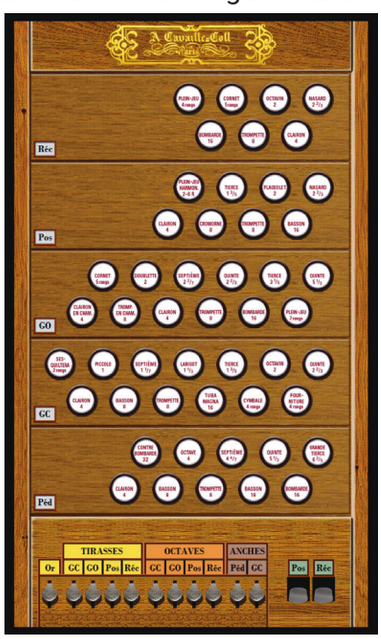
St. Etienne

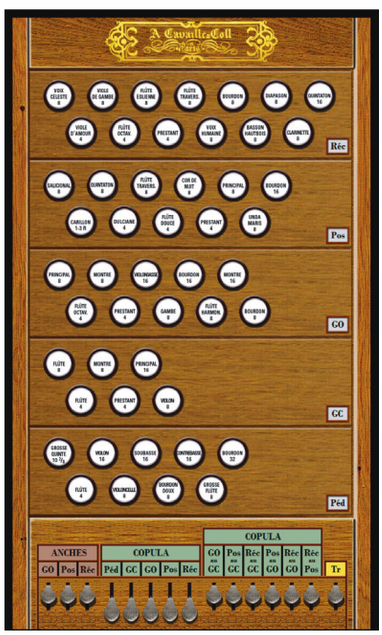
Caen, France

This Cavaillé-Coll French Romantic organ resides at the St. Etienne abbey in Caen, France.

Since its foundation by William the Conqueror in 1066 (who is also buried in the church) the “Abbaye aux Hommes” was the center of education and musical life for the whole region. This majestic organ housed behind a monumental mid-eighteenth century oak case, was built by Cavaillé-Coll between 1882 and 1885. Alexander Gilmant was organist titular of the Abby and consulted on the tonal design of the organ. Guilmant inaugurated the organ in ceremony on March 3rd, 1885 in the presence of Cavaillé-Coll.

Despite unanimous national recognition given to the new instrument, comment sprung up from the locals that the new organ sound was weak and indistinctive. Eventually, Cavaillé-Coll heard the comments and was astonished. He sent out a renowned organ expert, Philbert, to find out more. He discovered that the old, sharply intonated french baroque organ with numerous mutation voices was replaced with a romantic, symphonic instrument to which the parishioners were simply not accustomed. The controversy quieted over time and was forgotten, and the instrument is considered a masterpiece.





Since 1975 the organ is listed as a national cultural heritage. This is the instrument the famous French organist, Marie Claire Alain, chose to record the complete works of César Franck.

Caen was heavily damaged during WWII, but by a miracle, the abbey was spared significant damage. This is one of the many beautiful churches Meta Organworks visited during a research trip to France in June, 2017.

Positif

Bourdon	16
Montre	8
Saliconal	8
Unda Maris	8
Cor de nuit	8
Prestant	4
Flûte douce	4
Carillon	III
Nasard	2 2/3
Tierce	1 3/5
Basson	16
Cromorne	8
Trompette	8

Grand Orgue

Montre	16
Bourdon	16
Montre	8
Gambe	8
Bourdon	8
Flûte Harmon.	8
Prestant	4
Flûte Octav	4
Doublette	2
Quinte	2 2/3
Cornet	V
Plein-Jeu	VII
Bombarde	16
Trompette	8
Clarion	4

Récit

Quintaton	16
Diapason	8
Viole de gambe	8
Voix céleste	8
Flûte traver.	8
Flûte octav.	4
Basson-hautbois	8
Clarinette	8
Voix humaine	8
Nassard	2 2/3
Plein-Jeu	IV
Cornet	II-V
Octavin	2
Bombarde	16
Trompette	8
Clarion	4

Pédale

Bourdon	32
Soubasse	16
Contrebasse	16
Grosse Flûte	8
Violoncelle	8
Bourdon doux	8
Flûte	4
Contrebombarde	32
Bombarde	16
Trompette	8
Clarion	4