

A Study of Marcel Dupré's *Variations sur un Noël*
as Correlated with American Visual Art

by

Ashley Snavley

A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved November 2014 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Kimberly Marshall, Chair
Russell Ryan
Rodney Rogers

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2014

ABSTRACT

By studying of a piece of music paired with specific artwork from the time and place of its composition, one can learn more about the character and artistic merits of both the art and music, as well as their relationship to the culture in which they were created. It is the purpose of this paper to examine one specific idea within this vein of interdisciplinary study. This study explores the presentation of American visual art from the 1920s alongside Dupré's *Variations sur un Noël*, Op. 20. This correlation provides a platform for deeper insight into the composition. The sights and sounds of America that Dupré observed while composing his variation set, captured in artwork from that period, illustrate some of the unique and distinguishing features of the musical work. This study also explores the history and culture around music and art in the 1920's, as well as some of the existing research on the relationship between music and visual art.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my doctoral committee, Dr. Kimberly Marshall, Dr. Rodney Rogers, and Professor Russell Ryan, for their continued support and contributions to my research while at ASU. I would especially like to thank Dr. Marshall for years of guidance and constant encouragement through this incredible journey. She has been an amazing mentor, providing the necessary resources for me to grow as a person, both musically and academically, and for which I am ever grateful.

For generously allowing me to practice and record this music, I would also like to thank Pastor Garman and the staff at La Casa de Cristo Lutheran Church in Scottsdale AZ. And finally, for donating their time and talents to produce the recording, I am incredibly grateful for the masterful work of Jim and Monica Stern and Earful Recording.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 MUSIC AND ORGAN CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES	3
3 ART AND SOCIETY IN THE 1920S	6
4 MARCEL DUPRÉ.....	10
5 ART AND MUSIC: MAKING CONNECTIONS	15
6 AMERICAN ART AND DUPRÉ'S ORGAN VARIATIONS	22
7 CONCLUSION	47
REFERENCES.....	49
APPENDIX	
A TABLE 1 – VARIATION AND ARTWORK DESCRIPTIONS	52

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although the study of art and music history has not always been mutually exclusive, it is only recently that they “began to affirm shared interests, areas of study, and methodological approaches.”¹ While making connections between music and visual art dates back to ancient times, there are still significant challenges to effective cross-disciplinary research. There are countless ways of approaching the study of music and visual art and within each field, a variety of mediums. It is an area that is particularly rich with opportunities for further study and collaboration between scholars. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore one specific idea within this vein of interdisciplinary study. By studying a piece of music paired with specific artwork from the time and place of its composition, one can learn and absorb more information about the character and artistic merits of both the art and music, as well as their relationship to the culture in which they were created.

The Noël as a musical genre dates back to the Renaissance, and its popularity inspired musicians to use these tunes as themes for compositions. Organists in the French classical period used Noël in organ suites and variation sets. In the twentieth century, French organist Marcel Dupré (1886-1971) continued this tradition, crafting his own variations on an old Noël tune, but not for the timbres of French organs. While traveling in America on tour, he heard American organs that were larger and more versatile than French instruments. In a set of ten variations, Dupré explored the organs heard during his

¹ Tim Shepherd and Anne Leonard, introduction to *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*, ed. Tim Shepherd and Anne Leonard (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

travels. The sights and sounds of America that Dupré observed while composing his variation set, captured in artwork from that period, illustrate some of the unique and distinguishing features of the musical work. The presentation of American visual art from the 1920s alongside Dupré's *Variations sur un Noël*, Op. 20 provides a platform for deeper insight into the composition.

CHAPTER 2

MUSIC AND ORGAN CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

At the turn of the century, the United States was experiencing a number of major changes that would greatly impact musical culture. It was a time of rapid population growth and development. The railroad system was greatly expanded to connect major cities, and the rapid increase in telephone lines made communication faster and more reliable. As a result, the economy experienced a boom in industry and saw the growth of more large cities. The expansion of urban society was advantageous for music, as many of the large cities established orchestras and opera companies that relied heavily on European repertoire.²

In the years after WWI, music in America flourished. Numerous community and school ensembles appeared alongside professional orchestras. The American household now had access to violins and pianos, and the radio fostered not just popular music and jazz, but also classical music. Record sales of serious music soared during this time: in the 1920's, Victor's Red Sea label made records featuring prestigious international symphonic music and opera stars, spending millions to advertise them to the American public. Radio networks that featured classical programming brought the music of respected national symphonies and opera companies into millions of homes.³ The economic prosperity and musical renaissance of America in these decades fostered both the building and playing of organs.

² Orpha Ochse, *The History of the Organ in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 321-2.

³ Kathleen Drowne and Patrick Huber, *The 1920s: American Popular Culture Through History*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 217.

Thanks, in part, to the technical innovations and ideas of two builders from abroad, Robert Hope Jones and George Ashdown Audsley, the sound and style of the American organ changed dramatically in the early part of the twentieth century.⁴ Hope-Jones, a church music enthusiast who began his career as an electrical engineer for an English telephone company, emigrated to America in 1903. He became vice president of the E. M. Skinner Co. and later formed his own organ building firm. His ideas about organ design were revolutionary and greatly influenced the future of the theatre organ in America.⁵ Hope-Jones advocated the complete enclosure of every pipe for maximum expression; he also designed organs with powerful stops, high wind pressures, double touch keys, and new compartments that enclosed the Foundation, String, Woodwind, Brass, and Percussion divisions.⁶

Audsley, a Scottish native, detailed his views on organ design in several books including *The Art of Organ Building*. He differed from Hope-Jones on many issues including mixtures, wind pressures and the use of enclosures.⁷ His main contribution was a system for designing large organ, both for the concert hall and church, by adding more divisions of tonal character. Although the two builders had different and sometimes opposing views on organ design, both contributed important ideas that had a lasting impact on the new orchestral sound of the American organ.⁸

Among the technical innovations was a more reliable electric action. The development of electropneumatic action slowly replaced tubular-pneumatic action and

⁴ Ochse, 333.

⁵ Ibid., 334.

⁶ Ibid., 335-6.

⁷ Ibid., 339.

⁸ Ibid., 344.

gave the organist greater control. The console was manipulated in various ways to accommodate a vast number of new couplers, combination pistons, and swell controls. The pedal board also received a make-over. Builders extended the range to thirty-two notes and adapted the concave design of Henry Willis that would become the American standard.⁹ As for tonal concepts, the strings were the new foundation of an orchestral organ. According to one source, “There were probably more string stops made between 1910 and 1930 than in the entire history of the organ, before or since.”¹⁰ New flue pipe forms were also invented that could imitate reed instruments including saxophone, oboe, and clarinet but would stay in tune with the other flues. By the early 1920’s, the inventiveness of American organs rivaled European instruments not only in size, but also in colors, and technical advances.

⁹ Ibid., 346.

¹⁰ Ibid., 352.

CHAPTER 3

ART AND SOCIETY IN THE 1920S

Marcel Dupré's first visits to America took place during the tumultuous era known as the "Roaring Twenties." Spanning the end of World War I through the stock market crash of 1929, the "Jazz Age" of America was a time of prosperity, symbolized by flappers, Model T Fords, jazz bands, gangsters, and Hollywood stars.¹¹ It was also a decade of unprecedented changes for American life. Women were given the right to vote, the government enacted prohibition, and immigrants crowded the cities.¹² There were considerable social and racial tensions between a large working class and corporate employers. The rapidly changing environment "signaled the clear emergence of a consumer culture characterized by an emphasis on leisure, purchasing, sociability, expressiveness, and personal pleasure. Changing sexual morality, modified ideas about success...and mounting secularism [formed] a major challenge to the Victorian ethos of restraint, frugality, and order."¹³ Together, these social and economic changes had a major impact on the world of art, including literature, music, and especially visual art.

During the first four decades of the 20th century, two parallel traditions existed in the world of American painting – realism and abstraction.¹⁴ Realism, the appearance of reality in the painted image, had been the main tradition in American art to this point.¹⁵ While many American artists at this time experimented with techniques borrowed from

¹¹ Kathleen Drowne and Patrick Huber, introduction to *The 1920s: American Popular Culture Through History* (London: Greenwood Press, 2004), xiv.

¹² *Ibid.*, xv.

¹³ Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 12.

¹⁴ Wayne Craven, *American Art: History and Culture* (New York: Brown and Benchmark, 1994), 422.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 423.

European modernism, several schools of distinctly American art emerged, using inspiration found in their homeland.¹⁶

Founded by Robert Henri and his students, a group of urban realist painters calling themselves “the eight,” the Ashcan school was known for their representations of the vibrant and colorful city life.¹⁷ At the time they were considered rebels. They rejected classical themes and idealized landscapes while favoring ordinary life and street people. Artists in this school, such as Henri, George Luks, Arthur Davies, and Maurice Pendergast, gained recognition for depicting New York City with “bold strokes and realistic detail, [making] it clear that American painters need not look only to Europe for inspiration.”¹⁸

Another form of American Realism that stemmed from the Ashcan school was American Scene painting.¹⁹ This school was extremely popular with audiences, as prominent artists such as Charles Burchfield, Reginald March, George Bellows and Edward Hopper, painted more accessible subject matter – rural farms, small-town life, or “big-city streetscapes.”²⁰ American Scene painting also influenced the Regionalist school in which artists like Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood depicted scenes of Midwestern life.²¹ These artists, while still classified in the realist tradition, were also influenced by elements of abstraction and tended to disassociate with the art centers of the east.²²

¹⁶ Drowne and Huber, 271.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 272.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Craven, 439.

The rise of European modernism led to the tradition of abstraction in art during the second decade. Artists were no longer “obligated to recreate the physical world.” Form, color and light were all subjected to the concept of abstraction.²³ Within the span of a few years, artistic traditions experienced major shifts as modern art took hold in the twentieth century. Largely influenced by artists living in Paris, such as Matisse and Picasso, the American avant-garde experimented with color and form.²⁴ One of the more important of the American modernist movements was Precisionism, or “cubist realism.” The paintings by artists in this school are characterized by sharply defined geometric forms, and flat planes; these realistic scenes rarely included human figures.²⁵ Significant members included Charles Sheeler, Charles Demuth, and Georgia O’Keeffe. Although the “mainstream of modern American art should never be separated from...modernism in Europe, American painters added both originality and breadth to the movement.”²⁶

Photography during the 1920’s became more commonplace in books, magazines and newspapers, but was generally not considered an important art form.²⁷ Few museums collected photographs, although this would change over the course of the decade.²⁸ Photography was a useful tool in journalism, which tried to capture important social and political events; it also became a powerful means of advertising. Photographers began experimenting with camera angles, lenses, and backgrounds to produce more artistic and aesthetically pleasing visual effects. Technological advances –mechanical, chemical, and optical - made photography an accessible hobby for the average American as well as

²³ Ibid., 422.

²⁴ Ibid., 444-6.

²⁵ Drowne and Huber, 272-3.

²⁶ Craven, 467.

²⁷ Drowne and Huber, 284.

²⁸ Ibid.

facilitating the work of studio photographers. Even small towns had professional photographers on hand to capture important events on film, providing “lasting mementos for future generations.”²⁹

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 285.

CHAPTER 4

MARCEL DUPRÉ

The affluence of the 1920's created performing and teaching opportunities that lured many European virtuosos to America, and prestigious conservatories, like Eastman and Julliard, furthered the study of professional music. Among the visiting artists drawn to America were three renowned concert organists: Alexandre Guilmant, Joseph Bonnet, and Marcel Dupré.³⁰

Guilmant was the first French organist to make major concert tours in the United States and Canada. His energy and technical virtuosity along with his versatility on large instruments brought him international notoriety. He was especially influential in introducing American audiences to a wide variety of repertoire that few organists knew including Scheidt, Frescobaldi, and Titelouze in a series of 40 performances for the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis.³¹ Bonnet was also a frequent recitalist and teacher in the United States and Canada. He presented over 100 recitals in the US between 1917-1919 and founded the organ department of the Eastman School of Music in 1921.

One of Guilmant's last pupils, Marcel Dupré was already a renowned organist and composer at the start of the 1920s. Dupré had won the Grand Prix de Rome and taken first place in piano, organ, fugue, and composition at the Paris Conservatory. He also worked as assistant to Charles-Marie Widor and Louis Vierne, both of whom held prestigious posts in Paris. His fame was secured when he became the first person to perform the complete organ works of Bach from memory.³²

³⁰ Ibid., 323-4.

³¹ Ochse, 358.

³² Rollin Smith, "Dupré in the Twenties," *The Diapason* 62, no. 7 (June 1971): 26.

Dupré was first introduced to America and American instruments through Rodman Wanamaker, the owner of Wanamaker department stores and a music lover, who wanted to install an organ in the Philadelphia store. The instrument he acquired was the largest in the world, originally built by the Los Angeles Art Organ Company for the 1904 St. Louis Fair, and was installed in 1911.³³ Over the next few years, Wanamaker expanded the organ to a massive instrument of 232 stops, over 18,000 pipes, and a five-manual console.³⁴ When another large organ was later installed in the New York location, Wanamaker's music director, Dr. Alexander Russell, was sent to France to find an organist to inaugurate the organ with a series of twelve concerts, and follow with six at the Philadelphia store. As one of his former students, Russell first solicited the famed organist Charles-Marie Widor. Widor, however, declined, but recommended his student Dupré go instead. Without hearing him play, Russell engaged Dupré and promised a tour of 100 concerts the following year.³⁵ Consequently, in November of 1921, Dupré played his first American concert, making a spectacular debut by improvising an entire symphony on themes given to him moments before the recital. The New York *Evening Post* called it a "musical miracle." He repeated this feat two weeks later in the Philadelphia store, where the sounds of the organ inspired him to improvise on chants and hymns that would be a musical depiction of the life of Jesus. The audience was transfixed, and Dupré very moved. He described "feeling as I had never felt before"

³³ Andrew Shenton, "Marcel Dupré's *Symphonie-Passion*," *The Organ* 76 (Winter 1997): 9.

³⁴ Michael Murray, *Marcel Dupré: The Work of a Master Organist* (Boston: Northeastern Press, 1985), 74.

³⁵ Marcel Dupré, *Recollections*, Trans. and ed. Ralph Kneeream (Melville, NY: Belwin Mills, 1975), 79.

during his improvisation³⁶ In the foreword to Dupré's book of memoirs, Olivier Messiaen describes the *Symphonie-Passion*:

The staccato chords in *païón* and *epitrite* in "The World awaiting the Savior;" the light of the star, the oboe solo impregnated with Hindu modes, the marches of the shepherds and the Magi, and the exquisite prayer of the angels evoked by 'Adeste fidelis' in the "Nativity;" the suffering, horrible pulsating, and the bleak frozen image of the sorrowful Mother portrayed in the "Crucifixion;" the marvelous use of the organ reeds in the chromatic counterpoint, the constantly amazing brightness and great bursts of sound in the "Resurrection" – all this was and is magnificent, at Saint-Sulpice, at Notre-Dame, at the Trocadéro, and upon many other fine instruments...but I am certain that when played on the six-manual Wanamaker organ, and by Marcel Dupré himself, it was the grandest, the most sublime, the most powerful.³⁷

Dupré was exposed to some of the most advanced organs in the world during his time in the United States. His first concert schedule included six concerts in Philadelphia and twelve in New York, to which he added three in Canada and even one in Boston on Christmas day.³⁸ He gave concerts on organs that were far larger and more technically advanced than those in France, including Widor's organ at St. Sulpice, which at the time, was the largest in Europe.³⁹ Dupré was impressed by the American organ builders who designed instruments with thumb and toe pistons for each division, as well as general pistons to rapidly change the sound.⁴⁰ He believed that these developments made it necessary to create new idioms of music,⁴¹ and he was highly influenced by the variety of

³⁶ Craig R. Whitney, *All the Stops: The Glorious Pipe Organ and Its American Masters* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003), 44.

³⁷ Olivier Messiaen, foreword to the American Edition of *Recollections*, by Marcel Dupré, trans. and ed. Ralph Kneeream (Melville, NY: Belwin-Mills, 1975), ix.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

³⁹ Graham Steed, *The Organ Works of Marcel Dupré* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 1999), 24.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Rollin Smith, "Pipe Organs of the Rich and Famous: Marcel Dupré's Residence Organ." *The American Organist* 43, no. 5 (May 2009).

tonal effects and orchestral colors made possible by the new technology.⁴² As Dupré described in an interview:

Although my stay has largely been confined to New York and Philadelphia, I have seen a good many examples of the work of prominent American organ builders and find it on the same high plane as that of the great builders of Europe. . . . It is a well-known fact that mechanical improvements on American organs are far in advance of European. . . . I believe that American inventiveness and ingenuity will within the next few years bring about advances yet unheard of.⁴³

Dupré was also inspired by the country of America and its inhabitants. He liked the “vitality of New York and the more sedate pace of Philadelphia and Boston.”⁴⁴ He admired the lavishness of the city, and the ivory and gold of the Wanamaker organs. Organist and author Michael Murray speculates, “Certainly he was struck by the open friendliness, the lack of artifice in the people he met, their ingenuous enthusiasm born, it seemed, in a unique vivacity and force.”⁴⁵

The following year, in the fall of 1922, Dupré returned to the United States to go on a transcontinental tour to play ninety-four concerts. In Dupré’s own words, he was “well received everywhere.”⁴⁶ During this tour, he traveled by train from New York to Chicago to San Francisco and Los Angeles. He performed in Pasadena, Claremont, Tucson, Albuquerque, Colorado Springs, and Omaha - to name a few venues – before returning to the East Coast.⁴⁷ During these long train rides, Dupré composed his *Variations sur un Noël*, which would become one of his most popular works. He was inspired by the organs he encountered on his American tour and sought to create textures

⁴² Shenton, 9.

⁴³ Quoted in Murray, 83-84

⁴⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Dupré, trans. Kneeream, 82.

⁴⁷ Murray, 90.

that would demonstrate their many tonal resources. Dupré's protégé, Michael Murray asserts that this set of variations on a French carol "provides an opportunity for displaying almost all the capabilities of player and instrument in less than quarter of an hour."⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

ART AND MUSIC: MAKING CONNECTIONS

There are many important ways in which the worlds of art and music overlap, and there are countless benefits of combining visual and auditory forms of communication. From an educational perspective, the integration of art with music can help viewers attain a deeper understanding of the music they hear. Art and music also share a common expressive vocabulary, and teachers have long used visual illustrations to help students listen more effectively to music. Looking at a picture of a specific instrument while listening to a musical work that features that instrument, for example, can draw the listeners' ear towards the sound it makes. Or in a less literal way, a painting that uses mostly a dark palette of colors can intensify the somber mood of a composition.

Much research has been done in recent years on the interdisciplinary study of music and visual art. *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*, is an excellent source of writings by authors in the fields of musicology and art history. Editors Tim Shepherd and Anne Leonard, a musicologist and art historian respectively, attempt to provide a reference for the study of disciplines that are “concerned with musical and visual elements in combination.”⁴⁹ The result is a collection of essays from authors with different perspectives on the correlation of music and visual art, exploring topics that range from synaesthesia to iconography to digital games.

Although the topics vary, most authors consider visual art and music to be complementary. Painting, in particular, shares a common vocabulary with music. Words like color, tone, harmony, composition, improvisation, modulation, and scale are

⁴⁹ Shepherd and Leonard, preface to *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*, xi.

associated with both.⁵⁰ Hector Berlioz even wrote that “instrumentation in music was the exact equivalent of color in painting.”⁵¹ Colors, like music, can be in harmony if they are near one another in the color wheel, or in contrast if they are opposite, or even in discord if the natural order is reversed.⁵² Interestingly, if three harmonizing colors are next to each other in their natural order, they may be regarded as a major color chord, but if one is altered slightly, it may produce more of a minor color chord. For example, if orange red and blue are in their natural order, this is major. But if the middle red color inclines more towards blue (now purple-red), it is minor.⁵³ Lines and texture in art can be compared to melodic contour and thickness of sound. And the composition of a work of art can be likened to rhythm. “Looking at a painting [or work of art] is a dynamic process. The eye does not rest, stilled at a single point. Rather it moves about from one area to another. One of the functions of composition is to encourage the eye to make certain transitions.”⁵⁴ This is the rhythm of a work of art.

In “Painting and Music,” art historian Therese Dolan writes about artists’ perspectives on music as well as musicians’ perspectives on art.⁵⁵ An example is French Romantic artists Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), who sought to explore the relationship between music and painting. He wrote in his journal that the artist should work to achieve a higher aesthetic, that of music, and he explained the aesthetic connections between art and music:

⁵⁰ Therese Dolan, “Painting and Music,” in *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*, ed. Tim Shepherd and Anne Leonard (New York: Routledge, 2014), 127.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² L.N. Staniland, *Let’s Understand Art: A Book on Art Appreciation for All* (New York: Studio Publications, 1951), 44-6.

⁵³ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁴ John Armstong, *Looking at Pictures: An Introduction to the Appreciation of Art*, (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1996), 68.

⁵⁵ Dolan, “Painting and Music,” 127.

...to a composition which is already interesting though the choice of subject, you add a disposition of lines which augments the impression, if you add chiaroscuro which seizes the imagination, and color adapted to the characters...you have entered the realm of superior ideas, doing what the musician does when, to a single theme, he adds resources of harmony and its combinations.⁵⁶

Delacroix also described how beautiful art can be even more delightful in the presence of music. He claimed that certain music could release the emotions of a particular painting. When he saw Prud'hon's *Christ* during a funeral mass, he described how the "feeling seemed to free itself, and came to [him] on the wings of music."⁵⁷

Delacroix's art became a benchmark for others seeking the same juxtaposition of art and music.⁵⁸

Inspired by Delacroix, novelist Pierre Jules Théopile Gautier (1811-1872) also explored the union of arts, writing of paintings that could be heard as well as seen. He proclaimed that he could actually hear the emotion of the subjects or the sound effects of the actions in certain works of art. Of musicians, he believed the composer was the "consummate artist...because of his ability to evoke vision."⁵⁹

Musicians are also often inspired by art. This idea flourished in the 19th century, with the rise of the symphonic poem, where music was composed to depict a poem, story or painting. Upon viewing Raphael's painting of Saint Cecilia for the first time, Franz Liszt describes feeling overwhelmed by the beauty of the symbol of his art:

I do not know what type of mysterious magic overcame me, but this painting appeared before my intellectual and spiritual eyes as a doubly manifested, magical expression of the human form as a whole...It is a wonderful example of elegance,

⁵⁶ Eugène Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, trans. Walter Pach (New York: Crown, 1948), 312.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 359-60.

⁵⁸ Dolan, 128.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 128-9.

purity, and harmony, and at the same time...it possesses art's most admirable, perfect, and liveliest symbol to which we have dedicated our lives!⁶⁰
Liszt even claimed that studying the paintings of Raphael and Michelangelo

helped him to understand music of Beethoven and Mozart, and that as he studied, he became increasingly more aware of the relationships between works of genius.⁶¹ Liszt was especially inspired by Richard Wagner, and wrote a book about the composer's operas, describing them synaesthetically rather than musically, using visual metaphors to explain the beauty in Wagner's music.⁶²

French poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) also wrote much about the relationship between art and music in the nineteenth century. Like Liszt, he wrote about Wagner as if the composer was painting a vivid picture through his music. In fact, Baudelaire observed that it would be surprising if "sound *could not* suggest color, [and] that colors *could not* evoke the idea of melody."⁶³ His interest in music and painting relied on the idea that there is an "essential unity" in the way we experience different forms of art. "Sensory experiences overlap and interpenetrate in the true work of art: color is musical and poetic, music is poetic and painterly, poetry is painterly and musical."⁶⁴

Art can also tell us more about how people understood music's function throughout time. Musicologist Philip Weller describes the potential of mutual relationships between music and other types of media. He gives examples of how images

⁶⁰ Franz Liszt, *The Collected Writings of Franz Liszt: Essays and Letters of a Traveling Bachelor of Music*, trans. and ed. Janita R. Hall-Sawdley (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 486.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 497.

⁶² Dolan, 130.

⁶³ Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathon Mayne (Greenwich, CT: Phaidon, 1964), 116.

⁶⁴ Dolan., 131.

of music in Greek and Graeco-Roman art, musical portraiture in the Baroque, and musical subjects and motifs in eighteenth-century art can help us to understand music's role in society during those times.⁶⁵ As a result, Weller states, music's ability to function as "an attribute of some other reality or system offers myriad possibilities for associating visual and musical elements of various kinds in productive ways."⁶⁶

For the scholar, images that deal with music-making in particular can also provide clues to other aspects of interconnections between music and visual culture.⁶⁷ Pictures of music making can elicit a response from the part of the brain that is normally activated by sound, called the "inner ear."⁶⁸ Although it is hard to measure, it would likely be different based on the musical knowledge of the viewer. Images that include a performer's facial expressions, or gestures can also help the viewer more accurately interpret musical meaning or significance, in addition to hearing the sounds represented in the image.⁶⁹ To summarize, if "the mind's ear [is] an essential partner to the viewer's eye, then we come to the intriguing issue of the alignment and interaction between these two senses."⁷⁰ It is the interconnectedness of these two senses that makes a compelling argument for the juxtaposition of the visual and auditory.

To substantiate this point, art historian Simon Shaw-Miller asserts that one should look at the difference between visual art and music as a matter of degree, not of kind.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Philip Weller, "Music as an Attribute: Idea, Image, Sound," In *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*, ed. by Tim Shepherd and Anne Leonard (New York: Routledge, 2014), 112.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁶⁷ Alan Davison, "Representing Music-Making," in *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*, ed. by Tim Shepherd and Anne Leonard (New York: Routledge, 2014), 87.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷¹ Simon Shaw-Miller, *Visible Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagner to Cage*, (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 4.

He considers combining music with visual art to be a “juxtapositional hybrid,” in which “one art form is accompanied by another but where the elements can be perceived as distinct.”⁷² Shaw-Miller draws this conclusion: “In all hybrids...the combining of music and the visual arts draws attention to points of similarity, difference, and contrast.”⁷³ Therefore, it is advantageous not only to present visual art alongside music, but to explore the effect that one has on the other.

Author Leif Finnäs presents reviews of research that focus on how music is perceived in different formats. One of these is the audio-visual performance, in which visual material that is unrelated to the music is included in the presentation.⁷⁴ Several studies indicate that “some visual features accompanying music...may influence it positively;”⁷⁵ in one of these, college students listened to musical excerpts while viewing visual material in the form of paintings. The results indicated that listeners’ “ratings for pleasantness of the music increased or decreased according to whether it was paired with a painting representing the same or contrasting mood.”⁷⁶

Author Janet Barret explores the benefits of studying and relating music to other arts, particularly the visual arts, for educational benefits. She believes that the study of music is integral to the understanding of the art of Paul Klee, an artist whose works are

⁷² Ibid., 11.

⁷³ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁴ Leif Finnäs, "Presenting Music Live, Audio-Visually Or Aurally - Does It Affect Listeners' Experiences Differently?", *British Journal of Music Education* 18, no. 1 (March 2001): 55. My use of American art to accompany a recording of Dupré's *Variations sur un Noël* constitutes an example of this format identified by Finnäs.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 56.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 67.

often visual representations of musical ideas. Barret argues that this idea works equally well in the other direction, using art to understand musical compositions.⁷⁷

When creative artists draw across this inspiration from one art form to the next, and when we learn about their intentions...our understanding of the work is deepened....Once you are on the lookout for complementary bridges of inspiration between music and art, they crop up everywhere.⁷⁸
Barret contends that when we take time to study works related by context or inspiration, we develop a new appreciation for the overlap of artistic sensibilities.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Janet R Barrett, "Interdisciplinarity - Highways and Byways: Interdisciplinarity, Teacher Knowledge, and the Comprehensive Music Curriculum." *The Mountain Lake Reader* (Spring 2006).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

AMERICAN ART AND DUPRÉ'S ORGAN VARIATIONS

Scholarly and artistic discourse since the nineteenth century have made clear the interconnectedness between music and art. Numerous studies have determined that listening to music in association with visual materials that reiterate aspects of the music can provide an enhanced experience of the music, just as viewing a work of art while listening to music can enhance the viewer's appreciation. The connection between art and music is one that can broaden our understanding of both. To explore this symbiotic relationship, I propose to juxtapose American art and photographs from the 1920s and 30s, when Dupré was touring the United States, with each of his Noël variations, Op. 20.

The specific choice of visual art is two-fold. The photographs are from places that Dupré visited while touring in America. They are not necessarily scenes that he would have observed, however. The paintings and art also represent places or scenes in the United States that he would have been exposed to in his travels. In this way, the images provide contextual, historical, and cultural clues about the time and place in which the *Variations sur un Noël* were composed. They also offer insight into the composer himself. Dupré was fond of both America and Americans, so images taken from American life at the time of his composition should provide a visual platform for the listener to appreciate possible sources of inspiration.

For each variation, I have assigned a visual image that I feel enhances the mood of the music or is representative of the texture, color or some other musical aspect. Each picture will draw the listener's ear toward an element of the composition in a new way.

The Noël, literally meaning Christmas in French, began as a literary genre in the fifteenth century.⁸⁰ The text usually parodies a chanson text and strophic design, and the refrain likely contains the word Noël, also an expression of Christian joy during the Christmas season. A typical Noël also recounts a part of the Nativity story and could be sung to the tunes of chants, popular songs, and dances.⁸¹ In the 17th and 18th centuries, organists including Nicholas Gigault (1683), Nicholas Lebègue (1685), André Raison (1714), Claude Daquin (1757) and Claude Balbastre (1770) composed suites and variations based on these familiar tunes. Most often, the organ Noël followed a certain structure: after being introduced without ornamentation, the Noël underwent a series of diminutions, culminating in a majestic statement usually on full organ, including the foundations and plentiful reeds of the French Classical organ.⁸² The diminutions required registrations specific to these instruments, and they often involved alternation between duple and triple figurative patterns. They were vehicles for virtuosity, ways for organists both to flaunt their abilities as performers and to display the colors of the organ.

The Noël used in Dupré's variations is a narrative Noël, called "Noël Nouvellet," which dates back to the late 15th century. It begins with scenes from the Nativity, but also includes verses about the three kings and the presentation in the temple.⁸³ The structure of the tune is ternary and the melody is in Dorian mode. The six phrases of the theme

⁸⁰ Adrienne F. Block, *The Early French Parody Noël*, (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸² Jean-Paul Montagnier, "Daquin, Louis-Claude," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, 2007-, accessed 18 November 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07208>.

⁸³ Block, 46.

each use the same rhythmic pattern; melodically, each section stays within the confines of one of the two tetrachords in which the scale can be divided.⁸⁴

Like many of Dupré's early organ compositions, the harmonic style of the variations is rooted in the tonal music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that includes a "chromatic coloring" typical of late-romantic composers such as Liszt and Wagner.⁸⁵ Compared to organ compositions from later in Dupré's life, works from this early period have clearly defined tonalities with an emphasis on plain triads. This is evident in the *Variations sur un Noël* as the tonic chord is heard at the beginning of almost every variation.⁸⁶ Other style characteristics from this period include the non-functional use of seventh and ninth chords, and a moderately paced harmonic rhythm.⁸⁷

Like the organ noëls of his French predecessors, Dupré's theme and variation set allows the performer to display technical prowess while demonstrating the capabilities and colors of the instrument. The composer seems to draw inspiration from romantic musicians like Liszt and Chopin, as his organ variations include techniques exploited in virtuosic piano etudes. Although similar in form to French Classical noëls, Dupré's variations also seem to incorporate ideas from some important German composers. It is likely that while composing the *Variations sur un Noël*, Dupré was inspired by works like Beethoven's "Diabelli" variations or Brahms' "St. Anthony" variations.⁸⁸ In particular, Dupré's use of canons in the third, sixth, and eighth variations is comparable to Bach's

⁸⁴ John Mason Pagett, "The Music of Marcel Dupré," (SMD Diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1975), Proquest (7519293), 216.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 176.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 178.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 176.

⁸⁸ Steed, 24.

“Goldberg” variations, in which every third variation is a canon.⁸⁹ Bach’s Canonic Variations on the Christmas chorale “Vom himmel hoch da komm’ ich her,” BWV 769, might also have served as models for the incorporation of canon.

Of the ten variations, Dupré alternates between literal and free treatment of the theme. In the first variation, for example, the theme is altered slightly, but easily heard as the solo voice. The second variation, conversely, outlines the harmonic progression without presenting the theme melodically. As previously mentioned, three of the five literal variations, the third, sixth, and eighth, are in the form of a canon. The tenth begins as a free variation in the form of a fugato that incorporates the theme in longer notes, and later in the pedal of the toccata section.⁹⁰

Most of the variations are built upon a single rhythmic or melodic motive, such as the triplets in the fifth variation, the half steps in the fourth, and the grace notes in the seventh. As a whole, the work focuses on technical virtuosity. Many of the variations call for rapid tempi and difficult manual figurations. They are also clearly written for a large symphonic instrument, and they show the influence of Widor and Vierne in the “scherzo-like qualities.”⁹¹

Theme [Track 1]

The theme itself is presented as a fairly simple four-part harmonization of the Noël. The A section is divided into two four-bar phrases, with the first phrase ending on the major dominant and the second on the minor tonic. The B section is also divided into two four-bar phrases, with the second ending on the dominant. Dupré uses slightly more

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Pagett, 216

⁹¹ Ibid., 217

interesting harmonies, tonic pedal points, and chromaticism for the final eight bars, which is a recapitulation of the A section. As played, the theme should be presented on a single stop, the Gambe, a narrow-scaled pipe that creates a smooth string sound. This registration highlights the simplicity of the Noël's harmony and form.



The painting I have chosen to pair with the opening theme of Dupré's Variations, is *Near Sundown* by Midwestern regionalist painter Grant Wood that evokes a feeling of distance, isolation and, perhaps, even nostalgia.⁹² A limited use of muted colors, rounded textures, and open space helps to create this feeling of solitude. Wood's use of yellows, reds, and browns add warmth and color harmony to the painting, suiting the simplicity of Dupré's harmonization of the theme. The gentle curving lines of the hills add a slow but continuous rhythm to the painting that is also found in the music. The tree in the immediate foreground draws the viewer in at the bottom left side of the canvas. The tree line follows the curves of the hills and eventually meets the horizon near the top of the canvas:

⁹² Grant Wood, *Near Sundown* (1933), At *Spencer Museum of Art*, "An Ear for Art," accessed 10 November 2013, <http://www.spencerart.ku.edu>.

Despite the painstaking process involved, the curvilinear composition of ...*Near Sundown*...read as spontaneous responses to the general character of eastern Iowa countryside. The artist not only is moved by the land, but moves with it, gliding over smooth hills or penetrating shadowy folds of deep space. The observer is invited to join in the exhilarating visual experience as an alternative to exploring distant houses and barns.”⁹³

Dupré would have spent many hours gazing at the countryside from train windows as he traveled from one venue to the next on his extensive performing tours. Surely he saw the expansive fields and rolling hills depicted in Wood’s landscape painting and felt the isolation of the rural Midwest. It is a fitting emotion that correlates well with Dupré’s treatment of the theme.

Variation I [Track 2]

In the first variation, the Noël melody is stated boldly and plainly by the Trompette against the bright sound of the organ’s principals in the accompaniment. Dupré alters the melodic material slightly as he ends both phrases of the A section on the tonic chord and eliminates the first phrase of the B section. In the second phrase, the melody and accompaniment are reversed so that the theme is heard first in bass and then treble. This compositional technique demonstrates the versatility and brilliance of the Trompette, both in its upper and lower ranges; it easily cuts through the accompanying colors. Dupré uses the same basic harmonic progression, but the faster tempo and addition of chromatic passing tones in the eighth-note accompaniment creates tension and forward momentum.

⁹³ James M. Dennis, *Grant Wood: A Study in American Art and Culture*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), 222.



An historical photograph of Hollywood Boulevard from June of 1930 – showing the bright lights and glamor of Hollywood– reflects the first variation. It comes from the prestigious photojournalism archive of Dr. Otto Bettmann, and the original caption indicates that this particular evening, in the “cinema capitol of the world, Hollywood Boulevard appears emblazoned in electric lights during the premier of a new screen vehicle.”⁹⁴ The cars in the foreground draw attention to the boulevard, which then leads to the focal point of the photo, the beams of light shooting out from behind distant buildings. The interchange of light and dark, shadows and reflections, represents the exchange of theme and accompaniment between manuals. Much like the brilliance of the Trompette, beams of light draw the viewer’s attention immediately to the center of the photograph, yet without obscuring the details of the surrounding urban landscape. There is also a certain boldness and strength in the sound of the Trompette that is demonstrated

⁹⁴ Collection: Bettmann, “Hollywood Boulevard at Night” at *Corbis Images*, Accessed 9 November 2014, <http://www.corbisimages.com/stock-photo/rights-managed/U233876P-A/hollywood-boulevard-at-night?popup=1>.

by the lines and angles of the scene. The tone of the first variation is represented by the grandeur of Hollywood in the photograph.

Variation II [Track 3]

The second variation is much quicker and in triple meter. The harmonic motion in the manuals is so fast that it obscures any sense of the thematic material, save for having the same general melodic contour. Often the first treble pitch in the measure (or the last) is the same as the corresponding measure of the original theme, which also helps the listener to identify the Noël (Example 1).

The image displays a musical score for Variation II, consisting of two systems of music. The first system shows the original theme in 2/4 time, with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second system shows the second variation in 3/8 time, with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The variation is characterized by a faster tempo and a more complex harmonic structure, with a prominent pedal line in the bass clef. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

(Example 1, Theme mm. 1-7 and Var. 2 mm. 1-5)

The slower moving pedal line establishes harmonic clarity. Played on the flutes of the organ, the variation has a softness both in texture and dynamic, with a warm, round color.

Despite its tempo, this variation can easily be described as delicate and gentle, like “scudding clouds.”⁹⁵



This association with gently rolling clouds suggests the painting “Desert Clouds” by Maynard Dixon.⁹⁶ The artist’s use of light and the subtle blend of colors and lines in the clouds over the American Southwest is a perfect visual representation of Dupré’s use of harmony and color in this variation. Although Dixon rejected certain aspects of modernism, he experimented with post-Impressionism and was celebrated for his paintings in the “cubist realism” style. His limited use of colors and command of light and shadows over the low horizons are indicative of his modernist tendencies.⁹⁷

In “Desert Clouds,” the blues and whites are cool colors; the addition of pinks and reds add warmth and contrast. Dixon paints soft blurred lines that outline the shape of the clouds, much as Dupré artfully outlines the contour of the melodic material. There is also

⁹⁵ Roger Rayner, Notes for *Marcel Dupré: Works for Organ Vol. 8*, Stefan Engels, Organ, Naxos CD 8.553920, 1999.

⁹⁶ Maynard Dixon, *Desert Clouds (1922)*, at “Bonhams,” accessed 18 November 2014, <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/13221/lot/63/>.

⁹⁷ David Clemmer, *Serenading the Light: Painters of the Desert Southwest*, (Santa Fe: Schenck Southwest Publishing, 2006), 123.

the border of land near the bottom and a patch of darker blue sky at the top that frame the painting, much like the pedal line supports and grounds the harmonic movement. It is likely that Dupré composed a majority of the *Variations sur un Noël* while in the American Southwest, so the painting reflects the type of landscape he would have seen.⁹⁸

Variation III [Track 4]

The third variation is in the form of a canon at the octave. It is the slowest tempo marking of all of the variations. The theme is first heard in the treble, followed in the pedal on organ foundation sounds. Once again Dupré changes the theme slightly to end both phrases of the A section on the tonic chord. There is also a poignant moment in m. 18 (Example 2, last measure), when he alters the pedal note by lowering the B natural by a half step. It is an unexpected harmonic change that perhaps foreshadows the eighth variation, in which a canon at the second creates a tritone from E to Bb. (See Example 5)



(Example 2, Var. 3 mm. 13-18)

⁹⁸Pagett, 215.

The compass for this variation is only a little more than two octaves, using only 8' stops for both manuals and pedal. This causes considerable dissonance between the theme and the accompaniment, often a clash of A and Bb, as shown in example 3.



(Example 3, Var. 3 mm. 1-5)

Using the Voix Céleste for the accompaniment creates a somewhat ethereal mood. This slow variation is pensive and almost gloomy, like this painting by American artist Emile Branchard called *Snow Scene*.⁹⁹



Although it is a painting, Branchard uses only neutral colors – shades of black, white, and gray – to color the bleakness of winter. The high-keyed palette the artist uses

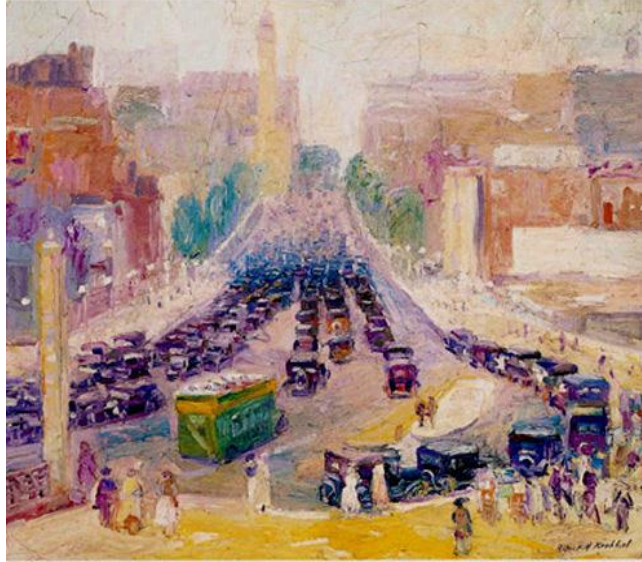
⁹⁹ Emile Branchard, *Snow Scene* (ca. 1920s-30s), At *Brooklyn Museum*, "Collections: American Art," accessed 11 November 2013, <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection>.

is comparable to the palette of colors in the variation. Although beautiful, the foundations against the strings are neutral sounds. And like the compass of the music, the subject of the scene, a home surrounded by bare trees and snowy mountains takes up only a small portion of the canvas. The majority of the painting including the snow in the foreground and empty sky in the distance is void of activity, creating a sense of stillness. The only movement occurs as the thin lines of a wooden fence draw one's attention to the house. Dupré certainly encountered the bitter cold of an East Coast winter on many occasions. Branchard's isolated and lonely landscape painting depicts the character of the first slow variation in the set.

Variation IV [Track 5]

The spirited fourth variation features a tricky staccato accompaniment of fourth and fifths moving in half-steps while the Noël theme appears in the pedal.¹⁰⁰ Dupré calls for a registration of foundations and mixtures (plentiful on American organs) that are coupled to the pedal. This creates a very vibrant sound, but one that can overshadow the theme. It is interesting to note that this is one of only two instances that the melodic material is presented completely unaltered and in its entirety in the variations.

¹⁰⁰ Steed, 25.



The oil painting *Traffic at the Link Bridge - Michigan Avenue* by Albert Krehbiel is a rendering of the bustling city of Chicago.¹⁰¹ Krehbiel was educated at the Chicago Art Institute and later in Modernist Paris. Although he painted in a variety of styles, *Traffic at the Link Bridge - Michigan Avenue* is a masterful contribution to American Impressionism.¹⁰² The variety of bright colors and textures depicts the rapid pace and movement of the city. Krehbiel skillfully uses differences in texture and color to create the illusion of distance as well as focus. The images in the foreground are brighter, sharper, and the brush strokes are more tightly controlled to create more concrete images. The block of warm yellow at the bottom border of the canvas clashes with the purples and blues of the cars and people. The viewer's eyes are drawn first to the right, then upward, following the road to the horizon. The colors become more muted and borders more imprecise the further up and out one looks. The brush strokes and distorted lines of

¹⁰¹ Albert H Krehbiel, *Traffic at the Link Bridge – Michigan Avenue* (ca. 1922), At *Albert Henry Krehbiel: American Painter and Muralist*, “Chicago Cityscapes Exhibit,” Last modified November 10, 2007, <http://www.krehbielart.com>.

¹⁰² Robert Guinan, *Krehbiel: Life and Works of An American Artist*, (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991), 2-3.

the city also become more apparent, giving the illusion of haziness. This painting reflects the lively movement, bright and colorful registrations, and sharp articulation of the fourth variation. The non-functional harmonies and chromaticism in the manual accompaniment are represented by the distortion in texture and contrast of colors near the horizon of the painting. The theme, presented in the pedal, is represented by the sharper, more defined images in the foreground. The fast tempo and contrary motion between the theme and accompaniment is present in the rhythm of the painting, where lines and colors move quickly across the canvas.

Variation V [Track 6]

The fifth variation is another free variation, built around the triplet motive. The harmonic progression and melodic content is somewhat preserved in the pedal and bass clef accompaniment, but the free flute solo of the treble line is the aural focus for the listener. A brilliant *vivace*, it creates a playful (though deceptively difficult) accompaniment. While the harmony is clear in the bass line and pedal, the treble flute spins and swirls in sets of sixteenth-note triplets that move chromatically up and down the compass of the keyboard, demonstrating how the sound of the harmonic flute blooms as it reaches the upper register and dissipates at the low end.



A photograph, from the archive of the New York Daily News, depicting the hustle and bustle of the stock exchange floor in New York City in the 1920s speaks to the chaotic disposition of the fifth variation.¹⁰³ It is the rhythm of the photograph that best captures the essence of this variation. The photographer used a slower shutter speed to capture the motion of stockbrokers on the floor. The photo shows stark contrast between the grounded objects and people that are in perfect focus and the streaks of light and movement. The constant motion in the photograph, in which some of the figures are blurred and indistinct, illustrates the dizzying pace of the treble flute. It captures the music of the fifth variation, its distorted figures and shadows suggesting the spirited and virtuosic triplet motive of the flute, with its clearly defined shapes reflecting the foundations and pedal.

¹⁰³ NY Daily News Archive, "New York Stock Exchange 1920s," At *NY Daily News*, "The Great Gatsby Era: New York City in the Roaring Twenties," accessed 10 November 2013, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york>.

Variation VI [Track 7]

A second canon appears in the sixth variation, where Dupré demonstrates his masterful use of counterpoint. The theme is presented as an expressive three-part canon utilizing some of the vibrant colors of the organ including the Clarinet, Violoncelle, and Bassoon. In the treble, the Noël melody is heard for the second time in its entirety and melodically unaltered. The second and third entrances of the canon occur at the fourth and fifth intervals and enter only one beat apart. Neither of the two successive canons use the exact intervals of the Noël, but follow the same pattern to the end of the variation.



Edward Hopper, one of the most important Realist painters of the twentieth century, left a painting that reflects aspects of Dupré's sixth variation. His painting *Early Sunday Morning* shows a city block, stripped to its bare essentials.¹⁰⁴ The warmth of the red and yellows of the second story of the buildings is set apart by the cooler greens and blues that frame it. There is very little depth in the composition. Hopper's use of straight

¹⁰⁴ Edward Hopper, *Early Sunday Morning* (1930), At *Whitney Museum of American Art*, "Edward Hopper," accessed 10 November 2013, <http://whitney.org/Collection>.

lines and large blocks of bright colors represent the straightforward nature of the canon, which has only three voices and uses three distinctive sounds. Both the painting and the music are straightforward and unpretentious while still appealing to the viewer/listener. Hopper was associated with both the American Scene and Regionalist movements of the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰⁵ Many of his paintings evoke feelings of isolation and sadness, the loneliness of cities and unrequited relationships.¹⁰⁶ Likewise, the three voices of Dupré's canon move independently on distinctive sounds that do not blend, a type of musical isolation.

Variation VII [Track 8]

The seventh variation is especially lively and joyous. The indicated registration of 16' and 4' flutes accentuates the charming spirit of this variation, giving it both depth and a sparkling disposition. Dupré's *vivace* tempo marking indicates that the treble line should move quickly. *Acciaccaturas* decorate every beat and the accompaniment outlines the harmonies, shown in example 4.



(Example 4, Var. 7 mm. 1-4)

As the variation moves into the second phrase of the A section, passing tones are added to fill in harmonies and create even more motion. In the B section, the pedal line takes

¹⁰⁵ Wieland Schmied, *Edward Hopper: Portraits of America*, (New York: Prestel, 1995), 7.

¹⁰⁶ Craven, 435.

over the eighth notes from the left hand and is in constant contrary motion with the treble line. For the performer, this variation is technically treacherous yet enjoyable to play.¹⁰⁷ In the final ten measures, both manuals and pedal race to the end in a series of eighth notes that are filled with non-functional extended harmonies, chromatic passing tones, contrary motion, and giant pedal intervals. It is an exhilarating finish.



A particularly artistic photo of a dance derby illustrates the charming nature of this variation exceptionally well. In an article from *The Pittsburgh Press* in April of 1929, a staff writer describes the upcoming dance derby that will take place in Madison Square Garden: [The] second annual polka plod is going to be a merger of the best features of two great sports – flagpole sitting and marathon dancing.¹⁰⁸ The article continues to describe how Alvin “Shipwreck” Kelly will not have to participate in the dancing, but merely “stand – at his lordly height of 60 feet – and muse upon the odd manifestations of

¹⁰⁷ Steed, 25

¹⁰⁸ Sam Love. “Flag Pole Sitting to Vie With Dancing in 1929 Derby,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 30, 1929, <http://news.google.com/newspapers>.

human nature in distress shuffling along below him.”¹⁰⁹ The photo of this phenomenon, from the Pacific and Atlantic photo archive, portrays the joyful character of the Dupré’s seventh Noël variation. The dancers are dispersed throughout the photo, leaving a great deal of unoccupied space in the frame; this corresponds to the staccato articulations and sprinkling of *acciaccaturas* and grace notes in the music. The lack of an 8’ foundation in the registration also contributes to the sense of space and openness. The flagpole sitter balancing on a 54-foot pole symbolizes the technical danger for the performer.¹¹⁰ The angle of the photo also creates a number of interesting perpendicular lines. The flagpole runs vertically and the white lines on the dance floor intersect horizontally, a visual depiction of the constant contrary motion in the music.

Variation VIII [Track 9]

Perhaps the most ominous and haunting of the variations is the eighth. Composed as a canon at the second, the theme is presented in the bass and treble by the Voix humaine reed and accompanied by quintuplets on *Viole célestes*. The introspective nature of this variation is heightened, since a canon at the second results in the opening interval of tritone instead of perfect fifth. (Example 5) This tritone is constantly reinforced in the accompaniment, as the groups of quintuplets also contain this interval.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Pacific & Atlantic/New York Daily News Archive, “Dancer Derby at Madison Square Garden 1929,” At *NY Daily News*, “The Great Gatsby Era: New York City in the Roaring Twenties,” accessed 10 November 2013, <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york>.



(Example 5, Var. 8 mm. 1-2)



Joseph Pennell's aquatint etching, "Towers at Night," reflects the unsettling nature of this slow moving variation.¹¹¹ Aquatint uses resin, copper plates, and acid, to produce a print in white dots that stand out among varying degrees of darkness formed by unattacked copper.¹¹² The result is a low-keyed image that merely hints at the shape of its subject. In Pennell's etching from 1922, the distant skyline of New York is distorted and

¹¹¹ Joseph Pennell, *Towers at Night* (1922), At *Craig F. Starr Gallery*, "The Photographic Vision: New York Vistas" accessed 7 November 2013, www.starr-art.com.

¹¹² Staniland, 26.

clouded by smoke. The neutral colors of the etching capture the melancholy mood of this variation. The eeriness of the sound of the Voix humaine reed with the tremulant is heightened by the image of a dark and smoke-filled New York skyline.

Variation IX [Track 10]

The ninth variation has been described by the virtuoso performer Dame Gilliam Weir as a demented Viennese waltz.¹¹³ It is easily the most colorful variation, and the one in which the theme is most obscured.¹¹⁴ The treble line begins with legato sixteenth-note running chromatic minor thirds on the organ's Clarinette sound. The bass clef accompaniment in this opening section adds an additional sense of instability, as it is often a repetition of diminished and half-diminished chords. The pedal, once again, forms the harmonic foundation, and helps the listener to identify the main phrases and thematic material along with the occasional tonic or dominant chord in the bass clef to punctuate the end of a section.

For the performer, it is a flashy and even dizzying display of technical prowess, yet should sound graceful and effortless. The dance-like rhythm of the waltz is present throughout and gives it a cheerful and animated disposition. I have chosen *Lower Manhattan (Composing Derived from Top of Woolworth)* by John Marin to represent this variation.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Rayner, Notes.

¹¹⁴ Steed, 26.

¹¹⁵ Museum of Modern Art, "Lower Manhattan (Composing Derived from Top of Woolworth)" in *John Marin (American, 1870-1953)* accessed 5 October 2014, <http://www.moma.org/collection>.



John Marin was an American artist that studied in Europe, mostly Paris, from 1905-1911. His work suggests a familiarity with Futurism and Cubism, and he was highly influenced by Robert Delaunay. In Delaunay’s art, structures are disassembled and then reassembled according to the “artist’s sense of dynamic rhythms, lines, and planes of color.”¹¹⁶ Marin’s watercolor renderings of New York capture the energy of the city and its people, but the “color, patterns, and rhythms also possess a life of their own, independent of the scene that inspired them.”¹¹⁷ The ninth variation is certainly the most deconstructed of all variations. Like the watercolor, it is an abstract rendering of its subject. Its vitality is depicted in the color and lively rhythm of the lines in Marin’s depiction of Manhattan. “It seems very abstract. But then, if you start to read the image really closely, you can start to see passages that look like streets kind of going off into the distance, or windowed buildings....Part of this abstraction is just a sense of great, fast

¹¹⁶ Craven, 455.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

activity.”¹¹⁸ Marin’s own description of the work is also a perfect caption for the ninth variation: I see great forces at work; great movements....While these powers are at work pushing, pulling, sideways, downwards, upwards, I can hear the sound of their strife and there is great music being played.¹¹⁹

Variation X [Track 11]

The last variation, in which Dupré presents the theme as a *fugato*, provides a thrilling finale. As the variation progresses, the theme appears in each voice before all three come together, each at a different rhythmic level – eighth-notes, quarter-notes, and half-notes, shown in example 6.

(Example 6, Var. 10 mm.25-28)

The composer calls for a continuous crescendo of sound that leads into a dramatic and exhilarating toccata. For the listener, it is a dazzling display of counterpoint, and yet still aurally accessible. Dupré combines intense musical complexity with exciting drama.

¹¹⁸ Museum of Modern Art, Esther Alder, on “Lower Manhattan (Composing Derived from Top of Woolworth)” in *John Marin (American, 1870-1953)*, accessed 5 October 2014, <http://www.moma.org/collection>.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

“The last page is like a carillon in the hands of a master bellringer... These variations never fail to generate intense audience enthusiasm.”¹²⁰



The collage of sound in Dupré’s final Noël variation finds a visual counterpart in the mural *America Today*, by Regionalist painter Thomas Hart Benton.¹²¹ Although he was influenced by Cubism and Synchronism in Paris, Benton was happiest painting scenes from his Midwestern home and the daily lives of Americans.¹²² His mural combines images that illustrate the accomplishments of the working people of the 1920s. In this artwork, Benton takes “an approach to form, color, style, composition, and subject matter that is totally different from the quasiclassical Beaux-Arts murals of the preceding generation.”¹²³ It is dramatic, vividly colored and lively, depicting Americans of all kinds.

¹²⁰ Steed, 27.

¹²¹ Thomas Hart Benton, *America Today* (1930-31), At *Artfixdaily: Curated Art World News and Exclusives*, “AXA Equitable Donates Thomas Hart Benton’s Epic 1920s Mural *America Today* to Metropolitan Museum,” accessed 10 November 2013, <http://www.artfixdaily.com>.

¹²² Craven, 439

¹²³ *Ibid.*

Much like the first time one hears the complexity of the rhythms in the final variation, it is hard to absorb everything that is happening in the mural at first sight. Both the artwork and the music have many layers, and the eyes and ears are pulled in many directions. Framing lines within the mural serve to divide the action into manageable pictures, just as the final variation is divided into two large sections, the fugato and toccata. Art and music are complicated, intense, and almost overwhelming, yet they still excite and engage the viewer/listener.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

As interpretive artists, musicians transform notes on a page into audible works of art. Although the composer has already chosen the canvas and the subject, the performer adds additional elements of personal interpretation through the selection of tempo, color, and articulation. Thus, the work of any interpreter involves personal expression, communicating ideas that are subjective and open to interpretation.

My specific artistic choices for each of Dupré's Noël Variations are an extension of my musical interpretation of the composition. Some may be surprised that none of the art works depicts the Nativity or some aspect of the Christmas story upon which the original Noël text is based. My intention was to find visual correlations to the textures, techniques and colors found in the music, thereby elucidating musical features. I did not intend to represent every style of American art from the 1920s, nor am I suggesting that Dupré was directly inspired by American art in conceiving the work. Rather, I found artistic expressions that were contemporary to Dupré's long trips across the US and that resonated with aspects of his Noël Variations.

There are numerous ways to present art and music together, just as there are many ways to interpret a specific painting or piece of music. By listening to this work in conjunction with art from the era and place in which it was composed, one gains new insights and perhaps a broader understanding of the context in which it was composed. Art and photography can bring out the mood and character of particular musical works or enhance some stylistic element that they have in common. The process of pairing art and music is an excellent tool for achieving a deeper and more meaningful understanding of

both forms of art. I hope that my artistic selections will assist the listener in appreciating the organ music that Dupré composed while travelling across our vast country.

In his memoir entitled *Recollections*, Dupré writes of his travels in America:

I would have liked to have had the time to stop here and there, to see, as they say, a little of America. It was not until the sixth tour that I was able, finally, to admire Niagara Falls...And on the next to the last tour, a break in my schedule, thanks to the Christmas holidays, permitted a visit to the Grand Canyon. What an extraordinary sight, especially at sunrise!¹²⁴

It is clear that Dupré loved his time in America and was influenced not only by the extraordinary instruments, but by the sights and people he encountered. Despite his hectic schedule, he composed his *Variations sur un Noël* on his first tour, primarily while aboard trains from one city to the next. He would have seen the American countryside, the desert of the Southwest, the plains of the Midwest, rural towns and large cities; he would have interacted with different types of people, united as Americans. The diversity he experienced is reflected in the variety of music that he conceived around a traditional Noël melody.

Viewing aspects of the America through which Dupré travelled during the winter of 1922 helps us to hear the music of his *Variations sur un Noël* in a new light. The “American inventiveness and ingenuity” that he praised so highly inspired his innate creativity, infusing a centuries-old genre with innovation and flair.

¹²⁴ Dupré, trans. Kneeream, 87.

REFERENCES

- Armstrong John. *Looking at Pictures: An Introduction to the Appreciation of Art*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1996.
- Barrett, Janet R. "Interdisciplinarity - Highways and Byways: Interdisciplinarity, Teacher Knowledge, and the Comprehensive Music Curriculum." *The Mountain Lake Reader* (Spring 2006): 24-37, 39.
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1579474?accountid=4485>.
- Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Translated and edited by Jonathon Mayne. Greenwich, CT: Phaidon, 1964.
- Benton, Thomas Hart. *America Today* (1930-31). At *Artfixdaily: Curated Art World News And Exclusives*, "AXA Equitable Donates Thomas Hart Benton's Epic 1920s Mural *America Today* to Metropolitan Museum." Accessed 10 November 2013. <http://www.artfixdaily.com>.
- Bettmann Collection. "Hollywood Boulevard at Night." at *Corbis Images*. Accessed 9 November 2014. <http://www.corbisimages.com/stock-photo/rights-managed/U233876P-A>.
- Branchard, Emile. *Snow Scene* (ca. 1920s-30s). At *Brooklyn Museum*, "Collections: American Art." Accessed 11 November 2013.
<http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection>.
- Block, Adrienne Fried. *The Early French Parody Noël*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983.
- Craven, Wayne. *American Art: History and Culture*. New York: Brown and Benchmark, 1994.
- Clemmer, David. *Serenading the Light: Painters of the Desert Southwest*. Santa Fe: Schenck Southwest Publishing, 2006.
- Delacroix, Eugène. *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*. Translated by Walter Pach. New York: Crown Publishers, 1948.
- Dennis, James M., *Grant Wood: A Study in American Art and Culture*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1986.
- Dixon, Maynard. *Desert Clouds* (1922). At "Bohnams." Accessed 18 November 2014.
<https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/13221/lot/63/>.

- Drowne, Kathleen and Huber, Patrick. *The 1920s: American Popular Culture Through History*. London: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Dumenil Lynn. *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.
- Dupré, Marcel. *Recollections*. Translated by Ralph Kneeream. Melville, NY: Belwin Mills, 1975.
- Finnäs, Leif. "Presenting Music Live, Audio-Visually Or Aurally - Does It Affect Listeners' Experiences Differently?" *British Journal of Music Education* 18, no. 1 (March 2001): 55-78.
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1325808?accountid=4485>.
- Guinan Robert. *Krehbiel: Life and Works of An American Artist*. Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991.
- Hopper, Edward. *Early Sunday Morning* (1930). At *Whitney Museum of American Art*, "Edward Hopper." Accessed 10 November 2013. <http://whitney.org/Collection>
- Krehbiel, Albert H. *Traffic at the Link Bridge – Michigan Avenue* (ca. 1922). At *Albert Henry Krehbiel: American Painter and Muralist*, "Chicago Cityscapes Exhibit." Last modified 10 November 2007. <http://www.krehbielart.com>.
- Liszt, Franz. *The Collected Writings of Franz Liszt: Essays and Letters of a Traveling Bachelor of Music*. Translated and edited by Janita R. Hall-Swadley. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012.
- Messiaen, Olivier. Foreword to the American Edition of *Recollections*, by Marcel Dupré, viii-x. Translated and edited by Ralph Kneeream. Melville, NY: Belwin Mills, 1975.
- Montagnier, Jean-Paul. "Daquin, Louis-Claude." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, 2007-. Accessed 18 November 2014.
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07208>.
- Murray, Michael. *Marcel Dupré: The Work of a Master Organist*. Boston: Northeastern Press, 1985.
- Museum of Modern Art. "Lower Manhattan (Composing Derived from Top of Woolworth)." In *John Marin (American, 1870-1953)*. Accessed 5 October 2014.
<http://www.moma.org/collection>.
- Ochse, Orpha. *The History of the Organ in the United States*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975.

- Pacific & Atlantic/New York Daily News Archive. "Dancer Derby at Madison Square Garden 1929." At *NY Daily News*, "The Great Gatsby Era: New York City in the Roaring Twenties." Accessed 10 November 2013. <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york>.
- NY Daily News Archive. "New York Stock Exchange 1920s." At *NY Daily News*, "The Great Gatsby Era: New York City in the Roaring Twenties." Accessed 10 November 2013. <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york>.
- Pagett, John Mason. "The Music of Marcel Dupré." S.M.D diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1975. Proquest (7519293).
- Pennell, Joseph. *Towers at Night* (1922). At *Craig F. Starr Gallery*, "The Photographic Vision: New York Vistas." Accessed 7 November 2013. www.starr-art.com.
- Rayner, Roger. Notes for *Marcel Dupré: Works for Organ Vol. 8*. Stefan Engels, Organ. Naxos CD 8.553920, 1999.
- Schmied, Wieland. *Edward Hopper: Portraits of America*. New York: Prestel, 1995.
- Shaw-Miller, Simon. *Visible Deeds of Music: Art and Music from Wagener to Cage*. London: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Shenton, Andrew. "Marcel Dupré's 'Symphonie-Passion'." *The Organ* 76, (Winter 1997): 9-14. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1184280?accountid=4485>.
- Steed, Graham. *The Organ Works of Marcel Dupré*. Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 1999.
- Smith, Rollin. "Pipe Organs of the Rich and Famous: Marcel Dupré's Residence Organ." *The American Organist* 43, no. 5 (May 2009): 56-57. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1288484?accountid=4485>.
- Smith, Rollin. "Dupré in the Twenties." *The Diapason* 62, no. 7 (June 1971): 26-27.
- Staniland, L.N. *Let's Understand Art: A Book on Art Appreciation for All*. New York: Studio Publications, 1951.
- Whitney, Craig R. *All the Stops: The Glorious Pipe Organ and Its American Masters*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2003.
- Wood, Grant. *Near Sundown* (1933). At *Spencer Museum of Art*, "An Ear for Art." Accessed 10 November 2013. <http://www.spencerart.ku.edu>.

APPENDIX A

TABLE 1: VARIATION AND ARTWORK DESCRIPTIONS

Variation Tempo/Meter/Registration/Theme	Descriptive Information	Image Title
Theme <i>Moderato</i> , 2/4, Gambe, theme in soprano	Smooth, round, simple, expressive	Grant Wood <i>Near Sundown</i> (1933) Painting, Oil on Canvas
1st Variation <i>Larghetto</i> , 4/4, Trompette, 8' & 4' Foundations, theme in Trompette	Bold, stately, grand, dignified	"Hollywood Boulevard Los Angeles" 1920s Photograph
2nd Variation <i>Poco animato</i> , 6/8, Flûtes, theme hidden/harmonic	Delicate, gentle, soft, mellow, flowing	Maynard Dixon <i>Desert Clouds</i> (1922) Painting
3rd Variation "Canon à l'octave" <i>Cantabile</i> , 2/4, 8' Foundation & Voix céleste, theme in treble first, followed in the pedal	Introspective, pensive, brooding, cold	Emile Branchard <i>Snow Scene</i> (ca. 1920s-30s) Painting, Oil on Canvas
4th Variation <i>Vif</i> , 2/4, Mixtures, pedal 16' Subass and 8' Bourdon, theme in pedal	Spirited, frantic, bright, colorful, busy, vibrant	Albert H Krehbiel <i>Traffic at the Link Bridge – Michigan Avenue</i> (ca. 1922) Painting, Oil on Canvas
5th Variation <i>Vivace</i> , 6/8. Flûte, 8' and 4' Foundations, harmonic variation (no theme)	Playful, tricky, delicate, swirling, spinning	"New York Stock Exchange" (1920s) Photograph
6th Variation "Canon à la quarte et à la quinte" <i>Plus modéré</i> , Clarinette, Violoncelle, Bassoon, theme in all 3 voices	Straightforward, subtle, sophisticated, reminiscent	Edward Hopper <i>Early Sunday Morning</i> (1930) Painting, Oil on Canvas
7th Variation <i>Vivace</i> , 2/4, 16' Bourdon, 4' Flûte, theme hidden/harmonic	Lively, energetic, bouncy, animated, fun	"Dancer Derby at Madison Square Garden" (1929) Photograph

<p>8th Variation “Canon à la seconde” <i>Cantabile</i>, 4/4, Voix humaine & Violes célestes, theme in pedal and treble</p>	<p>Haunting, muddled, pensive, cloudy, dark</p>	<p>Joseph Pennell <i>Towers at Night</i> (1922) aquatint</p>
<p>9th Variation <i>Animé</i>, 3/8, Clarinette, Gross Flûte, harmonic variation</p>	<p>Brilliant, lighthearted, flashy, jovial, bubbly, cheerful</p>	<p>John Marin <i>Lower Manhattan (Composing Derived from Top of Woolworth)</i> (1922) Gouache and charcoal with paper cut-out attached with thread on paper</p>
<p>10th Variation “Fugato” <i>Non Troppo vivace & Presto</i>, Full organ, theme in all voices at different levels</p>	<p>Furious, vivid, dramatic, intense, stunning, complicated, imposing</p>	<p>Thomas Hart Benton <i>America Today</i> (1930-31) Mural</p>