



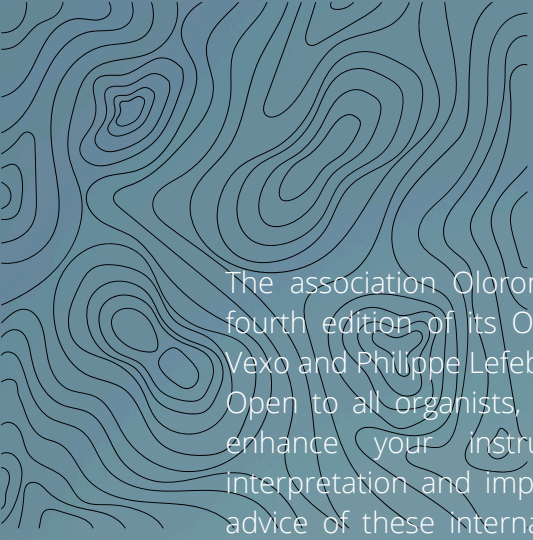
Oloron Orgues

••••• **Organ
Masterclass**

Summer Edition 2025

Interpretation
Improvisation



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The association Oloron.Orgues is pleased to invite you to the fourth edition of its Organ Masterclass, led in 2025 by Johann Vexo and Philippe Lefebvre.

Open to all organists, this Masterclass offers an opportunity to enhance your instrumental practice and develop your interpretation and improvisation skills, guided by the invaluable advice of these internationally renowned organists. Participants will have the exceptional opportunity to play historic instruments emblematic of 19th-century French organ heritage, amidst the beautiful landscapes of the Béarnese Pyrenees.

Philippe Lefebvre will specifically lead a segment dedicated to the art of improvisation, providing a precious opportunity to explore this essential discipline of organ playing. Enjoy an enriching stay in Oloron-Sainte-Marie, a city renowned for its art and history, and discover the authentic charm of its culture and natural beauty.

An unforgettable musical and human experience awaits you!

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... Presentation

Teachers

.....

JOHANN VEXO

Born in Nancy in 1978, Johann Vexo is one of the leading figures among the younger generation of French organists. Holder of the great Cavaillé-Coll organ at Nancy Cathedral and choir organist at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris for 20 years, he has also served as titular organist of the Nancy Cathedral organ since 2009, leading a notably rich international career.

After studying at the Regional Conservatory of Strasbourg, where he obtained a First Prize in organ in Christophe Mantoux's class, Johann Vexo also specialized in early music with Martin Gester and harpsichord with Aline Zylberajch. He furthered his education at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris, studying organ with Michel Bouvard and Olivier Latry, and improvisation with Thierry Escaich and Philippe Lefebvre. He brilliantly earned several distinctions there, including First Prizes in organ and basso continuo, as well as awards in harmony and counterpoint.

A regular guest at major international festivals, Johann Vexo performs recitals and appears with orchestras throughout Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Russia. His talent has led him to perform in prestigious venues such as the Wanamaker Grand Court in Philadelphia, the National Shrine Basilica in Washington, the KKL in Lucerne, St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, and the Philharmonic Hall in Yekaterinburg. His notable concert appearances include performances in Atlanta, Auckland, Dallas, Düsseldorf, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Montreal, Moscow, New York, Porto, Riga, and Vienna.

Passionate about education, Johann Vexo teaches organ at the Conservatory and the Académie Supérieure de Musique in Strasbourg. He is frequently invited to lead prestigious masterclasses, notably for the American Guild of Organists, Rice University in Houston, the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, Westminster Choir College in Princeton, and the University of Aveiro in Portugal.

Johann Vexo also has numerous critically acclaimed recordings to his credit, particularly featuring historic French organs, including the iconic great organ of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. He is represented exclusively in the United States and Canada by Phillip Truckenbrod Concert Artists, LLC.



PHILIPPE LEBFEVRE



Born in Roubaix in 1949, Philippe Lefebvre is one of the most prominent figures of organ music in France. Educated at the Lille Conservatory under Jeanne Joulain, he continued his studies at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris, where he won First Prizes in organ, improvisation, fugue, and counterpoint, demonstrating exceptional mastery of both repertoire and improvisation from an early stage.

Winner of the prestigious Grand Prix in improvisation at the Chartres International Organ Competition in 1973, he embarked on a distinguished career, first at Arras Cathedral, then at Chartres Cathedral, before being appointed titular organist of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris in 1985, a position he shared with Olivier Latry, Yves Devernay, and later Jean-Pierre Leguay. He remained there until 2024, significantly contributing to the musical excellence of this spiritual and artistic landmark.

A renowned educator, Philippe Lefebvre taught improvisation for over a decade at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris, as well as at the Centre d'Études Supérieures de Musique in Toulouse. Simultaneously, he served as Director of the Lille Conservatory from 1979 to 2003, strongly advocating for the education of young musicians.

An internationally acclaimed concert performer, he is regularly invited to prestigious organ festivals across Europe, the United States, Japan, Russia, and South America. His improvisation, characterized by freedom, depth, and poetry, has established him as an undisputed ambassador of the French organ school.

Actively involved in musical associations, Philippe Lefebvre serves as president of "Orgue en France," the Association des Grandes Orgues de Chartres, and "Amis de l'orgue de Montréal" in the Aude region, where he resides. He is deeply committed to the preservation and promotion of French organ heritage.



... The
Organs

The organ of the **CATHEDRAL**

The magnificent organ case that adorns the cathedral gallery dates back to 1650. It is believed to have originally housed a Cliquot organ donated by Bishop Pierre de Gassion. In 1771, Dom Bedos drew up restoration plans for the original organ, but like many similar instruments, it was dismantled during the Revolution.

Only a few pipes remain today, preserved by Cavallé-Coll.

In 1870, the renowned organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll installed a new organ within the existing case. At that time, the splendid case was coated with brown paint.

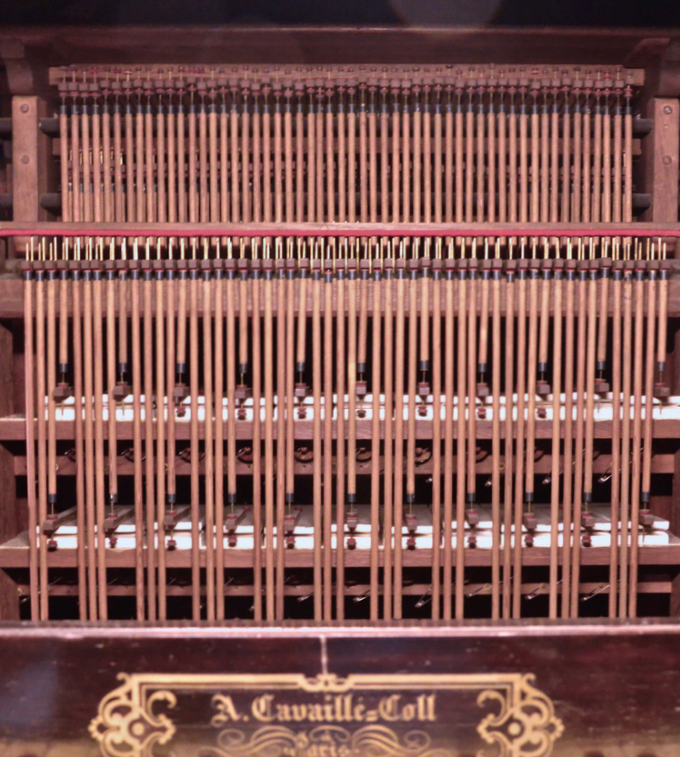
Sixty years later, in 1932, restoration work was entrusted to the Toulouse-based organ builder Maurice Puget. Unfortunately, during this intervention, the Cavallé-Coll instrument underwent some alterations which were not entirely successful, particularly concerning its wind supply. The first electric blower was only installed in 1949.

Thanks to the efforts of Jean Laporte, the organist from Pau, the instrument was officially classified as a historic monument on September 24, 1971. In 1982, the Danion-Gonzalez company restored the instrument to its original specifications. On this occasion, the case regained its original colors and gilding.

In the 2000s, the entire wind supply system was thoroughly revised, and a new blower was installed.

Some of Puget's alterations were also corrected to partially revert to Cavallé-Coll's original plans. The console was equipped with a new and expanded pedalboard (fa3), necessitating some adjustments to the mechanical action.





ARISTIDE CAVAILLÉ-COLL 1870

Keyboard n°1 : Barker

54 notes (C1-F5)

This keyboard serves as a coupling keyboard, the Récit and the Gran-Orgue can be called up independently. This keyboard has a sub octave coupler.

II : Grand-Orgue

54 notes (C1-F5)

Principal 16'	Octave 4'
Montre 8'	Doublette 2'
Flûte harmonique 8'	Plein-jeu 2-5 rangs
Bourdon 8'	Basson 16'
Gambe 8'	Trompette 8'
Prestant 4'	Clairon 4'

III : Enclosed Récit

54 notes (C1-F5)

Flûte traversière 8'	Octavin 2'
Violo de gambe 8'	Basson-Haubois 8'
Voix humaine 8'	Trompette 8'
Voix céleste 8'	
Flûte octaviante 4'	

Pédalboard

30 notes (D1-F3)

Soubasse 16'	Bombarde 16'
Flûte 8'	(currently deposited for restoration)
	Trompette 8'

Accessories

Orage, appel GO, II/P, III/P, sub octave coupler I, Appels des jeux de combinaison P, I and II, appel REC, Tremulant REC

The organ of **NOTRE-DAME** church

Signed by Vincent Cavallé-Coll, the organ of Notre-Dame Church in Oloron was initially built for the Capuchin Church in 1851.

It was inaugurated by L.J.A. Lefébure-Wely.

The acceptance of the work took place in 1852.

It was dismantled and later installed in Notre-Dame Church in 1889 by Michel Roger, being inaugurated again on August 4, 1889.

In 1906, the same builder carried out sealing and tuning repairs.

In 1929, Maurice Puget installed an electric blower. In 1935, he heavily modified the mechanism and the wind supply, adding a Barker lever machine. Further work was entrusted to him in 1943. At that time, Puget pointed out that the organ's mechanical system, particularly the console, needed complete rebuilding—unfortunately, this was not carried out.

In 1954, Antoine Pesce, an organ builder from Pau, replaced the pedalboard, extending it to 27 notes but leaving the original 18-note windchests unchanged.

On this occasion, the Plein-Jeu stop was also revised. During a period of inactivity lasting about twenty years, the organ was abandoned beneath rubble, exposed to the elements, partially looted, damaged, and vandalized. Jean Laporte, an organist from Pau, struggled greatly to have the instrument classified as a historic monument in 1985. In 1989, the authorities finally understood the situation's gravity and prohibited access to the gallery.

The instrument subsequently fell completely into oblivion.

The restoration from 2008 to 2011 restored a cohesive functionality, reflecting the instrument's condition following Michel Roger's work.





VINCENT CAVILLÉ-COLL 1851

I : Grand-Orgue

54 notes (C1-F5)

Montre 16'	Doublette 2'
Bourdon 16'	Plein-jeu 7 rangs
Montre 8'	Bombarde 16'
Flûte 8'	Trompette 8'
Bourdon 8'	Clairon 4'
Prestant 4'	

II : Enclosed Récit

54 notes (C1-F5)

Flûte Harmonique 8'	Flûte octaviante 4'
Viole de gambe 8'	Octavin 2'
Voix humaine 8'	Basson-Hautbois 8'
	Trompette 8'
	Clairon 4'

Pédalboard

C1-F#2 real then G2-D3 on couplers

Flûte 16'	Bombarde 16'
Flûte 8'	Trompette 8'

Accessories

II/P, I/P, sub octave coupler I, Appels d'anches I and II,
Tremulant II



The organ of **SAINTE-CROIX** church

The choir organ of the Sainte-Croix church is an instrument built by Abbé Émile Clergeau. Its exact date of construction is unknown, but we know that all of Clergeau's series organs were made between 1845 and 1867. This particular instrument originally comes from the Saint-Laurent church in Cambo-les-Bains (Basque Country).

It is an 8-stop model including a Viola da Gamba and a Voix Céleste housed in a so-called "classical" case. In 1870, Organeria Española conducted restoration work and installed the organ's first electric blower. The original bellows system was likely removed at this time. In 1982, the Pesce firm restored the organ and modified the console. Clergeau's famous transposing keyboard was removed during this intervention.

Robert Chauvin cleaned the organ in 2016. In 2022, since the organ had become silent for several years and as the city of Cambo-les-Bains began preparations for building a new pipe organ, the Oloron.Orgues association acquired the instrument, dismantled it from the Cambo-les-Bains church, transported it, restored it, and reassembled it as the choir organ in the Sainte-Croix church in Oloron.

At the beginning of 2023, the members of the Oloron.Orgues association designed and installed an entirely new wind supply system, carefully adapted to the available space in the organ's lower structure and to the instrument's wind requirements.

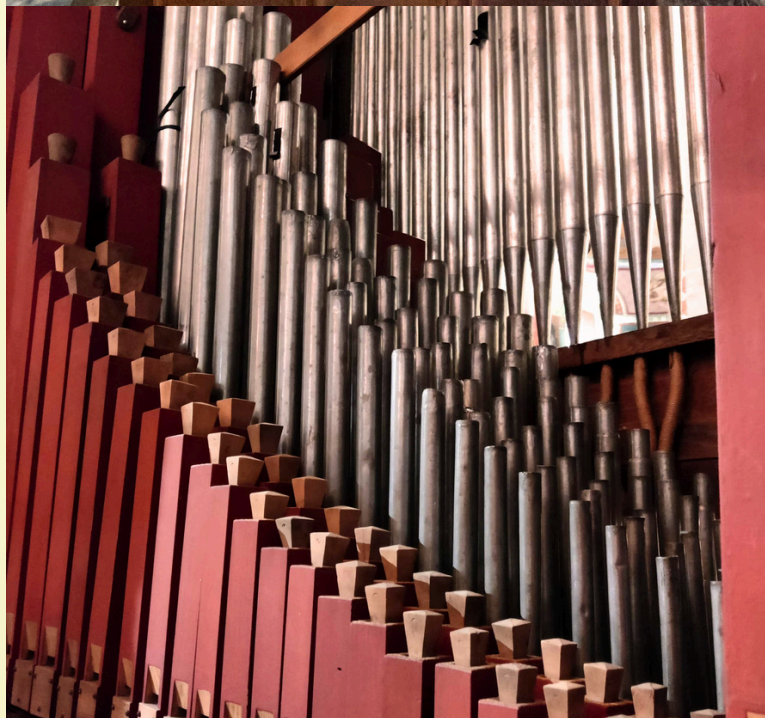
Clavier Keyboard

54 notes (C1-F5)

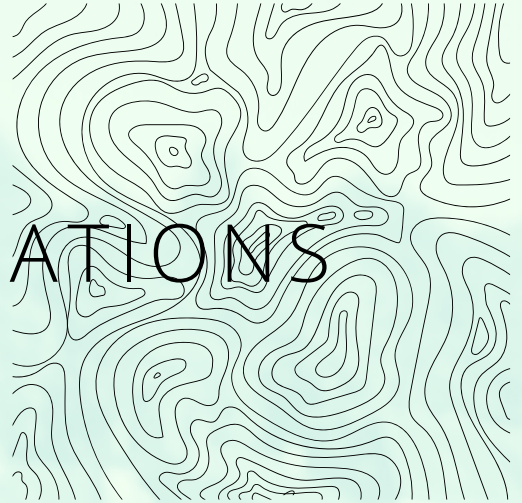
Flûte-Salicional 8'
Bourdon 8'
Viole de Gamba 8'
Voix Céleste 8'
Prestant 4'
Doublette 2'
Clairon-Hautbois 8'
Trompette 8'

Pedalboard

18 notes on couplers



INFORMATIONS



General schedule for the week

- July 21:
 - Participants' welcome, Start of interpretation classes
- July 22 to 24:
 - Morning and afternoon classes with both instructors
 - July 23 at 8:30 pm: Concert by Philippe Lefebvre at the cathedral
- July 25:
 - Final day of interpretation classes
 - 8:30 pm: Concert by Johann Vexo at the cathedral
- July 26:
 - Day dedicated to students: rehearsals and closing public recital at 5:00 pm

Each student, according to their chosen registration, benefits from one individual lesson per day with each instructor: 45 minutes of interpretation with Johann Vexo, and 45 minutes of improvisation with Philippe Lefebvre, from July 22 to 24. Sessions alternate among several instruments. A lunch break is scheduled each day between 12:00 and 2:00 pm.

The week's organization adapts to each participant's selection—interpretation, improvisation, or both—in a spirit of balance, flexibility, and kindness. Beyond their own personal sessions, all students are encouraged to attend each other's classes, fostering mutual enrichment and artistic exchange.

In the interest of fairness and smooth organization, each student will receive a personalized individual schedule, created according to their registration and balanced between the two teaching locations.

Practice instruments are available throughout the Masterclass. In the evenings, after class, students have free access to the organs of Sainte-Marie Cathedral, Notre-Dame Church, and Sainte-Croix Church, allowing them to extend their practice and deepen the day's learning. For participants who have difficulty accessing the organ lofts, their classes can be conducted using a Hauptwerk console or at Sainte-Croix.

ACCESS TO THE CITY

The town of Oloron-Sainte-Marie can be reached by different means of transport :

By train, from Pau TGV station, then take the direction of Bedous (64) by TER.

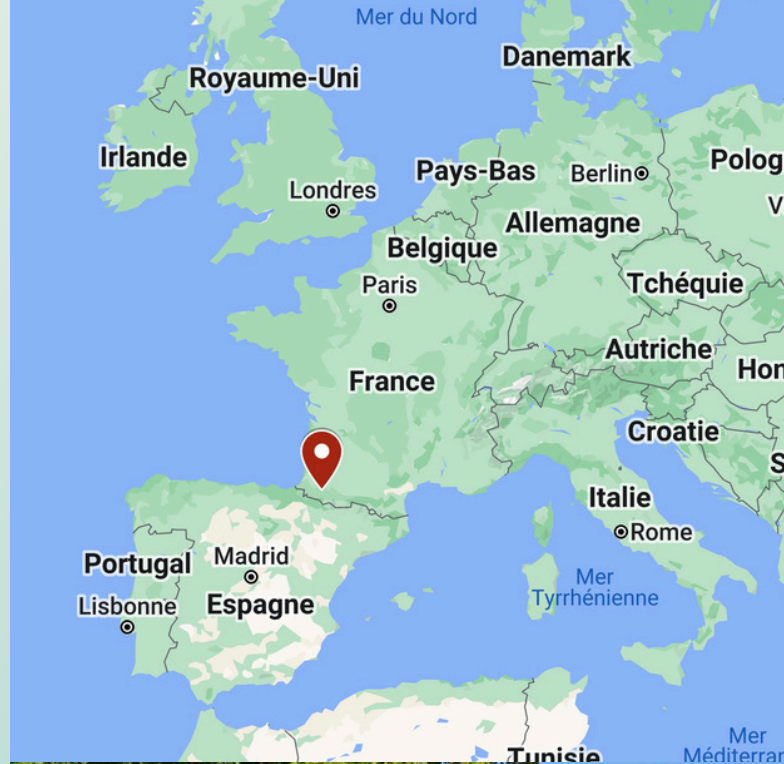
By plane to Pau airport (PUF).

By car, via the A64 motorway, exit 10 towards Oloron then RN134 to Oloron.

INTRA-MUROS TRAVEL

The town of Oloron-Sainte-Marie has a public transportation system known as "La Navette." This shuttle service is free of charge and covers the entire city, including key locations of the masterclass (cathedral, Notre-Dame church, Sainte-Croix church, hotels, and tourist attractions).

Oloron is a small town, and getting around on foot is generally quick (though access to certain neighborhoods can be quite physically demanding, as it is situated in a foothill area).





HOUSING POSSIBILITIES

The city of Oloron currently has 3 affordable hotels: the Central Hotel, the Hotel Astrolabe and the Hotel de la Paix.

The Central has a restaurant offer, the Astrolabe has an agreement with a nearby restaurant for evening meals, none have a lift but the Hotel de la Paix has air conditioning.

We invite you to inquire as soon as possible for your accommodation reservation.

On the AirBnb platform, you will also find various accommodations for rent throughout the city.

If you have a problem booking accommodation, do not hesitate to contact the Association Oloron.Orgues by email, we will help you as best we can.

Further information

-Website of association Oloron.Orgues : oloron-orgues.fr

-Contact email : contact@oloron-orgues.fr

- Website of Oloron city : <https://www.oloron-ste-marie.fr/>

-Tourist office website :

<https://www.pyrenees-bearnaises.com/>

-Map of Oloron :

<https://oloron-orgues.fr/plan-oloron.pdf>

-Map and timetable of "la Navette" :

<https://www.hautbearn.fr/vivre-habiter/se-deplacer/navette-oloron-sainte-marie>

-City walking map :

https://oloron-orgues.fr/carte_temps_deplacement.jpeg

