

Charles Mutin

Kurt Lueders

(*b* Saint Julien-sur-Suran, Jura, 7 April 1861; *d* Paris, 29 May 1931). French organ builder. Mutin lost his father, an innkeeper, before he was three, and his mother took him and his two sisters to Paris after the Franco-Prussian War, where he was apprenticed to Aristide Cavaillé-Coll from 1875. His benefactor there, the voicer Joseph Koenig, later became his brother-in-law. Assignments in Normandy, where he married, led Mutin to set up shop in Falaise, where he built his first organ in 1887, then in Caen. Instruments followed for Lure (1889–90) Ste Catherine, Honfleur (1890); St Julien, Caen (1894); Notre Dame, Orbec (1895); Notre Dame de Bon Secours, Trouville (1895); and Ste Anne, Vire (1896), among others.

As one of the staunchest followers of the Cavaillé-Coll style, he came to the attention of the era's leading organists so that, when the 87-year-old master was no longer able to carry on the business, their endorsement helped Mutin to acquire the firm on 18 June 1898. Successfully bolstering the company's sagging accounts, he constructed several hundred instruments before ceding activity to Auguste Convers on 19 March 1924. During the years 1894–99 several articles about Mutin and his work appeared in the periodical *Le monde musical*.

Numerous elegantly cased house organs for wealthy private customers greatly offset the reduced ecclesiastical demand resulting from the separation of Church and State in 1905.

Significant organs built under Mutin's directorship of the Cavaillé-Coll firm (all are of three manuals unless otherwise noted) include an organ in the house of Alexandre Guilmant in Meudon (1899); Moscow Conservatory (1900, 50 stops); the concert hall of the Schola Cantorum, Paris (1902) and St Pierre, Douai (1922; originally built in 1910–14 and intended for the St Petersburg Conservatory, its delivery was halted by the outbreak of World War I and the Russian Revolution). Mutin also relocated the large Cavaillé-Coll organ of the Baron de l'Espée in Biarritz (1898) at the Basilica of the Sacré Coeur in Paris (1919).

While occasionally using pneumatic or electric actions, he remained partial to mechanical action with Barker levers. Despite – or on account of – undeniable commercial acumen, his personality was not characterized by the same generosity and unshakable integrity as that of his mentor: the quality of his instruments – particularly their tonal finesse – tended to vary according to the funds available, which has led to highly negative appreciation and concomitant alteration of the organs by ensuing generations.

Caught between the Romantic conception which paired Cavaillé-Coll with Franck, Widor and other masters, and the 'neo-classic' school embodied in Alain, Duruflé, Messiaen and Langlais, Mutin is still awaiting objective study and evaluation.

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