

Louis Victor Jules Vierende was born on 8 October 1870 as the son of a journalist at the *Figaro*. Born blind, he underwent a successful operation aged seven, but lost his sight again 38 years later. He began his musical training (violin/organ) at the Valentin Haüy Institution for the blind, was an organ pupil of César Franck at the Paris Conservatoire, later becoming a substitute at Saint Sulpice, where Charles-Marie Widor taught. Vierende won First Prize in the 1894 competition. After a further contest on 21 May 1900, he was appointed organist at Notre-Dame. This widely educated man was to have a lasting influence on the intellectual and cultural environment of his sphere of activity. A sought-after teacher and internationally famous virtuoso, he trained important organists in his organ class. In 1911 Vincent d'Indy asked him to conduct a masterclass at the Paris Schola Cantorum. Except for a period in Switzerland from 1916 to 1920, Vierende worked at Notre-Dame for 37 years, until his death. He died in Paris on 2 June 1937.

While Vierende's output reveals the stylistic influence of his teachers C. Franck, Ch. Widor and more particularly Gabriel Fauré, he contributed brilliant, effective and harmonically adventurous works to French organ literature. He wrote six grandiose organ symphonies, 24 pieces in "free style", masses for mixed chorus and organ, a Requiem and a tone poem for violin and orchestra. Many of his large-scale works are still unpublished. Apart from songs and charmingly evocative piano music, his chamber music, often subtly chromatic, is admirable. He left an excellent, harmonically very varied string quartet, a piano quintet, one sonata for violin and piano and one for cello and piano. Our two pieces for viola and piano belong to the light classical genre of "Songs without words". They appeared undated in 1895, dedicated to the violist Victor Balbreck, who had played the first performance with the composer on 5 April 1895 in Paris, and entitled "DEUX PIÈCES / POUR / ALTO / avec Accompagnement de PIANO / I. - LE SOIR / II. - LEGENDE / PAR / LOUIS VIERNE / *Les Mêmes pour Violoncelle avec Accompt. de Piano* / Paris, ALPHONSE LEDUC, Editeur, 3, Rue de Grammont."

Das kompositorische Werk Viendes ist stilistisch von seinen Lehrern C. Franck, Ch. Widor und im besonderen von Gabriel Fauré beeinflusst, bereicherte aber auch mit brillanten, effektvollen und bemerkenswert harmonisch kühnen Werken die französische Orgelliteratur. Er schrieb sechs grandiose Orgelsinfonien, 24 Stücke im „freien Stil“, Messen für gemischten Chor und Orgel, ein Requiem sowie ein Tongedicht für Violine und Orchester. Viele seiner großangelegten Kompositionen blieben bis heute unveröffentlicht. Neben Liedern und reizvoller mit programmatischen Klangbildern versehener Klaviermusik muß seine Kammermusik gelobt werden, die häufig mit verfeinerter Chromatik angereichert ist. Er hinterließ ein ausgezeichnetes, harmonisch stark differenziertes Streichquartett, ein Klavierquintett und je eine Sonate für Violine bzw. Violoncello und Klavier.

Zu der Gruppe der liebevoll im Stil von „Liedern ohne Worte“ nachempfundenen Salonstücke gehören unsere zwei Stücke für Viola und Klavier. Sie erschienen undatiert im Jahre 1895 und sind dem Bratschisten Victor Balbreck, der am 5. April 1895 die Pariser Uraufführung mit dem Komponisten spielte, gewidmet mit dem Titel „DEUX PIÈCES / POUR / ALTO / avec Accompagnement de PIANO / I. - LE SOIR / II. - LEGENDE / PAR / LOUIS VIERNE / *Les Mêmes pour Violoncelle avec Accompt. de Piano* / Paris, ALPHONSE LEDUC, Editeur, 3, Rue de Grammont.“

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