

Jehan Alain

(1911 - 1940)

Variations:

- *sur 'Lucis Creator' (1932)*
- *sur un thème 'de Clément Jan(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 'Lucis Creator'

Score (concert pitch)

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

Jehan Alain

Recitativo [♩ = 96]

Flute

Oboe *solo*
mf Lu-cis Cre-a - tor op-ti-me, Lu - cem di - e - rum pro-fe-rens,

Cor Anglais *solo*
mf Lu-cis Cre-a - tor op-ti-me, Lu - cem di - e - rum pro-fe-rens,

Bb Clarinet

Horn

Bassoon

3

Prim-or - di - is lu - cis no vae Mun - di pa - rans o - ri - gi-nem.

Prim-or - di - is lu - cis no vae Mun - di pa - rans o - ri - gi-nem.

Theme Recitativo [$\text{♩} = 80$]

poco rit

(Hn tune)

mf
p
p
mp
mf
f

3 *a tempo*

poco rit

mf
p
p
mp
mf
f

Variation 1

[Moderato ♩ = 112]

Ob/CA theme: to fore

0

mf

mf

p *sempre legato*

pp *sempre legato*

mf

8

p *sempre legato*

p

p

p

p

pochiss. rit.

15 a tempo

Musical score for measures 15-22. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of six staves. The top staff is the melody. The second and third staves are for the Oboe (Ob) and Clarinet in A (CA), both playing the theme 'to fore' with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The fourth staff is for the Bassoon (Bn), which is silent until measure 22 where it begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fifth and sixth staves are for the Violin (Vn) and Viola (Va), both playing the theme 'to fore' with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic.

23 poco rit. a tempo

Musical score for measures 23-30. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of six staves. The top staff is the melody. The second and third staves are for the Oboe (Ob) and Clarinet in A (CA), both playing the theme 'to fore' with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The fourth staff is for the Bassoon (Bn), which is silent until measure 23 where it begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The fifth and sixth staves are for the Violin (Vn) and Viola (Va), both playing the theme 'to fore' with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The Bassoon part is marked as being in canon with the Oboe. The dynamic for the Bassoon part is mezzo-forte (*mf*) in canon with Ob. The dynamic for the Violin and Viola parts is forte (*f*).

pochiss. rit. a tempo

dim. e rall.

Variation 2 Moderato

Musical score for Variation 2, measures 1-7. The score is in common time (C) and features a melody in the upper voice with dynamics of *mf* and *sempre legato*. The piano accompaniment is mostly rests.

8

Musical score for Variation 2, measures 8-14. The score continues with the melody and piano accompaniment. Dynamics include *mf* and *sempre legato*.

Musical score for measures 14-19. The score consists of six staves. The top staff (treble clef) begins with a rest and then features a melodic line starting at measure 14 with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The second and third staves (grand staff) contain piano accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes. The fourth staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with some rests. The fifth staff (treble clef) is empty. The sixth staff (bass clef) contains a bass line with a dynamic marking of *mf* and the instruction *quasi legato*.

Musical score for measures 20-25. The score consists of six staves. The top staff (treble clef) features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p*. The second and third staves (grand staff) contain piano accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *p*. The fourth staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mp* and a crescendo hairpin. The fifth staff (treble clef) is empty. The sixth staff (bass clef) contains a bass line with dynamic markings of *p* and *mp*.

Musical score for measures 38-43. The score consists of six staves. The top five staves are in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music features a complex texture with multiple melodic lines. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A *fff* (fortissimo) marking is present at the end of the section. The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

rall.

Musical score for measures 44-49. The score consists of six staves. The top five staves are in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The tempo is marked *rall.* (rallentando). The music features a complex texture with multiple melodic lines. Dynamic markings include *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Blue annotations are present, including the label "(Hn)" and curved lines connecting notes across staves.