

ALEXANDRE GUILMANT
1837-1911

Marche religieuse (March on a Theme of Handel)

The first four notes are believed to be taken from the chorus “Lift up your heads” from *Messiah*, although the first *eight* notes bear a more striking resemblance to Giordani’s aria “Caro mio ben.” In any event, this piece makes a wonderfully resolute statement and is among Guilmant’s most often played works. Its three sections are straightforward: stately march, dramatic fugue, triumphant march.

Sonata No. 1 in D minor, Op. 42

I. Introduction et Allegro

II. Pastorale: Andante quasi Allegretto

III. Final: Allegro assai

Guilmant’s music is traditional in every sense. His forms are clear, his harmonies pleasant and his melodies sing-able. Although his writing is often accused of being square and reiterative of previous styles, study of his music reveals a constant and noble homage to his musical models who include Mendelssohn, Franck, and Bach. Guilmant’s first Sonata for organ is his own transcription of his first symphony for organ and orchestra, and both versions are still equally popular today. Expect a typical fiery first movement in the style of Franck, a beautiful slow movement in Guilmant’s loveliest melodic vein, and a relentless third movement toccata/rondo with a hymn-like middle section recalling the style of Mendelssohn.