue in C Major	Dietrich Buxtehude
Concerto No. 10 in D Minor	G.F. Handel
Adagio	
Allegro	
Allegro	
Canon in B Minor	Robert Schumann
Fantasy on "Ad nos, ad salutarem"	Franz Liszt
Improvisation on a Submitted Theme <sup>28</sup>	

March 21st found Demessieux in Buffalo, NY, playing at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Her program, similar to others on this tour, was as follows:

Fantasie and Fugue in G Minor	J.S. Bach
Chorale: "Blessed Jesus, We Are Here"	J.S. Bach
Fugue in C Major	Buxtehude

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<sup>26</sup> Washington Post, March 13, 1955, H10.

<sup>27</sup> Taken from original program.

<sup>28</sup> Taken from original program.

Tenth Concerto in D Minor	Handel
Adagio - Allegro - Allegro	
Canon in B Minor	Schumann
Redemption ( <u>Interlude Symphonique</u> )	Franck
Scherzo (Second Symphony)	Vierne
"Dogme" (from <u>Seven Meditations sur le Saint Esprit</u> [sic])	Jeanne Demessieux
"Those who believe will be saved; Those who do not will be condemned."	
"Paix" ( <u>Seven Meditations sur le Saint Esprit</u> ) [sic]	Demessieux
"God With Us"	Messiaen
Improvisation on a submitted theme <sup>29</sup>	

John W. Becker, director of music at Holy Trinity at the time of the recital, recalls:<sup>30</sup>

[It was] an excellently fine recital. There was a brilliant display of her pedal technique especially in her own pieces and her improvisation. I sat behind her in the chancel, the only one there who could see her feet and was amazed at the speed of the pedal passages. She wore VERY high heels and seemed to move her legs very little. Her ankles did the work and appeared to place her high heels where she wanted them with unfailing accuracy and incredible speed. Her's was a very efficient and, by American standard, an unusually personal pedal technique. It was quite a show!

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<sup>29</sup> Taken from original program.

<sup>30</sup> Letter from John W. Becker, Pittsburgh, PA, to Laura Ellis, August 29, 1990.



Theolinda Boris reviewed the concert in Buffalo NY:<sup>31</sup>

The petite organist's playing gave abundant evidence of her mastery of her instrument and of her exceptional musicianship. In short, she is a virtuoso who is also an artist!

Few organists of note who have played here recently have achieved as much variety of color in registration without sacrificing any of the essential qualities of the various pieces. Still fewer have played with such beautiful clarity throughout an entire program, not excluding the heaviest passages.

In fact, it was this clarity that minimized the somewhat thick and sluggish sound of the organ. Everything under Mlle. Demessieux' fingers was crisp, so that even involved contrapuntal threads sounded with a truly admirable clearness.

Demessieux' rhythm had a wonderful vitality and her handling of melodic line and phrase was like that of a master violinist or sensitive singer. Singularly fine were the naturalness and legitimacy of her climaxes, which were never a mere piling up of thunderous and muddy sonorities. . . .

A very impressive improvisation concluded Mlle. Demessieux' already impressive recital. Using two themes submitted by Eric Dowling of St. Georges' Anglican Church, St. Catharines, Ontario, she expertly fashioned a three-part piece, Passacaglia I, Interlude and Passacaglia II.

The 1955 American recital tour concluded at St. John the Divine in New York City. Reflecting upon the past two months, Demessieux found the trip extremely fatiguing--hard not only on the mind but body. Travelling for such a long

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<sup>31</sup> Theodolinda Boris, "Jeanne Demessieux Displays Artistry in Organ Recital," Buffalo [NY] Evening News, March 22, 1955, 26.

time was difficult in a country so different from Europe. She reflected again that concert life was very draining because it was necessary to not only travel, but also to make a good impression, to undergo interviews, and to share her viewpoints concerning French art, while courteously receiving the general public.<sup>32</sup>

Upon her return to Europe Demessieux travelled to England and gave eight concerts in seven days (two in Birmingham). Then she travelled to Scotland to perform and from there went directly to Liège for her classes.<sup>33</sup>

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32 Trieu-Colleney, 205-6.

33 Trieu-Colleney, 66.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE 1958 AMERICAN TOUR

The January 1958 issue of the Diapason announced:<sup>1</sup>

Jeanne Demessieux will arrive in New York on the S.S. *Liberté* January 27. The opening recital of her third American tour will be in Glen Falls, NY, January 31 at the First Presbyterian Church. In February she will be heard in Newark, NJ, Philadelphia, Nashville, St. Louis, Denver and will give recitals in California at Chico, Oakland, Sacramento, San Jose, and Los Angeles.

Recitals have also been arranged in Fort Worth, Charlotte, N.C., Macon, GA, Bloomington, Ind., Fort Wayne, Pittsburgh and New Haven. She will appear in Chicago at St. Peter's Church March 10 and at New York City's Central Presbyterian Church March 24, her final recital before her return to France March 26. Her programs will include several of her own compositions.

Demessieux was accompanied on this tour by her student Claudine Verchère, who acted as secretary. "L'idée d'être aidée dans les mille détails matériels d'une tournée me semble un bienfait incroyable."<sup>2</sup>

While practicing on the organ at St. John the Divine in

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<sup>1</sup> Diapason 49 (January 1958): 2.

<sup>2</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 207. Translation: "The idea of being assisted in the thousand material details of the journey seems an incredible benefit to me."

New York City, Demessieux tried her newly composed "Te Deum" which was inspired by that organ. After a rehearsal of the piece, she thought the composition was successful and was relieved to find it was what she had intended.<sup>3</sup> Later that day, she travelled to Glen Falls, NY, for her opening recital on January 31 at First Presbyterian Church. The town welcomed her even to the point of putting her portrait in the entrance hall of the hotel!<sup>4</sup> For this recital Demessieux played the following selections:

Ouverture from Cantata 29	J.S. Bach
Fantasy in G Major (Vivo - Lento - Vivo)	J.S. Bach
Fantasy 2, F Minor (Maestoso - Allegro - Andante - Allegro)	W.A. Mozart
Basse et dessus de trompette	Clérambault
Prelude and Fugue on B.A.C.H.	Franz Liszt
Chorale-Prelude: "Attende Domine"	Jeanne Demessieux
from L'Ascension	Olivier Messiaen
III. "Transports de joie d'une ame devant la gloire du Christ, qui est la sienne."	
Improvisation on a submitted theme <sup>5</sup>	

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<sup>3</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 207.

<sup>4</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 207.

<sup>5</sup> Taken from original program.

Demessieux later recorded in her diary that the concert was a success. She was personally satisfied with the impressive silence of a captive audience of 900 people. She was impressed with the five-manual organ because the organ possessed good foundations, an array of mixtures, and Cavaillé-Coll reeds. She commented that the overall ensemble was rather good. She related one horror: the couplers on the Great division coupled at the fifth rather than the unison!<sup>6</sup>

Hugh Allen Wilson, organist at the First Presbyterian Church at the time of the recital, fondly recalls Demessieux. He was present for both the 1955 and 1958 recitals in Glen Falls and shares his memories:<sup>7</sup>

I remember these recitals and Jeanne very well. She was an angelic creature in her personality and played as few of her contemporaries could or did. She was a pupil of Dupré at the same time that I was working with him in Paris--1947.

We were all intrigued that she played in rather high heels--particularly in the wonderful little virtuoso piece by Berveiller--the Cadence. I do not bring to mind whether or not she was accompanied by a friend on both of her concerts here. She did have a companion on one I am sure. I met them at the train on her first tour and remember her astonishment that she found someone fluent in French in the great north of New York State.

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<sup>6</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 207.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Hugh Allen Wilson, Schenectady, NY, to Laura Ellis, January 6, 1991.

Demessieux recalled an incident in New York in which Claudine Verchère found an organ nearby their hotel and tried it out. Demessieux made an interesting statement concerning her former teacher: "L'orgue, un Austin de 1930, est horrible, lourd, cinéma. C'est ce qu'aimait Dupré, malheureusement!"<sup>8</sup>

Regarding a recital on February 3, Demessieux was received by a very warm audience. After much applause and photos she stood in another endless reception line.<sup>9</sup> Once again, Demessieux was somewhat uncomfortable with the one-on-one aspect of the touring performer and found it insufferable to see the people in the reception line slowly file past.

Her February 4 concert also went well and she played to a full church. She improvised a choral-paraphrase and fugue on a dark and rather beautiful theme. The audience was perfect and all were very impressed.<sup>10</sup>

She arrived in Nashville, TN, on February 6, but found the organ in bad condition: for a scale in the pedal there was a choice of a trumpet on C, a flute on D, a plein jeu of the positif on D! The audience applauded and gave Demessieux

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<sup>8</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 208. Translation: "The organ, a 1930 Austin, is horrible, heavy, cinematic. It is what Dupré would love, unfortunately!"

<sup>9</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 208.

<sup>10</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 209.

a standing ovation. All were very impressed by her improvisation of a prelude and fugue. She recalled that during the reception someone in the audience made her speak at length about her European tours.<sup>11</sup> No program is available for this recital.

On the morning of February 8 Demessieux arrived in St. Louis, MO. The organist of the host church met her at the railway station and immediately took her to record an interview that was to be on the radio later that afternoon. Demessieux felt the interview went well, but she refused categorically to have journalistic photos taken and would not give out any official publicity photos.<sup>12</sup>

Demessieux's journal entry of February 9 is somewhat curious:<sup>13</sup>

La journée commence par un épisode semi-dramatique, semi-comique. Pendant mon travail silencieux d'hier, je fus gênée par une autre sonorité d'orgue venue du sous-sol, ce qui m'empêchait de me concentrer. Alors, j'imaginai de bourrer mes oreilles de . . . papier à démaquiller

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<sup>11</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 209.

<sup>12</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 210.

<sup>13</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 210. Translation: "The day begins with a semi-dramatic, semi-comical episode. During my silent practice, I was distracted by another organ sound coming from the basement that hindered my concentration. Then, I thought of stuffing my ears with . . . tissues because I didn't have cotton balls. Then I removed it tranquilly. This morning, at my shower, I became completely deaf in my right ear, a piece of cotton remaining in my ear inflated with water. I imagined the concert!"

à défaut de boules! Puis je l'ôtai tranquillement. Ce matin, au moment de la douche, je devins complètement sourde de l'oreille droite, un flocon de papier restant au fond gonflé d'eau. J'imaginai le concert!

While in St. Louis, Demessieux gave the following recital in Graham Memorial Chapel at Washington University on February 10:

Prelude and Fugue in D Major	Bach
Chorale Prelude: "De Profundis"	Bach
Concerto No. 2 in A Minor	Vivaldi-Bach
Pièce héroïque	Franck
Mouvement (First performance in the U.S.A.)	Berveiller
Prelude on "Rorate caeli"	Demessieux
Te Deum (First performance in the U.S.A.)	Demessieux
Improvisation on two submitted themes <sup>14</sup>	

Ronald Arnatt, reviewer for the American Organist states:<sup>15</sup>

I do not hesitate to be lavish in my praise of Jeanne Demessieux since I can safely state that I have never attended an organ recital that I enjoyed more than

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<sup>14</sup> Ronald Arnatt, "Jeanne Demessieux, Graham Memorial Chapel, Washington University, St. Louis, MO, February 10, 1958," American Organist 41 (April 1958): 149.

<sup>15</sup> Arnatt.



this. Her superb technique was immediately evident in her performance of the Prelude and Fugue in D Major--this wonderfully light-hearted work seems to be particularly suited to the French probably because it benefits from a crisp, clear touch and an unerring pedal technique, both of which are the standard equipment of French artists; however, it was not only technique that made this particular performance so fine. Mlle. Demessieux makes it possible, through her transparent phrasing, for the listener to follow each voice with such ease that one could almost be listening to a top-notch ensemble. In the hands of a lesser artist the tempo of the fugue would have been disastrous--in the hands (and feet) of Mlle. Demessieux the extremely fast tempo seemed completely natural and completely right. . . .

I knew from her recordings what to expect in her performance of the Vivaldi-Bach--clarity and extreme precision--and again was delighted by being able to hear every single moving part: her registration in the first movement was sparkling and her phrasing clear as crystal.

The Franck was a little disappointing to me since the tempo fluctuated so much, large rallentandi were inserted where there is no indication and a rather noisy registration was used most of the time. Franck was always very careful to mark exactly what he wanted in the way of dynamics and tempo changes and I cannot see why so many organists appear to feel that he made omissions in this respect. Regardless of personal opinion however, it was a brilliant performance.

These comments regarding Demessieux's performance of the Pièce héroïque are very interesting when the two traditions of Franck organ playing are considered. The strict performance style of Franck playing, illustrated by Dupré and Widor, can be contrasted to the freer interpretations of Tournemire and Langlais. Langlais believed that Dupré played

Franck's compositions very simply and regularly, missing their true spirit. Dupré eliminated fermatas, removed many dynamic indications and changed registration markings in his editions of the Franck organ works. It is very possible that Demessieux followed Dupré's indications regarding registration and dynamics in the Pièce héroïque, but tempo fluctuations and large rallentandi appear antithetical to Dupré's teachings--perhaps she asserted some independence on this point. Whatever the analysis, the overall concept did not entirely please the reviewer.<sup>16</sup>

The the U.S. premiere of Jean Berveiller's "Mouvement" was not well-received.<sup>17</sup>

The Berveiller is scarcely worth mentioning--cliches of the Boellmann and Widor toccatas abound with a few pseudo-jazz rhythms inserted to make it sound a little more modern complete with the Gershwin minor triad and many bravura pedal passages. The performance was stunning, but what a waste of precious time.

As a composer Jeanne Demessieux is known mostly in this country for her Twelve Preludes on Gregorian Themes--short, finely wrought pieces showing a combination of contrapuntal mastery and lyrical warmth. The prelude on Rorate caeli is one of the loveliest of these with a distinctive style all her own, leaning less on impressionism than some of her compatriots. Here was an entirely

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<sup>16</sup> For further information regarding the French traditions of playing the organ works of César Franck, see Robert Sutherland Lord, "Conversation and Commentary with Jean Langlais," Diapason 66 (March 1975): 3.

<sup>17</sup> Arnatt.

different approach to a Gregorian chant, martial in mood, polytonal in influence and excitingly brilliant. The work falls into three main sections: the opening strong exposition, the quieter, more reflective middle section, and the powerful toccata-like ending, frighteningly difficult and jaggedly dissonant.

An interesting perspective regarding the concluding improvisation is given by the reviewer Ronald Arnatt, who himself wrote the themes upon which the improvisation was based.<sup>18</sup>

Then came the solemn ceremony of presenting the themes to the artist for her improvisation--like some sort of strange liturgical rite: I feel particularly embarrassed since I wrote the themes upon which her improvisation was based.

The first theme was repetitive and angular in 5/8, the second a modal, lyrical theme in 6/8: I did my best to keep in mind the type of theme that might appeal to Mlle. Demessieux's particular style. The improvisation began in a mysterious mood using snatches of the first theme, then the theme was announced in full in her own style as easily as if she'd written it herself. The work fell into three sections, in a similar manner to the Te Deum, with the second theme used as a basis for the middle section. Much use was made of fugal imitation, especially with the second theme, and brilliant use was made of the two themes superimposed on one another with the second theme altered to fit the 5/8 rhythm. In the finale, instead of the usual thunderous ending heard so often, the ending was lyrical and mysterious with beautiful use made of the interchange of the two themes.

Jeanne Demessieux was received with great enthusiasm and was brought back many

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<sup>18</sup> Arnatt.

times to take a bow--fortunately she did not play an encore since anything played after her own three works would have been an anti-climax. One further point--think of what a masterful composition we would have heard if she could have selected her own theme for improvisation instead of being stuck with mine!

Demessieux recalls a crowd of 1200 at her recital in Denver, CO, on February 12. At intermission, the priest ascended to the pulpit and announced that the audience was free to stand up and stretch their legs. All the people rose in their places, causing Demessieux to smile. When they returned to their seats and sat down, she continued with the second half of the recital.<sup>19</sup> Obviously, such an announcement by the priest would have been uncommon in France!

She travelled on to Chico, CA, for a recital at Bidwell Memorial Presbyterian Church on February 14 and played the following program:

#### I.

Ouverture from the 29th Cantata	J.S. Bach
Fantasy in G Major	J.S. Bach
Vivo--Lento--Vivo	
Second Fantasy in F Minor	Mozart
Maestoso--Allegro--Andante--Allegro	
Basse et dessus de trompette	Clérambault

#### II.

Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H	F. Liszt
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<sup>19</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 211

Chorale Prelude:  
"Attende Domine"

Jeanne Demessieux

Ascension Suite  
(3rd Movement)

Olivier Messiaen

"Transports de joie d'une ame devant  
la gloire du Christ qui est la sienne"

### III.

Improvisation on a submitted theme<sup>20</sup>

In her diary Demessieux noted in passing that the organ at Bidwell Memorial consisted of only 12 ranks!<sup>21</sup> It seems amazing that this organ could handle her recital literature, especially the Liszt, which requires large changes in dynamics and colors.<sup>22</sup> Demessieux's skill at registration was appreciated by Charles van Bronkhorst.<sup>23</sup>

A petite but astounding young lady from Paris has proved that a heavy program and a small instrument can indeed sell organ music to an audience of predominantly just-plain-music lovers. . . .

Mozart was a definite highlight . . . Opening with full organ sans reeds, the first allegro section was lively and clean cut, with plenty of appropriate accent. The andante provided Mlle. Demessieux her first real opportunity to make use of the limited color available in this 12-rank instrument, and she took full advantage of

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<sup>20</sup> Taken from original program.

<sup>21</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 211.

<sup>22</sup> For specifications of the organ at Bidwell Memorial Presbyterian Church see Appendix 1.

<sup>23</sup> Charles van Bronkhorst, "Jeanne Demessieux, Bidwell Memorial Presbyterian Church, Chico, CA, February 14," American Organist 41 (April 1958): 148.

contrasts provided by Melodia, Oboe, Gamba, Voix Celeste and separately enclosed Great and Swell divisions. Also noteworthy were the delicate ornamentation and terrific pedal work, the latter accomplished in high heels as is customary for this young artist. The buildup to full in the final allegro was smooth as silk, growing in excitement and brilliance to the end. . . .

Liszt's dazzling opus, difficult on even a sizable instrument, was handled so beautifully that I never once wished for more organ. Despite less than an hour's practice on this instrument, Mlle. Demessieux was in perfect control at all times: registration, dynamics and technique were combined to yield maximum results, yet I was never distracted by body movement of any kind as is often the case in this particular work.

James Kinne of the Chico State College music faculty submitted two four-measure themes in D Major and 6\4 meter for the improvisation.<sup>24</sup> The themes were given to Demessieux in a sealed envelope and she studied them for a brief moment and then proceeded to deliver one of her deservedly famous improvisations.<sup>25</sup> Another reviewer felt:<sup>26</sup>

The themes were ideal--simple, but rhythmically alive. Mlle. Demessieux began with the theme stated by Great flutes over Swell string celeste, then proceeded to exploit both subject matter and organ to their fullest in some ten minutes of breathtaking free variation, a high-point being the appearance of the

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<sup>24</sup> Bronkhorst.

<sup>25</sup> "Audience Enthusiastic Over Organ Recital," Chico [CA] Enterprise Record, February 15, 1958, 1.

<sup>26</sup> Bronkhorst, 148.

theme toward the end in upper pedals *a la pizzicato* over manual accompaniment. I heard Marcel Dupré improvise on submitted themes several years ago and was duly impressed but have never been as stimulated or musically satisfied as by this beautiful demonstration in the French tradition.

Several conclusions were reached by this reviewer as a result of Mlle. Demessieux's visit to Chico: 1) a great artist need make no musical compromises in order to satisfy an audience; 2) a small instrument adequately installed and maintained is no handicap to such an artist; and 3) any doubts that the Great division should be enclosed in an organ under 15 ranks were completely dispelled--one reason for the success of this program was a flexibility and control achieved by thoughtful and skillful use of the two swell shoes. The artist gave no encores despite excellent audience reaction and applause.

On February 16, Demessieux gave a recital at the First Presbyterian Church of Oakland, CA. Demessieux thought the evening was unforgettable and the audience very intelligent. The audience was so enthusiastic that she dared to play her "Te Deum" twice because the organ suited the composition perfectly.<sup>27</sup> No program for this recital has been located.

Her next recital was in Sacramento, CA, at the First Baptist Church and her program included:

Ouverture from the 29th Cantata	J.S. Bach
Fantasy in G Major (Vivo, Lento, Vivo)	J.S. Bach

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<sup>27</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 212.

Second Fantasy in F Minor                      Mozart  
(Maestoso, Allegro, Andante, Allegro)

Basse et dessus de trompette      Clérambault

Prelude and Fugue "BACH" F. Liszt

Choral-Prelude:  
"Attende Domine"                      Jeanne Demessieux

Ascension: Olivier Messiaen  
"Transports de joie d'une ame devant  
la gloire du Christ qui est la sienne"

Improvisation on a submitted theme<sup>28</sup>

Leland Ralph, organist of the First Baptist Church at the time of Demessieux's recital relates;<sup>29</sup>

Thirty plus years is a long time to remember every detail of her performance. However, I do remember that many of us felt it was a rather lack-luster performance. Perhaps it was the instrument, or perhaps she was tired, I do not know. Too, so many of her selections had been performed so many times in recital here, that perhaps we were bored!! I do remember she was a delightful person.

On February 21 Demessieux played a recital in San Jose, CA, where the organ console was located in a pit so the audience could see only her head. She remarked that this time she didn't experience instant vertigo!<sup>30</sup>

A recital hall in Forth Worth, TX. reminded Demessieux

28 Taken from original program.

29 Letter from G. Leland Ralph, Sacramento, CA, to Laura Ellis, August 27, 1990.

<sup>30</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 212.



of the Pleyel Hall in Paris. She prepared herself furiously for the recital. The audience consisted of 200 organists from four different cities.<sup>31</sup> No recital programs have been located for the concerts in San Jose and Forth Worth.

On March 3, Demessieux travelled to Charlotte, NC, for an evening recital at Myers Park Methodist Church. The recital program was:

Overture from the 29th Cantata	J.S. Bach
Fantasy in G Major	J.S. Bach
Vivo-Lento-Vivo	
Second Fantasy in F Minor	Mozart
Maestoso-Allegro-Andante-Allegro	
Basse et dessus de trompette	Clérambault
Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H	F. Liszt
Choral-Prelude:	
"Attende Domine"	Jeanne Demessieux
Ascension:	Olivier Messiaen
"Transports de joie d'une ame devant le gloire du Christ qui est la sienne"	
Improvisation on Submitted Themes <sup>32</sup>	

Demessieux recalled a good concert and a magnificent audience. She reflected how uncomfortable she was at receptions where people burst into laughter, pause and notice suddenly that they are in front of you, then they say a few

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<sup>31</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 213.

<sup>32</sup> Taken from original program.

standard remarks to try to ease the tension.<sup>33</sup>

Upon arriving in Macon, GA, the evening of March 5 Demessieux heard the carillon bells of a neighboring church playing the Ava Maria of Schubert. The accompaniment was realized in an agreeable manner by Hammond organ and tremolo and the music poured all over the city with a carefully estimated volume.<sup>34</sup> The next day, March 6, Demessieux performed in front of a magnificent audience. Once again the organ console was located in a pit, but this time she installed an immense rearview mirror so the audience could follow her playing. A reception followed the recital.<sup>35</sup>

On March 9, Demessieux performed in Bloomington, IN. She felt the organ console was too near the edge of the stage and asked someone from the church to reposition it. Unfortunately, the console did not get moved prior to the concert and she experienced vertigo! Despite the dizziness, she improvised a symphony of four movements on a submitted theme. She remarked that this improvisation was one of her better ones.<sup>36</sup>

Once again Demessieux was sponsored in recital by the

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<sup>33</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 214.

<sup>34</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 215.

<sup>35</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 215.

<sup>36</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 216.

Chicago Club of Women Organists on March 10 at St. Peter's Catholic Church. Frank Cunkle reviewed the concert.<sup>37</sup>

Mlle. Demessieux was not very happy with the medium-sized, unremarkable instrument, and neither her own back-breaking tour schedule nor the church's almost constant series of services helped at all to give her the time an organist needs to find an organ's strongest and weakest points and to persuade the stubborn beast to contribute only its good to the program.

Obviously, the reviewer did not know that Demessieux previously performed on the organ at St. Peter's during her 1958 recital tour. The program included the following selections:

Overture to Cantata 29	Bach
Fantasie in G Major	Bach
Fantasie	Mozart
Basse de dessus de trompette	Clérambault
"Outburst of Joy"	Messiaen
"Attende Domine"	Demessieux
Te Deum	Demessieux <sup>38</sup>

The review continues less than favorably.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Frank Cunkle, "Demessieux in Chicago," Diapason 49 (April 1958): 16.

<sup>38</sup> Cunkle.

<sup>39</sup> Cunkle.

This preface already indicates that the recital this frail-looking Frenchwoman played did not provide an entirely satisfying evening. Mlle. Demessieux's command of the organ is extraordinary in many ways. She can play more correct notes per minute and in a more nearly metronomic rhythm than most of her contemporaries of either gender--no mean feat, certainly, and an important part of the armor of a virtuoso. How Mlle. Demessieux's predilections for thick, heavy registration sounds on French instruments, this reviewer has not had the opportunity to observe; the effect on our instruments is certainly neither to heighten the richness of harmonic texture nor to emphasize the linear architecture of great counterpoint. And her often mechanically perfect meter sometimes has the effect of making her rubato and ritenuto sound forced and out of place. The end result is too often absence of a flowing line and remarkably little feeling of artistic communication. . . .

This recital seemed to affirm to this listener that while American and German organists are playing better than their fathers and grandfathers, younger French organists are not yet succeeding in realizing the standards of musicianship, style and communication which made the last generation of French organ playing truly a "golden age."

On March 11, Demessieux arrived in Fort Wayne and performed a recital on what she described as the most beautiful organ of the tour.<sup>40</sup> No recital program has been received for this recital. As in the 1955 tour, Demessieux's diary stopped before the conclusion of the 1958 tour, this time

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<sup>40</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 216-7.

because her typewriter broke!<sup>41</sup>

On March 17, Demessieux played the following program at Woolsey Hall on the Yale University campus in New Haven, CT:

Prelude and Fugue in D Major	Bach
Chorale: "De Profundis"	Bach
Concerto in A Minor	Vivaldi-Bach
Pièce héroïque	Franck
Mouvement	Berveiller
Chorale Prelude: "Rorate"	Demessieux
Te Deum	Demessieux
Improvisation on a submitted theme <sup>42</sup>	

The reviewer, Barbara Owen, writes that:<sup>43</sup>

. . . there was a large and enthusiastic house on hand to hear Mlle. Demessieux perform, and the remarkable lady from France did not let them down. . . . The D Major Prelude, perhaps because of its grand character, left little to be desired. The Fugue, on the other hand, was a bit too heavily registered and speedily played to be really satisfying, though I confess that its execution left me somewhat in awe of this woman's fantastically clean and accurate technique and excellent rhythmic sense.

The De Profundis was interestingly

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<sup>41</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 217.

<sup>42</sup> Barbara Owen, "Jeanne Demessieux. Woolsey Hall, Yale University. New Haven, CT, March 17." American Organist 41 (June 1958): 223-4.

<sup>43</sup> Owen, 223.

registered but cold. Perhaps as Schweitzer suggests it is because their culture and religious backgrounds are so different from Bach's, that the French seem rarely able to put across the more spiritual of the Bach chorale preludes. With the Vivaldi Concerto, however, she was back on solid ground and though her interpretation was again not the Baroque one it was nonetheless exciting.

From the first note of the Franck, it was obvious that Mlle. Demessieux had at last reached her real element and the writer cannot remember when she has heard such a pleasing performance of this frankly romantic war-horse. Here was 19th century French music unabashedly performed for what it is and on an ideally suited instrument.

Perhaps it was well that an intermission separated the 19th and 20th centuries. The Berveiller Mouvement, unlike some others of this composer's work, said what it had to say succinctly and interestingly, and is perhaps the most pleasing work I have yet to hear from this composer, whom Mlle. Demessieux has so zealously introduced to this country. Towards the end the composer suddenly breaks into an idiom which can only be described as jazz, and which here produces the same cold-shower effect that it does in his Epitaphe . . .

The improvisation was, as it often unhappily is, the dulllest spot on the program. The theme submitted was a Gregorian chant Adoro te devote, which would seem an excellent vehicle. However, she did little with it, beginning with the usual meanderings over a solo melody, and building up to the inevitable climax replete with 64-foot stop and blazing reeds. At the conclusion, Mlle. Demessieux received a richly deserved and prolonged ovation, after which she returned for an encore, which turned out to be the inevitable French toccata.

Once again Demessieux's composure at the organ was noted by the audience and reviewer:<sup>44</sup>

A word should be said here about what might be called Mlle. Demessieux's console presence. Rarely, if ever, does one observe a European artist indulging in the ridiculous console gyrations so dear to the hearts of certain American recitalists bent on attracting the rock-and-roll set, yet in my corner of the balcony I could see a number of people who were sitting on the edges of their seats, and even standing, just to watch an organist who could tear flawlessly through the most difficult manual and pedal passages almost literally without batting an eyelash, and wearing high-heeled shoes at that (only other female organists will understand the import of this!) The sight of an organist sitting still and upright in the midst of a tumult of sound is to me more awe-inspiring than having to speculate on whether he or she is suffering from St. Vitus dance or an epileptic seizure.

On March 25, Demessieux returned to Central Presbyterian Church in New York to conclude her 1958 American recital tour and played the following program:

Overture, Cantata 29	Bach
Fantasie in G Major	Bach
Second Fantasie in F Minor	Mozart
Basse et dessus de trompette	Clérambault
Prelude and Fugue on BACH	Liszt
Chorale Prelude: "Attende Domine"	Demessieux

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<sup>44</sup> Owen.

Te Deum	Demessieux
(First Performance in U.S.A.)	
Study in Thirds, No. 2	Demessieux
"Transports de joie d'une ame devant la gloire du Christ"	Messiaen <sup>45</sup>

The review of the New York concert by Ray Berry begins:<sup>46</sup>

The young brilliant French artist gave a performance in New York which held to the incredible standards of technical excellence which she sets for herself in both playing and composing. In all departments, save perhaps one, Mlle. Demessieux is impeccable. Were I to find one fault, it would be that this program was not sufficiently relieved by music of a lighter character (which has nothing to do with inferiority), plus a certain warmth which could have been a bit more in evidence in interpretation.

The opening piece made a commanding demand on listeners' attention and was interpreted with stylistic integrity. The Bach Fantasie is practically never played in recital, for which I am not unduly surprised. Mozart was given an architecturally powerful concept which held the interest throughout. The charm of interpretation, as well as of the music itself, made the Clerambault especially welcome for it was one of the few light moments in the whole program. The Liszt was given a thrilling reading which captured all the excitement the composer intended.

Mlle. Demessieux as a composer is fascinating even though I suspect that there are some who feel her thoughts are not yet so fully matured as to include heart as equally as head . . . The choral

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<sup>45</sup> Ray Berry, "Jeanne Demessieux. Central Presbyterian Church, New York, March 25," American Organist 41 (June 1958): 225.

<sup>46</sup> Berry.



prelude was that truly, and, had strength of spirit. The Te Deum made excellent use of dissonance in a fabulously difficult piece. For the benefit of those not familiar with this composer's Etudes, the thirds in question are in the pedal!! However, the élan and grace and effortlessness, with which this piece was tossed off, left this reporter breathless with amazement.

In this instance it took a French woman to interpret a Frenchman. Messiaen's Transports were a perfect, if slightly ear-shattering, close to an exciting evening.

While I cannot in all truth state that French organists completely match numerous American colleagues in the art of making music, I must of course admit readily that there are few if any who can match this charming young girl in sheer virtuosity. And this with unimpeachable deportment at the console almost to the point of shyness--but a shyness with clearly defined authority.

Her performance was so electrifying that despite the printed request for no applause there was spontaneous hand-clapping at the mid-point intermission which could not be ignored. With this as cue, the applause at the recital's conclusion was quite deafening.

This program was well designed and a complete entity. Therefore I was a bit annoyed that the usual improvisation demanded of French recitalists was tacked on to its end. Mlle. Demessieux attacked Searle Wright's interesting themes with care and imagination and made a fascinating work of art out of it, but . . . this 'art' is something we could do without--at least for a few seasons.

The 1958 American recital tour of Jeanne Demessieux, like the preceding tours, was a great success. Throughout the country, Demessieux played to full churches and was well received. Her technique, compositions and improvisations

impressed and were applauded by the American public. This tour solidified her position as an international virtuoso.

## CHAPTER 5

### HER FINAL YEARS

Following the 1958 recital tour of America, Demessieux's active touring of Europe continued with recitals in Holland and France. In 1959 she recorded the complete organ works of César Franck on the organ at La Madeleine, Paris. For this four-record set of the Franck organ works, Demessieux won the Grand Prix national du disque for 1960-61.<sup>1</sup> In 1961 she began to feel the fatigue that had accumulated through the years and spoke of a "saturation" that had seized her. Despite a feeling of saturation, that year she drew up a schedule which was so hectic that it threatened her health.<sup>2</sup> The past fifteen years, she reflected in her diary, had been very full and she had sacrificed many things in order to build her successful career. Becoming a concert artist had not been easy, and many obstacles stood in her way.<sup>3</sup> These obstacles most likely included her inability to succeed Dupré at St. Sulpice, her break with Dupré, and not

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<sup>1</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 71.

<sup>2</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 67.

<sup>3</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 67.

being offered an appointment as professor at the Paris Conservatory.

Despite feeling fatigued, Demessieux left her post of thirty years at St. Esprit to become titulaire of La Madeleine in Paris in 1962. Gaining this position was a consolation for Demessieux and it began to ease the disappointment of losing her dream of succeeding Dupré at St. Sulpice. At La Madeleine she was able to play one of the most beautiful Cavaillé-Coll instruments in Paris and to continue a long succession of excellent organists there--Lefébure-Wely, Saint-Saëns, Gabriel Fauré and Edouard Mignan.<sup>4</sup> Demessieux planned to restore the historic Cavaillé-Coll organ at La Madeleine, and in 1964 she consulted with Felix Raugel regarding the improvements. As is common in restoration projects, Demessieux had to battle to receive adequate funding for the repairs. Unfortunately, she did not see these plans to fruition, for the restoration of the organ was not completed until 1971, three years after her death.

In 1963, Demessieux was invited by Norbert Dufourcq to give a recital at St. Merry, Paris, and she also toured Holland, England, Germany and the south of France. The next year she was decorated with the "Ordre de la Couronne le

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<sup>4</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 38. For specifications of the organ at La Madeleine, see Appendix 1.

Belgique" and was named vice-president of the Union des maîtres de chapelle et organistes de France in 1965. 1967 was the last complete year of recital playing for Demessieux and she travelled to Florence, where she was heard by 1,500 people at the Lucques Basilica. She also performed at the Liverpool Cathedral that year.<sup>5</sup>

In her final year, 1968, Demessieux began to reflect upon her life, at times somewhat bitterly:<sup>6</sup>

Pour moi, cette préparation de carrière internationale suivie de vingt années de voyages solitaires me laisse l'âpre souvenir d'une jeunesse sans jeux ni sorties, ni camarades de mon âge en raison de la précocité de mes études où les autres avaient 8 ou 10 ans de plus que moi.

Towards the end of her life, Demessieux began to wonder if the many sacrifices she had made to become an international artist were worth the trouble. She recalled the obstacles she had overcome, and the everyday demands on a concert artist. She felt that tenacity and obstinate stubbornness were essential to her success as a virtuoso.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 225. Translation: "For me, this preparation for an international career followed by twenty years of solitary trips leaves a harsh reminder of a youth without fun or outings, or comrades of my own age because of the precocity of my studies, where the others [my colleagues] were eight to ten years older than me."

<sup>7</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 225.

She regretted the intense solitude of a concert artist's life and the hardship of being a woman in a male dominated field.<sup>8</sup> She continued to have disappointment over never attaining a professorship at the Paris Conservatory or becoming titulaire at St. Sulpice.

In the summer of 1968 Demessieux's health declined. She consented to spend two days in a clinic near Paris in July. She constantly reassured her sister through letters that she was recovering and that her fever was gone. This two-day stay became a two-month convalescence.<sup>9</sup> After her return to Paris she wrote on November 3: "Je ne souffre plus, si ce n'est d'un état de saturation nerveuse qui passera . . ."<sup>10</sup> Here she seems to allude to the years of stress associated with being a child prodigy and adult virtuoso.

Marie-Louise Girod visited the ailing Demessieux and

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<sup>8</sup> In her diary Demessieux reveals her perception of sex discrimination at the composition concours of 1941 in which she entered a symphony. She clearly points out that of the eleven competitors, the six men were given a prize, but the five women were not. She obviously believed that the quality of the compositions submitted had nothing to do with the presentation of the awards (see Trieu-Colleney, 124).

<sup>9</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 228.

<sup>10</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 228. Translation: "I suffer no more, if this state of nervous saturation will pass . . ."

related this touching story:<sup>11</sup>

J'avais acheté des roses devant la Madeleine pour pouvoir lui dire: Tiens, j'ai trouvé ces fleurs devant TON église! Elle m'avait regardé en souriant et en me disant: J'entends les flûtes de la Madeleine . . . Elle continuait à penser à cet orgue qu'elle aimait tant!

On November 11, 1968, Jeanne Demessieux died at the age of 47. No definitive cause of death is offered by the Trieu-Colleney biography, but it is clear that Demessieux spent time in a clinic a few months prior to her death complaining of a fever.

The unexpected death of Demessieux was disconcerting to the entire musical world. Hugh Allen Wilson, who studied with Dupré at the same time as Demessieux recalls:<sup>12</sup>

I was shocked by her early death. She was unique. I have often thought about what the future might have brought to her and she to it. There was certainly no one of her ability contemporary to her. Her Six Etudes are unparalleled. It was through them that I first became aware of her when I heard Dupré play the etude "Pointes."

I still think of her from time to time. Her gentleness and serenity left powerful impressions. What a loss!

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<sup>11</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 228-9. Translation: "I had bought roses in front of La Madeleine to be able to say to her: Well, I had found these in front of YOUR church. She regarded me with a smile and said to me: I hear the flutes of La Madeleine . . . she continued to think of this organ that she loved so much!"

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Hugh Allen Wilson, Schenectady, NY, to Laura Ellis, January 6, 1991.

While European journals were timely in reporting Demessieux's death, the news was slow to travel to the United States. The Diapason and American Organist, America's leading organ periodicals, did not report the death of the French virtuoso until March 1969, nearly four months after the fact.



## CHAPTER 6

### HER COMPOSITIONS FOR ORGAN

Although internationally well-known for her skill at improvisation and prodigious technique, Demessieux composed a number of works for the organ and performed many of these compositions on her American recital tours.<sup>1</sup> In November 1941 Marcel Dupré began work on a set of twelve compositions to challenge his student Demessieux. These pieces, designed to push the limits of technical virtuosity, were first performed for Dupré by Demessieux on September 17, 1943. The compositions, written for Demessieux, were later reorganized and published as Suite, op. 39, Offrande à la Vierge, op. 40, Deux Esquisses, op. 41. In response to these pieces and the encouragement of the publisher Bornemann, Demessieux decided to create her own study in technical virtuosity--the Six Etudes, op. 5.<sup>2</sup>

The Six Etudes, published in 1946, were dedicated to

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete list of the organ compositions of Demessieux see Appendix 2.

<sup>2</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 82-4.

Marcel Dupré. In the work's preface, Dupré relates their musical importance:<sup>3</sup>

Like the Etudes of high virtuosity of the piano repertory (Chopin, Liszt, etc.) they fulfill a double purpose: that of making the student progress to their level and that of permitting the accomplished artist to preserve and maintain acquired technical qualities.

To promote these compositions, Dupré introduced the etudes to America during his winter tour of 1946-7.

Olivier Messiaen also praised the etudes of Demessieux:<sup>4</sup>

Les six études pour orgue de Jeanne Demessieux sont, dans leur genre, une manière de chef-d'oeuvre. Les récentes oeuvres de Ligeti et de Xenakis présentent un genre de difficulté plus avancé, mais en ce qui concerne la technique de pédale, on n'a pas encore dépassé l'extraordinaire difficulté des Etudes de Demessieux. (Je pense notamment aux deux études en tierces

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<sup>3</sup> Jeanne Demessieux, Six Etudes, op. 5, with a preface by Marcel Dupré, trans. by David Pizarro (Paris: Bornemann, 1946).

<sup>4</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 80-1. Translation: "The six etudes for organ of Jeanne Demessieux are in their genre, a type of masterpiece. The recent works of Ligeti and Xenakis present a genre of more advanced difficulty, but in pedal technique, one still has not surpassed the extraordinary difficulties of the Etudes of Demessieux. (I think especially of the two etudes in thirds and sixths where J. Demessieux asks of the feet what Chopin asked of the hands.) Like most of my colleagues, I have deciphered these etudes for my personal pleasure and that experience has helped me progress [in my playing]. J. Demessieux has united in her Etudes technical interest in harmony and originality of registration. All good organists must know and play these works. Very few, however, will come to play with the astonishing virtuosity that was possessed by the composer."

et en sixtes où J. Demessieux demande aux pieds ce que Chopin demandait aux mains.) Comme la plupart de mes confrères, j'ai déchiffré ces études pour mon plaisir personnel et cela m'a fait faire des progrès. J. Demessieux a su réunir dans ses Etudes l'intérêt technique au parfum harmonique et à l'originalité de la registration. Tout bon organiste doit les connaître et les travailler. Très peu cependant arriveront à les jouer avec la virtuosité étourdissante que possédait leur auteur.

Each one of the etudes emphasizes a particular technical point.<sup>5</sup>

#### I. Pointes

This etude requires alternating toes in the pedal and demands evenness of rhythm and security of interval spacing.

#### II. Tierces

Etude No. 2 was played numerous times on Demessieux's American tours and exploits parallel thirds in both right hand and pedal. The left hand plays sustained chords and provides an anchor for the parallel third motion.

#### III. Sixtes

This etude, also played on her American tours, places parallel sixths in the pedal in opposition to chordal movement in the manuals. At a scherzando tempo, the feet must remain in a constant position yet not become stiff.

#### IV. Accords Alternates

The alternating chords present in the manuals, are much like a typical French toccata, but are registered on 16', 8',

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<sup>5</sup> For an analysis of the Etudes, see Majorie Ness, "Six Etudes, op. 5. of Jeanne Demessieux," 78 Diapason (August 1987): 10.

and 4' Voix céleste! Beneath this energetic texture is a florid pedal line played on Basson 4'.

#### V. Notes Répétées

This movement requires agility and lightness of quick repeated notes in the pedal and was performed on the 1953 American recital tour.

#### VI. Octaves

In this etude, also played numerous times on the 1953 tour, octaves are rhythmically alternated between manual and pedal.

Sept Méditations sur le Saint Esprit was published in 1947, one year after the Six Etudes. The Méditations, dedicated to Jean Berveiller, were written for the church of St. Esprit, Paris, where Demessieux was organist at the time of composition and remained until 1962. The opening movement is based on the chant "Veni Sancte Spiritus" and each movement is prefaced by a biblical verse or quotation from the Pentecost liturgy.

#### I. Veni Sancte Spiritus

Venez Esprit-Saint, et envoyez-nous  
du ciel un rayon de votre lumière.  
(Seq. Pentecôte)<sup>6</sup>

The opening meditation begins with a haunting presentation of the "Veni Sancte Spiritus" chant in the pedal, first on a 4' foot reed, then on 8' foot principal stops. The movement gradually builds in intensity with a juxtaposition of duple and triple rhythms.

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<sup>6</sup> Translation: "Come, Holy Spirit, and send us from Heaven a ray of your light. (Pentecost Sequence)"

## II. Les Eaux

La terre était informe et vide; les ténèbres couvraient l'abîme et l'Esprit de Dieu se mouvait au-dessus des eaux.  
(Genèse)<sup>7</sup>

The ebb and flow of water is portrayed by an oscillating double pedal line. In a solo melody, the Spirit of God emerges from this turmoil. Sectional contrasts of duple and triple subdivisions of the beat increase in intensity to a fortissimo climax. The movement concludes with a brief return of the opening material, suggesting a calming of the waters.

## III. Pentecôte

Il se fit soudain un bruit comme celui d'un vent impétueux, là où ils étaient assis . . .<sup>8</sup>  
(Epître Pentecôte)

The movement is in two sections; the first, with its constant eighth-note motion, suggests a breeze. In the second section the breeze becomes a swirling wind.

## IV. Dogme

Celui qui croira sera sauvé, mais celui qui ne croira pas sera condamné.  
(Evang. St. Marc, Ascension.  
Ant. Magn. Pentecôte)<sup>9</sup>

Full organ, dense chords, and angular pedal lines depict judgment day. The first section

<sup>7</sup> Translation: "The Waters. The earth was without form and void; darkness covered the deep and the Spirit of God moved above the waters. (Genesis [1:2])"

<sup>8</sup> Translation: "Pentecost. There was suddenly a noise like an impetuous wind where they were seated. (Epistle for Pentecost)"

<sup>9</sup> Translation: "Dogma. Those who believe will be saved, but those who do not believe will be condemned. (St. Mark the Evangelist, Ascension. Antiphon of Magnificat for Pentecost)"

serves as a call to all people on the final day. After a rhythmical middle section, the movement concludes with a joyous toccata.

#### V. Consolateur

Vous, le Consolateur parfait . . .  
(Seq. Pentecôte)<sup>10</sup>

After the intensity of judgment, Christ appears, simple and serene.

#### VI. Paix

Je vous laisse la paix  
Je vous donne ma paix.  
(Evang. Pentecôte)<sup>11</sup>

Hypnotic eighth-note motion and soft flute stops, suggesting a human heart, illustrate the peace which Christ bestows.

#### VII. Lumière

O bien-heureuse lumière . . .  
(Seq. Pentecôte)<sup>12</sup>

Ostinato pedal lines and scalar passages in the manuals combine to present the sparkle of sunlight hitting water.

Triptyque, published in 1948, was the first composition written after Demessieux's break with Dupré. The work was premiered by the composer at her final recital at Pleyel Hall on January 30, 1948 and was performed numerous times on her

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<sup>10</sup> Translation: "Comforter. You, the perfect comforter, . . . (Pentecost Sequence)"

<sup>11</sup> Translation: "Peace. I leave you peace. I give you my peace. (Evang. Pentecost [John 14:27])"

<sup>12</sup> Translation: "Light. O blessed light . . . (Pentecost Sequence)"

1955 American tour. The three movement composition begins with a "Prelude," subtitled "Chant grave," which evokes a flowing, nomadic quality. "Chant interior," the adagio second movement, is lyrical and registered on flutes and strings. The final movement is a rhythmic fugue, subtitled "Chant de joie." The energetic fugue subject is characterized by rests and angular leaps.<sup>13</sup>

Twelve Choral-Preludes, op. 8, based on Gregorian chant themes, are dedicated to the rector of the church of St. Esprit. The preludes, composed in 1947 and published in 1950, were inspired by the tremendous reception of Dupré's performance of Demessieux's Six Etudes in America.<sup>14</sup> These pieces are short, student pieces and are not as technically demanding as her other compositions. Compositional forms used by Demessieux in the Twelve Choral-Preludes include ornamented chorale, fugue, variations, and toccata. Most of the pieces are two to three pages in length and clearly present the chorale tune.<sup>15</sup>

In her 1953 American tour Demessieux programmed "Ubi

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<sup>13</sup> For an analysis of Demessieux's Triptyque see Robert M. Rudd, "Stylistic Trends in Contemporary Organ Music" (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1967) 265, 267-282.

<sup>14</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 90.

<sup>15</sup> For a complete analysis of the majority of the choral preludes, see William James Dorroh, Jr., "A Study of Plain-song in the Organ Compositions of Six Twentieth-Century French Composers" (Ph.D. diss., Peabody, 1978).

caritas" from the Twelve Choral-Preludes. In this brief prelude the chant is presented unadorned in the pedal while accompanying harp-like arpeggios appear in the left-hand.

On her 1958 tour, Demessieux performed two more of her chorale-preludes, the "Rorate caeli" and the "Attende Domine." "Rorate caeli," the opening prelude of the set, is an intimate setting of the chant presented on solo cornet and accompanied by 8' bourdon. The choral paraphrase "Attende Domine" is a complex contrapuntal setting of this responsorial Lenten antiphon. Throughout the prelude Demessieux simultaneously combines phrases of the chant respond and verse and employs such contrapuntal devices as stretto and augmentation.<sup>16</sup>

Poème pour orgue et orchestre, op. 9, was composed in 1950 at Nancy and was published in 1952. The score requires a large orchestra, including harp, four horns and divisi strings. The composition is an interesting dialogue between the sonorities of organ and orchestra. Demessieux specifically notates registration and exploits various mutations, solo and chorus reeds. The organ part is largely rhythmical, but does present motivic material and includes a section for solo organ. As a concerto, the work is constructed in free form with three continuous movements--Introduction (Moderato) and Allegro deciso, Andante, Allegro.

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<sup>16</sup> Dorroh, 107, 109-11.



Demessieux's Te Deum, op. 11, published in 1959, is reminiscent of Charles Tournemire's Te Deum. The majestic work is in three sections--Moderato, Andante, Allegro--and paraphrases three sections of the Te Deum hymn.<sup>17</sup> In the first five measures, the first two phrases of the hymn are stated by full organ. A pedal ostinato, derived from the first three notes of the hymn, begins soon thereafter (m. 24) and supports the opening phrase in augmentation. The presentations of the first phrase, with suggested registration of trompette en chamade (mm. 67-70) concludes the opening section. The andante middle section (mm. 77-118) is based on the text Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis in gloria numerari.<sup>18</sup> The melody is stated in the manuals on 8' fonds and in augmentation in the pedal on 4' clarion with 2' foot flute (or soft cymbal). The concluding allegro section is technically demanding and builds to a climax on full organ with trompette en chamade. Demessieux performed the Te Deum numerous times on her 1958 tour, having composed it with the organ at St. John the Divine in New York City in mind.<sup>19</sup>

The Prelude and Fugue in C, op. 13, published in 1965, is dedicated to the memory of Jean Gallon and served as a

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<sup>17</sup> For analysis of the Te Deum of Demessieux see Dorroh, 62-64.

<sup>18</sup> Dorroh, 63.

<sup>19</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 207.

required competition piece for the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique in 1965. For this reason, Demessieux clearly identified the various compositional techniques utilized in the work. In the fugue she marked each entry of subject and countersubject, identified the use of augmentation and contrary motion, and requested that the performer refrain from using the mixtures because they obscure the clarity of the resulting polytonality. The rhythmical character of the fugue subject recalls the Fugue in C Major of Bach (BWV 564).

Répons pour le temps de Pâques, published posthumously in 1970, was to be part of a vast collection entitled Répons pour les temps liturgiques.<sup>20</sup> The piece, based on the Easter celebration, paraphrases three Gregorian chants, "Ite missae est," "Victimae paschali laudes" and "Resurrexit," which are presented individually and polyphonically. The work, typical of Demessieux's writing, is rhythmic with athletic leaps in the pedal. Rather than ending with full organ, the composition gradually diminuendos to pianissimo, concluding with an inward reflection of the resurrection.

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<sup>20</sup> Trieu-Colleney, 95. For a complete analysis of Répons pour le temps de Pâques see Dorroh, 114-16.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AMERICAN TOURS

A number of American women organists, including Nita Akin, Claire Coci, and Catharine Crozier, made transcontinental recital tours of the United States in the 1950s, but few European women travelled across the Atlantic Ocean to perform organ recitals in North America. Through her American recital tours Jeanne Demessieux brought the French perspective of organ playing to the United States and dazzled audiences with her phenomenal technique. The tours of 1953, 1955 and 1958 were resounding successes and firmly established Demessieux as an international virtuoso. She demonstrated her skill at improvisation and introduced to American audiences a number of her own compositions and those of other French composers.

Demessieux's recitals were well received by reviewers and concert-goers alike. Audiences were impressed by her flawless pedal technique, particularly because of her high-heeled shoes, and her poise at the console. Not only was she a virtuoso organist, those who had personal contact with Demessieux found her to be a lovely and engaging person.

The American tours offered Demessieux the opportunity

to perform some of her own organ compositions. On the 1953 tour she played various movements from her Six Etudes, including "Notes répétées," "Octaves," and "Tierces." The technical difficulty of these studies coupled with Demessieux's flawless execution amazed concert-goers. Also, on this premiere tour of America, Demessieux performed "Dogme" from Sept Méditations sur le Saint Esprit and introduced "Ubi caritas" from her Twelve Choral-Preludes. Although not all reviewers appreciated the compositional idioms of the twentieth century, Demessieux's compositions were generally well received by her concert audiences.

On her 1955 recital tour Demessieux often played "Paix" from her Sept Méditations sur le Saint Esprit and her three movement Triptyque. In 1958 she played more of her compositions, including "Attende domine" and "Rorate caeli" from Twelve Choral-Preludes, various movements from the Six Etudes, and the recently composed Te Deum, inspired by the organ at the church of St. John the Divine.

Not only did Demessieux perform her own compositions for the American public, she introduced organ works of other French composers. She paid homage to the French classical period in organ music by frequently performing the "Basse et dessus de trompette" of Clérambault on her 1958 tour. Numerous Franck works were played on all of her American tours--including Pastorale, A Minor Chorale, B Minor Chorale, Pièce héroïque, and a transcription of "Redemption" from

Interlude symphonique.

Demessieux frequently performed compositions of the French symphonic organ school. She programmed "Variations" from Charles Marie Widor's Symphonie gothique, the "Allegro" from Symphony No. 6 of Widor, and the "Scherzo" from Louis Vierne's Symphony No. 2. Demessieux did not neglect compositions of her French contemporaries. She programmed "Les Rameaux" of Jean Langlais, along with Le banquet céleste, "Dieu parmi nous" from La Nativité du Seigneur, and "Transports de joie" from L'Ascension of Olivier Messiaen. Demessieux introduced into America many of the compositions of Jean Berveiller, her friend and colleague. Many times at least one work of Berveiller was programmed on every recital. She performed Berveiller's Cadence, Epitaphe, Mouvement, and "Intermezzo" from Suite.

Ironically, Demessieux performed few of the compositions of her maître Marcel Dupré on her American tours. Out of all the recital programs collected, only two programs from the tours presented a work of Dupré--"The World Awaiting the Savior" from Symphonie-Passion. She previously performed the majority of Dupré's works on her recital series at Pleyel Hall, so there is no doubt that the works were in her repertoire. Though the American public would have loved to hear her play his works, it seems that Demessieux preferred not to play Dupré's works in America.

Adhering to the French tradition, Demessieux concluded each recital with an improvisation based on a submitted theme. These improvisations took different forms depending on the character of the given themes. The forms Demessieux considered for her improvisations included symphony, variations, and prelude and fugue. Though some reviewers did not feel improvisations were necessary for the concert program, the majority of concert-goers were impressed by Demessieux's skill at improvisation and often compared her to Dupré.

Demessieux's diary entries for the American recital tours reveal that she enjoyed concert performing immensely and wished never to give it up. Unfortunately, she was not as comfortable with the constant personal demands of the concert artist. She did not enjoy the receptions, interviews, and dinners that she had to endure in every town.

The American recital tours of Jeanne Demessieux not only solidified her position as organ virtuoso and master of improvisation, but also introduced her compositions for organ to the American public. Surely, American organists and audiences of Demessieux's programs were greatly enriched by her phenomenal technique and the variety of literature that she performed in the United States.

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## APPENDIX 1

### ORGAN SPECIFICATIONS

#### I. St. Esprit, Paris

The organ at the church of St. Esprit, Paris, was built in 1934 by Louis Debierre. Demessieux was named its titulaire in 1933 and remained there for nearly thirty years. The instrument had electric action and possessed the following specifications:

##### Great

Bourdon 16'  
Montre 8'  
Flûte harmonique 8'  
Bourdon 8'  
Prestant 4'

##### Pedal (Borrowed from Great)

Soubasse 16'  
Basse 8'

##### Swell

Cor de nuit 8'  
Gambe 8'  
Voix céleste  
Octave 4'  
Nazard 2 2/3  
Plein jeu III  
Bombarde 16'  
Trompette 8'  
Clarion 4'

Couplers: Gt/Pd; Sw/Pd; Sw/Gt at 16' and 8'; swell under expression; reeds controlled by ventil.

Information concerning the organ at St. Esprit is taken from Denis, "Les organistes français," 39.

## II. Dupré's house organ

To facilitate teaching his students, Marcel Dupré designed a music room in his home at Meudon. In 1926 Dupré bought the former Cavaillé-Coll organ of Guilmant for this music room, and it possessed the following specifications:

### Grand Orgue

Bourdon 16'  
Montre 8'  
Salicional 8'  
Flûte harmonique 8'  
Prestant 4'

### Récit

Diapason 8'  
Flûte Traversière 8'  
Dulciana 8'  
Voix Céleste 8'  
Flûte Octaviane 4'  
Doublette 2'  
Plein jeu III  
Trompette Harmonique 8'  
Basson-hautbois 8'

### Positif

Quintaton 16'  
Gambe 8'  
Cor de Nuit 8'  
Flûte douce 4'  
Nasard 2 2/3  
Quarte de Nasard 2'  
Tierce 1 3/5  
Cromorne 8'

### Pédale

Contrebasse 16'  
Soubasse 16'  
Bourdon 8'  
Violoncelle 8'  
Flûte 8'  
Basson 16'

To Guilmant's specifications Dupré added these stops as a solo division: Flûte 8'; Gambe 8' (taken from the Positif); Voix céleste 8'; Orchestral Oboe 8'; Clarinet 8' (the Guilmant Cromorne); and Basson 18'/8'. He replaced the Positif Gambe 8' with a Principal 8'. Joseph Beuchet carried out the revisions. Dupré replaced the original three-manual console with a four-manual console with adjustable combinations and electric action.

Information regarding Dupré's house organ taken from Michael Murray, Marcel Dupré: The Work of a Master Organist (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985), 134-5, 138, 226.

### III. Central Presbyterian Church, New York City

The specifications of the 1950 Möller at Central Presbyterian in New York City:

#### Great Organ

Quintaton 16'  
Principal 8'  
Bourdon 8'  
Gemshorn 8'  
Octave 4'  
Spitzflöte 4'  
Octave Quint 2 2/3  
Super Octave 2'  
Fourniture III-V  
Cymbale III

#### Swell Organ

Flute Conique 16'  
Diapason 8'  
Rohrflöte 8'  
Viole de Gamba 8'  
Viole Celeste 8'  
Flauto Dolce 8'  
Flute Celeste 8'  
Principal 4'  
Flute Triangulaire 4'  
Violina 4'  
Twelfth 2 2/3  
Fifteenth 2'  
Plein jeu V  
Trumpet 16'  
Trompette 8'  
Oboe 8'  
Vox Humana 8'  
Clarion 4'  
Tremolo

#### Choir Organ

Dulciana 16'  
Geigen Principal 8'  
Nachthorn 8'  
Concert Flute 8'  
Dulciana 8'  
Unda Maris 8'  
Principal 4'  
Koppelflöte 4'  
Rohrnasat 2 2/3  
Terz 1 3/5  
Siffelöte 1'  
Clarinet 8'  
Tremolo

#### Solo Organ

Gamba 8'  
Gamba Celeste 8'  
Solo Flute 8'  
English Horn 16'  
English Horn 8'  
Harmonic Trumpet 8'  
French Horn 8'  
Clarion 4'  
Tremolo

#### Pedal Organ

Principal 16'  
Violone 16'  
Gemshorn 16'  
Quintaton 16'  
Dulciana 16'  
Flute Conique 16'  
Quint 10 2/3  
Principal 8'  
Violoncello 8'  
Rohrflöte 8'  
Quint 5 1/3  
Choralbass 4'  
Koppelflöte 4'  
Mixture IV  
Sesquialtera III  
Trumpet 16'  
English Horn 16'  
Bombarde 16'  
Bombarde 8'  
Clarion 4'

#### Antiphonal Organ

Spitzprincipal 8'  
Hohlflöte 8'  
Erzahler 8'  
Principal 4'  
Super Octave 2'  
Mixture III  
Trompette 8'  
Tremolo

#### Antiphonal Pedal

Spitzprincipal 16'  
Erzahler 16'  
Principal 8'  
Super Octave 4'  
Trompette 8'

## IV. First Presbyterian Church, Glen Falls, NY

The following are specifications of the organ at First Presbyterian Church of Glen Falls, NY, where Demessieux played on February 6, 1955, and January 31, 1958. The organ was originally a 1928 Casavant which was renovated and enlarged by Ernest M. Skinner, Inc. in 1950.

Chancel Pedal Organ

Diapason 32'  
 Diapason I 16'  
 Diapason II 16'  
 Bourdon 16'  
 Gedeckt 16'  
 Violone 16'  
 Octave 8'  
 Still Gedeckt 8'  
 Cello 8'  
 Superoctave 4'  
 Quintaton 2'  
 Fagotto 32'  
 Fagotto 16'  
 Bombarde 8'  
 Trompette 4'  
 Clarion 4'  
 Mixture V  
 Carillon II

Antiphonal Pedal Organ

Diapason 16'  
 Gemshorn 16'  
 Principal 8'  
 Quint 5 1/3  
 Bourdon 32'  
 French Trumpet 16'  
 Clarion 8'

Great Organ

Diapason 16'  
 Diapason I 8'  
 Diapason II 8'  
 Doppel Flute 8'  
 Viole d'amour 8'  
 Quint 5 1/3  
 Octave 4'  
 Hohlpipeife 4'  
 Grosse Tierce 3 1/5  
 Twelfth 2 2/3  
 Trumpet 8'  
 Plein jeu IV  
 Cymbale V

Swell Organ

Bourdon 16'  
 Diapason 8'  
 Rohrflute 8'  
 Viola da Gamba 8'  
 Voix Celestes 8'  
 Principal 4'  
 Flauto Traverso 4'  
 Piccolo 2'  
 Posaune 16'  
 Trompette 8'  
 Clarion 4'  
 Flugel Horn 8'  
 Vox Humana 8'  
 Cornet V  
 Fourniture IV  
 Tremolo

Choir Organ

Diapason 8'  
 Concert Flute 8'  
 Quintadena 8'  
 English Horn 8'  
 Dulciana 8'  
 Unda Maris 8'  
 Flute d'amour 4'  
 Violina 4'  
 Nazard 2 2/3  
 Flageolot 2'  
 Tierce 1 3/5  
 Larigot 1 1/3  
 Septieme 1 1/7  
 Trompette 16'  
 Trompette 8'  
 Clarinet 8'  
 Dulciana Mixture V  
 Tremolo

Solo Organ

Diapason 8'  
 Flauto Mirabilis 8'  
 Viole d'orchestre 8'  
 Viole Celeste 8'  
 Flute 4'  
 Trompette Harmonique 8'  
 Tuba Clarion 4'  
 Chimes  
 Tremolo

Antiphonal Organ

Gemshorn 16'  
 Diapason I 8'  
 Diapason II 8'  
 Corno d'amour 8'  
 Principal Flute 8'  
 Gemshorn 8'  
 Quint 5 1/3  
 Principal 4'  
 Octave 4'  
 Flute Harmonique 4'  
 Twelfth 2 2/3  
 Fifteenth 2'  
 French Trumpet 16'  
 English Trumpet 8'  
 Clarion 4'  
 Gamba 8'  
 Gamba Celeste 8'  
 Harmonics IV  
 Mixture V  
 Tremolo

Echo Organ

Muted Viole 8'  
 Vox Angelica 8'  
 Fern Flute 8'  
 Flute Celeste 8'  
 Rohrflute 4'  
 Musette 8'  
 Dulciana Mixture V  
 Pedal Bourdon 16'

# V. Bidwell Memorial Presbyterian Church, Chico, CA

The twelve-rank organ at Bidwell Memorial Presbyterian Church, Chico, CA, was a 1931 Möller and contained the following stops in 1958 when Demessieux performed in recital on February 14, 1958.

## Great (4 ranks--6 stops)

Diapson 8', 4'  
Viola da Gamba 8'  
Melodia 8', 4'  
Dulciana 8'

## Swell (7 ranks--11 stops)

Stopped flute 16', 8', 4', 2'  
Violin Diapason 8'  
Salicional 8'  
Voix Celeste 8'  
Vox Humana 8'  
Oboe 8'  
Trumpet 8', 4'

## Pedal (1 rank--4 stops)

Bourdon 16', 8'  
Lieblich Gedeckt 16' (from Swell Flute)  
Violon 16' (extension of Great Gamba)

Specifications for the organ at Bidwell Memorial Presbyterian courtesy of Charles van Bronkhorst.



## VI. La Madeleine, Paris

Specifications of the 1846 Cavaillé-Coll organ at La Madeleine, Paris, where Demessieux was named titulaire in 1962. In 1956 the Roethinger firm added several mixtures to the original Cavaillé-Coll specifications. In 1971, Georges Danion, representing the Gonzales firm, added additional stops, electrified the action, installed combination action, extended the manual compass from 54 to 56 notes, and extended the pedal from 25 to 32 notes.

Grand-Orgue I

Montre 16'  
Gambe 16'  
Montre 8'  
Salicional 8'  
Bourdon 8'  
Flûte harmonique 8'  
Prestant 4'  
Quinte 2 2/3  
Doublette 2'  
Piccolo 1' (D)  
Fourniture V  
Cymbale V  
Trompette 8'  
Cor anglais 8'

Bombarde III

Soubasse 16'  
Flûte harmonique 8'  
Flûte traversière 8'  
Basse 8'  
Flûte octaviante 4'  
Octavin 2'  
Fourniture IV (R)  
Cornet III (R)  
Bombarde 16'  
Trompette harmonique 8'  
Clairon 4'

Pédale

Quintaton 32'  
Contrebasse 16'  
Flûte 8'  
Violincelle 8'  
Flûte 4' (D)  
Bombarde 16'  
Trompette 8'  
Clairon 4'  
Basson 16'

Positiv II

Montre 8'  
Flûte douce 8'  
Viole de gambe 8'  
V. céleste 8'  
(en 2 rangs)  
Prestant 4'  
Dulciane 4'  
Octavin 2'  
Trompette 8'  
Basson-hautbois 8'  
Clairon 4'

Récit expressif IV

Flûte harmonique 8'  
Bourdon 8' (D)  
Flûte 4'  
Prestant 4' (R)  
Doublette 2' (R)  
Larigot 1 1/3 (D)  
Plein-jeu V (D)  
Cymbale III (R)  
Bombarde 16' (R)  
Trompette 8'  
Clairon 4'  
Voix humaine 8'  
Musette 8'

R = Roethinger  
D = Danion

Information concerning the organ at La Madeleine is taken from Claude de Noissette de Crauzat, Cavaillé-Coll (Paris: La Flûte de Pan, 1984)

## APPENDIX 2

### ORGAN COMPOSITIONS OF JEANNE DEMESSIEUX

- Poème pour Orgue et Orchestre. Paris: Durand, 1949.
- Prélude et Fugue en ut. Paris: Durand, 1965.
- Répons pour le temps de Pâques. Paris: Durand, 1970.
- Sept Méditations sur le Saint Esprit. Paris: Durand, 1947.
- Six Etudes. Paris: Bornemann, 1946.
- Te Deum. Paris: Durand, 1959.
- Triptyque. Paris: Durand, 1949.
- Twelve Choral-Preludes. Boston: McLaughlin & Reilly, 1950.

### APPENDIX 3

#### DISCOGRAPHY

##### RECORDINGS BY JEANNE DEMESSIEUX

##### Decca-London

Series of L.P.'s recorded at 78 r.p.m. (out of print)

- Toccata et Fugue en Ré Mineur J.S. Bach
- Cantabile (K 2560) C. Franck
- Toccata de la 5 Symphonie Widor  
Trumpet Tune (K 1914) Purcell
- Sonate en La Majeur (K 1700) Mendelssohn

##### LXT 2915

Works of J.S. Bach

Toccata, Adagio et Fugue en Ut

Choral: <<Quand nous sommes dans l'extrême  
détresse>>

Choral: <<Jésus-Christ, notre sauveur>>

Choral: <<Viens maintenant Sauveur des païens>>

Fugue en Sol Majeur: <<Gigue>>

Prélude et Fugue en La Mineur

##### LXT 2578

Works of Bach and Franck

Toccata et Fugue en Ré Mineur J.S. Bach

Prélude et Fugue en Ré Majeur J.S. Bach

Pastorale C. Franck

Fantaisie en La Majeur C. Franck

##### Decca

##### LXT 2773

Works of Liszt and Widor

Fantaisie et Fugue sur le Choral:

<<Ad nos, ad salutarem undam>> F. Liszt

Varitations de la <<Symphonie  
gothique>> (Puer natus est) Ch.M. Widor

LXT 2759

Handel Concertos No. 1 and No. 2

LM 5095

Works of J.S. Bach

Fantaisie et Fugue en Sol Mineur

Toccata et Fugue en Ré Mineur

LXT 5185

Trois Chorals:

C. Franck

Mi Majeur

Si Mineur

La Mineur

Concerto No. 2 en La Mineur

Vivaldi-Bach

173866

Works of J.S. Bach

Toccata et Fugue en Fa Majeur

Choral: &lt;&lt;Aie pitié de moi, Seigneur&gt;&gt;

Fantaisie en Sol Majeur

Choral: <<Christ notre Seigneur est venu  
au Jourdain>>

Ouverture de la 29 cantate

173867

Fantaisie No. 2 in Fa Mineur

W.A. Mozart

Adagio et Fugue en Ut Mineur

(adaptation de Jeanne Demessieux) W.A. Mozart

Prélude et Fugue sur le nom de B.A.C.H. F. Liszt

Allegro de s Symphonie

Ch. M. Widor

CEP 500000

Choral: <<O homme, pleure sur tes  
lourds péchés>>

J.S. Bach

Toccata médiévale

E. Mignan

STS 15103-15106

Four record set of the complete works of César  
Franck recorded at La Madeleine, Paris

Information regarding the recordings of Demessieux on the  
Decca-London and Decca labels taken from Trieu-Colleney,  
Jeanne Demessieux: Une vie de lutttes et gloire.

itto

DTO 10114

Works of J.S. Bach

Toccata and Fugue in D Minor

Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor

Chorale-Prelude: "Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten  
sein"

Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C Major

Prelude and Fugue in A Minor

(recorded at the Victoria Hall, Geneva)

## RECORDINGS OF THE COMPLETE WORKS OF DEMESSIEUX

Musical Heritage

3042-3044 (out of print)

Pierre Labric, organ