

Pierre Cournand

Dominique Castel, October 2024

Birth on February 15, 1922¹, in Paris (9th arrondissement), of Pierre Gabriel Camille Cournand

In 1947, he is studying organ at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris with Marcel Dupré. Some other young people studying with him will become quite famous organists: Marie-Madeleine Chevalier, Suzanne Chaisemartin, Marie-Claire Alain and Pierre Cochereau.

Around 1960, he is in charge of the main organ of Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis church in Paris. But we don't know exactly when he was appointed.

In 1964, he would have replaced Louis Roulet at Saint-Louis Cathedral in Choisy-le-Roy², a large town in the Val-de-Marne, south of Paris. But, even on the official website of the cathedral, they are not sure about the date of this replacement. Apparently Roulet was in charge of the organ between 1914 and 1964. But this last date is followed by a question mark. Does it mean it is the date of his death?

On July 25, 1971, Pierre gives a concert at Notre-Dame in Paris³. On the program, he is named as «titulaire» of Saint-Louis cathedral in Choisy-le-Roi.

On June 28, 1981, Pierre gives a concert in Choisy-le-Roi cathedral⁴, and, once again, on the program, he is named as «titulaire» of this cathedral.

On Facebook, a man named Jimmy Rocrou writes that, in 1986, he was a student of Pierre, and that Pierre was, at that time, in charge of the main organ of Choisy-le-Roi cathedral.

On Choisy-le-Roi cathedral website, they write that, in 1992, Jean-Yves Lacorne became tenured organist of the main organ, and that, between Pierre Cournand and him, there was another organist, called Jean-Claude Truchot. But they don't give the date of Pierre's departure.

On April 20, 1992, Pierre gives a concert and a lecture in Saint-Maur-des-Fossés main church (Val-de-Marne). He was, at the time, in charge of the instrument of a very small church in that town, where he actually lived. It is certainly his last concert.

Pierre Cournand dies on April 28, 1997¹ in Créteil, the main town of the Val-de-Marne department, in the south-east of Paris.

¹ <https://www.openarch.nl/ins:b4b925c4-dc86-73bb-c291-d83a5afc5f9c/fr>

² <https://www.choisyleroi-orguecathedrale.com/lorgue/>

³ <https://www.france-orgue.fr/disque/index.php?zpg=dsq.cnh.par&keywd=cournand&cmd=Go>

⁴ <https://www.choisyleroi-orguecathedrale.com/les-concerts/recital-28-juin-1981>



Photo of Marcel Dupré's class at the Paris Conservatoire in 1947
(Source : www.musimem.com)

This photo, taken in 1947, shows Marcel Dupré's Organ Class at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris.

On the first row, from left to right, Marie-Madeleine Chevalier, Françoise Renet, Suzanne Chaisemartin, Marie-Claire Alain.

On the second row, still from left to right, Jean Costa, Claude Prior, Bernard Havel, Marcel Dupré, Pierre Cournand, Pierre Cochereau, Pierre Labric, Jean Bonfils.

Marie-Madeleine Chevalier (1921-1999), married Maurice Duruflé in 1953. They both shared the main organ of Sainte-Etienne du Mont in Paris (5th arrondissement) until 1975, when, after a very bad car accident, Maurice stopped playing. But Marie-Madeleine kept on playing alone on Saint-Etienne-du-Mont main organ.

Françoise Renet (1924-1995), was deputy organist in Saint-Sulpice in Paris (6th arrondissement) , and organ teacher in Meudon, a town south-west of Paris

Suzanne Chaisemartin (1921-2017), was in charge of Saint-Augustin main organ in Paris (8th arrondissement) between 1949 and 1997. She was deputy organ teacher at the Paris National Conservatoire between 1955 and 1971, and assistant teacher between 1971 and 1986. She also taught organ in Dijon Regional Conservatoire and in the famous Normal Supérieure School in Paris.

Marie-Claire Alain (1926-2013) was one of the most famous organ performers all over the world. She gave about 2500 concerts between 1950 and 2010. She was also an outstanding teacher, and she gave many master-classes all over the world.

Jean Costa (1924-2013), was deputy organist in Saint-Sulpice in Paris (6th arrondissement) , then tenured organist in Saint-Vincent-de-Paul in Paris (10th arrondissement) between 1952 and 1997. He also gave many concerts

Claude Prior (1918-2002) was a Swiss citizen, who became director of Saint-Malo conservatory, in French Brittany. He also was an artistic director, a classical music publisher and a composer.

Bernard Havel (died in 1962), was in charge of the organ of Saint-Sever, in the Landes department, near the Spanish border.

Marcel Dupré (1886-1971) was first Charles-Marie Widor's deputy organist in Saint-Sulpice in Paris (6th arrondissement) , then tenured organist of this same church until his death. He got the famous «Grand Prix de Rome» in 1914. He also gave organ concerts all over the world, but mainly in the USA. He was organ professor in the Paris National Conservatoire between 1926 and 1954, then director of this same Conservatoire between 1954 and 1956. He was also a very famous organ music composer, but he also wrote music for the orchestra, the piano, chamber music and the voice.

Pierre Cournand (1922-1997), was in charge of the main organ of Saint-Paul-Saint-Louis church in Paris (4th arrondissement) around 1960, then he was in charge of the main organ of Saint-Louis cathedral in Choisy-le-Roi (Val-de-Marne department south of Paris) between 1964 and the end of the 1980s. His last tenure was in a very small church in Saint-Maur-des-Fossés (Val-de-Marne) south-east of Paris.

Pierre Cochereau (1924-1984). Tenured organist of Notre-Dame of Paris from 1955 until his death, he also was director of the Le Mans conservatoire between 1949 and 1958, and then director of Nice conservatoire between 1961 and 1979), and eventually founder and director of Lyon National Superior Conservatoire between 1980 and 1984. Fantastic concert performer and improviser. He is the only organist whose improvisations have been transcribed and are been performed as original compositions.

Pierre Labric (born in 1921, he was still alive in July 2024), was deputy organist at La Madeleine church in Paris (8th arrondissement) and in other Parisian churches, but also tenured organist in Saint-Gervais church in Rouen in Normandy.

Jean Bonfils (1921-2007), deputy organist in La Trinité church in Paris (9th arrondissement) between 1950 and 1999, was also tenured organist of the Grande Synagogue of Paris and organ teacher in the famous Schola Cantorum school in Paris between 1961 and 1973.