

Jehan Alain

(1911 - 1940)

Variations:

- *sur 'Lucis Creator' (1932)*
- *sur un thème 'de Clément*
Ian(n)equin' (1937)

for organ

arranged for
Wind Quintet
(Cor Anglais or Oboe)
by Toby Miller (2011)

(Jehan Alain in 1938)



Jehan Alain was born in a musical town (St Germain-en-Laye: also the birthplace of Debussy and more recently Ludovic Navarre aka St Germain) into a musical family. His father Albert Alain was a composer, organist and practical organ-builder. The magnificent four-manual organ he installed in their house inspired Jehan to sometimes Utopian expectations in his organ compositions. He made somewhat slow progress in his studies at the Paris Conservatoire from 1927, with Dukas and Dupré among others. (Fellow students in Dupré's improvisation class liked to play before Alain. Once he is said to have finished an improvisation in a different key and said 'sorry, I went wrong'. Dupré responded 'you should go wrong more often then'!) Alain signed up to the army and caught severe pneumonia in 1933, got married in 1935 and had three children, which required him to spend more time on fee-paying organist duties. Finally graduating in 1939 with first prizes in both organ and improvisation, he rejoined the army in a motorcycle corps and was killed by the Germans in 1940 after encountering a patrol on his own, being posthumously awarded the *Croix de Guerre* for bravery.

Despite his exposure to many eminent musicians, being steeped in the French church tradition, a formal study of Baroque, oriental and jazz music, and his tragically short life, Alain's own music is remarkably original. It evolves little over an admittedly short span, but one in which he wrote over 120 works. These two sets of variations share a similar structure and technique, with a 'standard' harmonization of the theme followed by a variation with a smoothly-flowing descant quaver line, and then a fugal variation. The organ registration of both pieces with soft woodwind stops, and the counterpoint with strong horizontal part lines, makes them suitable for wind quintet arrangement.

'Lucis Creator' is a hymn attributed to Pope Gregory the Great (6th century AD). The plainchant has been included at the beginning for reference, and could be either sung or played as a solo before the harmonised theme with which Alain's own work begins. The theme 'by Clément Jan(n)equin' is in fact a popular song published in 1531 by Pierre Attaignant, who was the first French printer to publish music widely, by exploiting movable music type. Many works by Janequin were published by Attaignant; however according to Alain's sister Marie-Claire, who through her long life did more than anybody to bring her brother's music to a wide audience, Jehan knew that the tune he chose to set was not by Janequin. He was captivated by the alternation of F sharp and F natural in its cadence. Organists without the luxury of an instrument in their own house are compelled to play in church, and Alain did not want to prevent anybody from doing so by disclosing too much about the original song, which is the complaint of a lover threatening to leave his beloved if she doesn't grant him sex soon. The quaver lines in the variations create an almost spooky atmosphere, which enhances the haunting beauty of the theme and softly rocking coda in their more traditional harmonizations. If a cor anglais is available, its sound is ideal for this piece in particular; however alternative parts for oboe and cor are included for both pieces.

Variations sur un thème 'de Clément Jan(n)equin'

arranged for Wind Quintet (Oboe or Cor Anglais) by Toby Miller

Jehan Alain

Aria **Affettuoso** ♩ = 72
(Ob lead Hn Bn)

Flute

Oboe (alt to Cor Anglais)

Cor Anglais (alt. to Oboe)

Bb Clarinet

Horn

Bassoon

mp L'es - poir que j'ai d'ac - qué - rir vô - tre grâ - ce, d'ac qué rir vô tre grâc' Et dé - jou - ir du

p (*legato*) *pp*

p *p*

8

poco crescendo *crescendo*

bien que je pour - chass - e, du bien qu'je pour chass', me tient sos - pens en at - ten - dant, En a _____ ten _____

poco crescendo *crescendo*

poco crescendo *crescendo*

p *crescendo*

— dant vôt'r' ap - point, Mais si de bref vous ne ve - nez au point, For-ce se - ra, For-ce se -

più p *p* *più p* *p* *p* *p* *più p* *p*

Var 1: Maggiore

(Cl lead Fl Hn)

Rit

ra que d'a-mour je me las - se, d'a - mour je me lass'

p (legato) *mp* *p*

37

crescendo

p (legato) *crescendo*

p (legato) *crescendo*

crescendo

crescendo

47

p

p (legato)

p (legato)

mp *mp*

p (legato)

p

Var. 2: Fugato

poco rit.....

Più vivo

Musical score for measures 57-65. The score is in B-flat major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a woodwind lead (Ob, lead Hn, Bn) starting in measure 60. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp* (legato). A sixteenth-note triplet is marked with a '6' in measure 61.

(Cl)

Musical score for measures 66-74. The score continues in B-flat major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a woodwind lead (Cl) starting in measure 66. Dynamics include *mf*. A sixteenth-note triplet is marked with a '6' in measure 70.

(with Cl)

pp (*legato*)

pp (Fl)

(Fl)

(with Fl)

pp

(with Bn)

pp

(with Hn)

pp

(with Bn)

Ob

mf

CA

mf

senza fretta

senza fretta

(play if Cor Anglais replaces Oboe)

(with Fl)

p

82

Cl

mf

(with Fl & Bn)

(with Cl)

pp (legato)

(with Hn)

(Fl)

(Fl)

(with Fl)

pp (legato)

(Fl)

Hn (with Fl)

pp (legato)

97

(F1) *f* 6 (with Cl) *mp*
 (with F1) *mp*

100

(with Bn) *f* 6
 (F1) *f* 6
 (F1) *f* 6
 (with Hn) *p* (legato)
 (with Cl) *p* (legato)
 (with F1) *p*
 Ob *f* CA

Var. 3/Coda

104

Rit.

(Cl Hn Bn)

Grave

(Ob lead Hn Bn)

104

Rit.

(Cl Hn Bn)

Grave

(Ob lead Hn Bn)

105

106

107

108

mp

pp

p

109

109

(Cl)

p

110

111

112

p

(Hn Bn)

mf (Hn Bn)

mf (Hn Bn)

mp

p (with Bn)

p (legato)

mp (legato)

p (with Hn)

p (legato)

mp (legato)

(en berçant jusqu'à la fin)

mp

p

p

mp

p

pp

Rit.

11