A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ORGAN MUSIC OF JEHAN ALAIN

by

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks, through an investigation of the life and an analysis of the organ music of Jehan Alain, to reach some significant conclusions regarding his style.

Chapter I defines stylistic analysis as a separating of a work of art into component parts so as to reveal how, through the handling of those components, an artist demonstrates a characteristic manner. This study consists of a survey of the organ music of Alain and does not examine his works for other media.

Chapter II is biographical. Alain was born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France, on February 3, 1911, the son of a musician and one of four musically gifted children. Demonstrating precocious musical talent, he studied the piano as a child and began playing the organ, under his father's guidance, at the age of 11. He entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 16 and studied with Paul Dukas and Marcel Dupré, among others, winning three First Prizes in the course of the next 12 years.

In addition to his rare musical talent, Alain possessed many aptitudes, including an unusual ability for sketching and a flair for writing. Although he suffered from chronic illnesses, he pursued his work and study vigorously. His deep love for nature was reflected in the inspiration he gained from pilgrimages to the Abbey of Valloires and the vacations he spent at the Alains' family retreat at Argentières, in the French Alps.

Alain was married at 24 to his childhood sweetheart, Madeleine Payan. To the young couple were born three children--two girls and a boy.

Becoming more and more active in the musical life of Paris, Alain, without being a member, associated with the group calling itself "Jeune France," attracting critical acclaim for a performance he gave of three of his organ works in a concert with Olivier Messiaen and Daniel Lesur in 1938.

Called to the army in August of 1939, Alain took part in the Battle of Flanders and the evacuation at Dunkerque. After a few days in England he returned to France, where he enlisted in a Free Corps. He was killed by enemy fire on June 20, 1940, at Petit-Puys, near Samur, while on a reconnaissance mission for which he had volunteered. His memory was honored in a military citation in 1943.

Chapter III describes the catalogue of Alain's works, published in the biography by Bernard Gavoty. Then it examines in turn the melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, form, and registration of Alain's organ music. This music is generally tonal, though not traditionally so. The melodic material is based on fragments from modes and from major, minor, whole-tone, and synthetic scales. Long pedal points, both consonant and dissonant, are common. Polyharmony is characteristic, although there are no extended polytonal passages. The tritone occurs often as a melodic interval and in root relations between tertian chords. Traditional harmonic progression is avoided, and unexpected major-minor and diminished seventh chords appear frequently.

The texture varies constantly, but it is always linear, in free chromatic counterpoint. Canon appears only occasionally and other melodic imitation hardly at all. Polyharmonic-polyrhythmic movement of chordal masses against each other is characteristic.

Most of Alain's music is written in measured rhythm of irregular accents, very freely barred. Reiteration of short motives--melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic--is common. A few short works are in traditional binary and ternary forms, but most of the music is free in form.

Alain's registrations are neo-classic, inspired by the Classic rather than the Romantic organ, thus representing a break with the tradition established by Franck.

Chapter IV, in summary, concludes that Alain's was a highly individual style not modeled on any composer, school, or system, and that his originality and sincerity should gain him a permanent place in the annals of organ music.

Appendix A gives the specifications of the organ in the Alain home. Appendix B gives the specifications of the organ in the Paris Church of La Trinité. Appendix C is a catalogue of Alain's organ works.

The study concludes with a Selected Bibliography.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Stylistic analysis must be defined before it can be attempted. A dictionary definition of "style" is: "Specific or characteristic manner of expression, execution, construction or design, in any art."[1] "Analysis" is defined as "a separating or breaking up of any whole into its parts so as to find out their nature, proportion, function, relationship, etc."[2] A musical lexicographer, Willi Apel, has defined musical style as "'Characteristic language' or 'characteristic handwriting,' particularly with reference to details of a composition, as distinguished from its large outlines, i. e., form."[3] In defining analysis he says: "With reference to music, [analysis is] the study of a composition with regard to form, structure, thematic material, harmony, melody, phrasing, orchestration, style, technique, etc."

Thus we are faced with seemingly contradictory terminology. Apel refers to "style" as one of what could be called the components of music. He further distinguishes it from "form," another component of music. For the purpose of this study, however, it seems advisable to

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1. Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1953), p. 1449.

2. Ibid., p. 53.

3. Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 714.

4. Ibid., p. 36.

consider style in a more general sense--that is, as a "manner of expression" which can be thought of as a characteristic quality rather than a component. As such, style results from the composer's characteristic use of the several components making up the music. This analysis, then, will seek, through an examination of these components, to lead to some conclusions regarding the composer's "manner of expression," or style.

This study will examine--from the standpoint of melody, harmony, texture, rhythm, form, and registration--all of the available organ music composed by Alain. It will relate the music to common practices of the past and to trends during the composer's period of activity; and it will reveal development and change, if such be evident, in the style of Alain's music.

A mere statistical account of the technical phenomena which go together to make up the music of a particular composer might perhaps be considered analysis, but it would be cold and dreary indeed. Further, a study of the music of a composer with no knowledge of the life and personality of that composer could hardly be considered thorough or complete, for all art is an activity of a human heart and hand. The more one knows of the artist, the more one can understand his art. Thus it seems justifiable to begin this study with a rather extensive biographical sketch of the composer, particularly as almost nothing is known about him outside the country of his birth, and as there has apparently been no previous account of his life in the English language.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF JEHAN ALAIN

On September 1, 1943, there was issued a French military citation which, in part, read as follows:

> ALAIN, Jehan, soldier in the 8th Cuirassiers; motorcycle courier of exceptional moral worth and courage.
>
> During the course of the Belgian Campaign and later at the landing at Dunquerque, he carried out several extremely dangerous liaison missions, several times being under fire of automatic weapons firing at close range. Having volunteered to reconnoiter an enemy post, he was mortally wounded at Saumur, June 20, 1940, after felling with his machine gun several infantrymen who ordered him to surrender.[1]

Thus was honored the memory of a fallen hero, whose untimely death had silenced forever a voice which had just begun to be heard in the world of music--a voice which had spoken with new and original accents and which had given promise of greatness in the future.

Jehan Ariste Alain was born on February 3, 1911, in the historic old town of Saint-Germain-en-Leye, a suburb of Paris which had been the summer residence of the Kings of France from the twelfth century onward and which had been the birthplace of Claude Debussy. Jehan was the oldest of four gifted children. His father, Albert Alain, was a well known French composer, a pupil of Fauré and Guilmant,[2] and was the organist

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1. France, Général de Corps d'Armée, Secrétaire d'État à la Défense, Ordre N° 1.655 (Sept. 1, 1943), reprinted in Bernard Gavoty's Jehan Alain: musicien français (Paris: Albin Michel, 1945), p. 9.

2. Olivier Alain, notes on record album, Marie-Claire Alain joue Jehan Alain (Paris: Éditions Costallat, 1963).

at the local church at Saint-Germain, where he presided over a good Cavaillé-Coll organ.[1] Perhaps there was prophecy in the archaic spelling of Jehan's name--the same as that of Jehan Titelouze (1563-1633), who was the founder of a long line of French organists. At any rate, Jehan Alain seems to have been destined for a career in music.

A lively, nervous, and sensitive child, young Jehan began to play the piano as soon as his hands were large enough, and he immediately demonstrated great talent and even the hint of being a prodigy.[2] When he was 11 he was considered ready to begin playing the organ, and soon he began to take his father's place in some duties of the church service. The many and varied voices of the organ captured his attention, and, from that time on, the daily discipline of the virtuoso was put aside in favor of the frolics of improvisation. As he remarked later, when he was about 23: "I am neither a pianist nor an organist and scarcely an improvisator. Just a little bit of an acrobat--a sort of sincere charlatan."[3]

The tall, narrow old house in Saint-Germain was the home of an unusual and unusually gifted family. Certainly it must have been filled with music from morning till night, for all of the children were musicians. Jehan's sister Odile was an accomplished pianist, organist, and singer;[4] his brother Olivier, later to become known as a critic,

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1. "We Visit Marie-Claire Alain," The Diapason, XIV, No. 12 (Nov., 1953), p. 28.

2. Gavoty, op. cit., p. 31

3. Ibid., p. 32.

4. Alain, loc. cit.

scholar, and composer, played both the piano and organ; and his little sister Marie-Claire was to have a distinguished career as a concert organist.

But it was not just the remarkable family dwelling in that house that set it apart, for it boasted another rare distinction--a three-manual, tracker-action pipe organ, which dominated the living room. Albert Alain was not only a musician but was also an organ builder; and that organ--like so many others, always changing and never finished--was his own handiwork (see specifications, Appendix A). Upon that organ young Jehan did much of his practicing. Nearer in sound to the "Classic" French organ than to the "Romantic" Cavaillé-Colls, and with some unusual pecularities of its own, that organ strongly influenced the registrations Alain would specify in many of the works he was later to write.[1]

It would have been difficult for Fate to deny a career in music to Jehan Alain, possessing such a rich talent and growing up in such a setting. At the age of 16 he began courses in harmony at the Paris Conservatoire, a half-hour's trip by train from Saint-Germain. At the same time he was studying the piano with Augustin Pierson, organist at the Cathedral of Versailles. For the next 12 years Jehan was a student at the Conservatoire, successively or simultaneously enrolled in classes in harmony, counterpoint, fugue, organ, improvisation, and composition.[2] His teachers included André Bloch in harmony; George Caussade in counterpoint and fugue; Marcel Dupré in organ and improvisation; and Paul Dukas

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1. Marie-Claire Alain, letter to the author, October 29, 1964.

2. Gavoty, op. cit., p. 45.

and later Jean Roger-Ducasse in composition.[1] In the course of these studies he won the First Prize in Harmony (1933), in Fugue (1933), and in Organ and Improvisation (1939).[2]

At the Conservatoire young Alain made the acquaintance of a fellow student named Bernard Gavoty, who became his lifelong friend and finally his biographer. To Gavoty we are indebted for a wealth of firsthand facts, observations, impressions, recollections, and interpretations regarding both Alain the man and Alain the composer. Speaking of Alain's studies at the Conservatoire, Gavoty wrote:

> All of Jehan's teachers tried to direct him without fettering him. . . . Fearing to dictate, they limited themselves to suggesting, only too glad to have found such fertile ground. From the atmosphere in which he had grown up Jehan inherited a suppleness of pen which spared him blunders and slowness. His school assignments had, from the very beginning, the freedom and grace of the born musician. His earliest fugues were correct and his improvisations without revisions. His first attempts had the ease of manner that permits such a nature to express itself in music as easily as we look at ourselves in a mirror.[3]

Indeed, music seems to have been as natural a process for Alain as thought itself. His friend Gavoty said: "For him music was not an unusual activity but a continuous presence. . . . Joy was a happy arpeggio; sadness, three chords linked together."[4]

A portrait of Jehan Alain would be simple to paint if he had been merely a very gifted musician. Such indeed was not the case, for he possessed talent for an astonishing variety of interests. He was a natural mimic, clown, and actor. He was an accomplished gymnast,

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1. Ibid., p. 72-73.
2. Olivier Alain, loc. cit.
3. Gavoty, op. cit., p. 73.
4. Ibid., p. 52

who performed "dare-devil" stunts on his motor scooter. He had an aptitude for mechanics and could pass by no ailing apparatus without putting it in repair. He sketched with chalk, crayon, and pencil almost as easily as he composed, with a sharp sense for pertinent detail.[1] His many sketches--often included in letters or on postal cards--reveal the kaleidoscopic nature of his moods and observations--from the whimsical to the serious, from the comic to the tragic. And so also do his countless letters and entries in his notebooks--often light but then suddenly and unexpectedly profound and even poetic. He loved reading, and he loved the beauties and mysteries of nature. But perhaps his deepest devotion was his love for people--family and friends--to whom he gave his time and attention with complete selflessness and great enthusiasm.

There were certain places which were of particular inspiration to Jehan Alain and which had a deep influence upon him. One such place was the old Cistercian Abbey of Valloires, in La Somme, not so very far from Saint-Germain. Here, as one making a pilgrimage, Jehan would often go to nourish himself on nature and solitude. He described the setting in his characteristic manner: "There are a lot of little hills. Even on the slopes of the hills there are hollows where the snow drifts. In the distance are birches with reddish tops and silver trunks. And over all that the scintillating snow, the blue shadows, and the pure air that makes the ceiling of the sky seem higher."[2] A letter written by Alain while at Valloires, dated February 18, 1933, is typical of his

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1. Ibid., p. 21.

2. Ibid., p. 66.

literary style and revealing of his poetic insight. It began:

> I would like you to spend just one day here. I would lead you to nooks I love. At every step you would see something worth exclaiming over and shouting "Thanks" to the one who fashioned it. There are flocks of crows, great soft, brown fields where you can get dirt on you right up to the teeth, snow galore, overwhelming sunlight, and ecstatically beautiful colors and lights. There are also quick twilights, gusts of glacial winds and lazy dawns, white sunlight that makes the frost sparkle, and frozen fields that crunch under the heel. There are great marshes rippled by the wind. The waves go back and forth and silently fall on top of each other around a clump of rushes; and the water-birds, crying, flee. There is an old fellow cleaning out a little drainage ditch. He is leaning on a sort of scoop, watching you as you go by as if you were some extraordinary being. He is not aware that he himself resembles a doleful looking old heron--motionless, featherless. He looks so very old, so tired. He must be a part of the marsh; it is impossible for him to have a house, a bed, a table. He must stay there, day and night, cleaning out ditches and looking from afar at the people who pass, listening to some unimaginable music. Birds must have built a nest on his shoulders, in the hollow of his neck.
>
> There are quite a number of these ditches, three or four meters wide or sometimes less, flowing with limpid waters. You can see fishes with rosy fins swim by. When you poke the sand on the bottom with a pole, big bubbles from the marsh gas rise up; and when you lie motionless on the ground, the crows come and circle around and around, way, way up. . . .[1]

During the day Jehan would hike on the chalky roads and through the marshes. At mealtime he would join his hosts at the Abbey, in an atmosphere more like a family boarding-house than a monastery. In the evenings, after playing for the service of Compline in the ancient chapel, Jehan would improvise on Gregorian themes.[2] It was at Valloires that Jehan composed, at the age of 21, his "Postlude pour l'office de Complies" ("Postlude for the Office of Compline"), an all too brief revelation of his personal religious devotion.

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1. Ibid., p. 128.
2. Ibid., p. 67.

Another place of special inspiration to Alain was the tiny village of Argentières, in Haute-Savoie. Here, almost in the shadow of Mont Blanc and within half-a-dozen miles of Switzerland, the Alain family had a country cottage, and here they spent much of their time together in the summers and even at Easter vacation.[1] This family hideaway was a special world to Jehan. Here, with his family or his best friends from Paris, he would leave the pressures and problems of life behind him. At Easter, with his friends who shared his fever for climbing and his almost mystical love of heights, he would discover an immense world of sparkling snow, in which was soon forgotten the anguish of the fast-approaching competitive examinations at the Conservatoire.[2] And in the summer he and his companions would seek a unique panorama that could be discovered only from the heights, or the peace of the summits, far above the sounds of the valley below. This, then, was the philosophical setting of "Le jardin suspendu" ("The Hanging Garden"): a world of irridescent sunlight on lofty snow, conceived, as he wrote, "in delicate and veiled shades."[3] This is the rare but perfumed air that one breathes in that "Hanging Garden," which the composer described as "located I know not where, but totally removed from everything. It is the ever pursued and fugitive ideal of the artist--the inaccessible and inviolable place of refuge."[4]

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1. Ibid., p. 62.
2. Ibid., p. 81.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

And there were other pleasures at Argentières. Jehan would compose, sketch, paint, sculpt, write, or simply fall asleep on the grass.[1] As a hiker he would quickly leave his other self, the composer, behind. But as Gavoty wrote, "Jehan would hike scarcely two hours, and then music would take possession of him again, like an orchestra. The ozoned scent of heights would be the prelude. Cunningly a flute song would unroll its arabesque, . . . the oboe would tell the beads of its motive, the horn would utter its call, and the shuttle of the viola would weave a silken veil in the icy silence. Suddenly the brasses would explode in fanfare, and an immense symphony would be put together, reverberating against crevasses and peaks."[2] In such a mood was born the "Litanies," sketched first in a shorter work called "Fantasmagorie" ("Phantasmagoria").[3]

But all was not happiness at Argentières, for in September of 1937 a mountain climbing accident took the life of Jehan's sister Odile. Gavoty wrote, "I can still see him--silent, crushed--when he heard the news in Paris, where his job as organist had recalled him a few days earlier. . . . I can still see his grief-stricken face at the window of the railway coach taking him toward sorrow."[4] At that chalet at Argentières, formerly so full of joy, Jehan found his family shaken by the tragedy. In his notebook he wrote:

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1. Ibid., p. 62.
2. Ibid., p. 64
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 66

> Now they were seated near each other and were weeping silently, while the wind blew, without stopping to take breath again. The trees were rustling their trembling leaves, the bushes were becoming smaller and older, and the numberless blades of grass were bending still lower toward the earth. And they were sitting near each other, their breasts drawn inward to bury their hearts more deeply.[1]

A curious paradox in the short life of Jehan Alain is the matter of his health. Certainly his gymnastic prowess and his seemingly boundless energy would suggest a strong constitution. But the fact is that, from the age of 20, when he suffered a serious case of pneumonia, he was required to be very careful regarding his health. Even despite precautions, he suffered a number of severe attacks of pneumonia, bronchitis, pleurisy, and appendicitis--always complicated by overwork.[2] Yet he took an unusual view of illness and enforced rest and accepted them as constructive occasions--times favorable for thought, study, self-evaluation, and even composition. Gavoty wrote: "Among so many images of Jehan, the most clearly heroic perhaps is the one that he offers us on his convalescent bed: an aristocrat of sickness, dominated but not vanquished, forging with weakened hands the golden scrolls of a song of triumph."[3]

An unusual, colorful thread weaves its way through much of Alain's music--a distinct penchant for exotic effects, particularly orientalism. Some of this interest may be traced to an important event at the beginning of the summer of 1931--the opening of the International Colonial Exhibition. Dominating this great fair, built in the Parisian

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 54
3. Ibid., p. 56.

suburb of Vincennes, were the exhibits from Indochina, rich in art and music. Alain went again and again to the Exhibition, fascinated by the music he heard there.[1] In 1932 he wrote: "I love old oriental things, opium-laden poems, and tales with a background of violet lanterns."[2] Years later, after hearing recordings of some Moroccan music, he wrote: "If there is a musical fiber in me, that music is it. It seems to be speaking my native language to me. What remote atavism has molded my brain?"[3] On another occasion, after playing for a friend two of his works in which the exotic element is clearly apparent, he confided: "It is not possible! I have the blood of Lamas or Buddhist monks in my veins." He concluded, with a chuckle and an Asiatic gleam in his dark eyes, "I must ask Papa about it!"[4]

On April 22, 1935, Jehan was married to Madeleine Payan, his childhood sweetheart. The young couple set up housekeeping in a small apartment in Saint-Germain. Jehan recognized and acknowledged the strength which he received from his devoted wife, in those too-few years they had together. Madeleine was not a musician herself, and she loved Jehan without judging him on the merits of his art. She knew from their childhood together that his was a spirit which inevitably concentrated on the exhausting efforts of artistic creation and which

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1. Marie-Claire Alain, loc. cit.
2. Gavoty, op. cit., p. 84.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

needed constantly to be restored. It is said that she spoke little and never about herself. But Jehan would say to her, "Because I am a musician and because I love you, I hear what you think."[1] And he summed up his debt of gratitude to his wife in one of his notebooks in a quotation which he copied from Mauriac: "Woe to him who in his days of abundance has not made sure for himself a faithful heart, one of those attachments against which time does not prevail."[2]

The miracle of Jehan Alain is that he could find time and energy for all of the accomplishments of his short adulthood. He produced well over a hundred compositions in a period of ten years. Yet during all of that time Jehan was studying at the Conservatoire; and during much of it he was earning a living as a teacher and church musician and organizing and giving concerts and recitals. Further, he found time to sketch, to read, to fill his bulging notebooks, and to carry on extensive correspondences. And yet, somehow, he was able to share his hours generously with his family and friends.

No doubt much of Alain's capacity for creation was his ability to detach himself from his surroundings in order to follow his train of thought.[3] He could compose in class while a fellow student would be laboriously improvising a fugue at the organ. His ideas came to him and were put on paper in most unexpected places--perhaps in a café or on a train. His "Choral dorien" ("Dorian Choral"), for example, was jotted

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1. Ibid., p. 46.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 51.

down on the train from Paris to Saint-Germain, in the midst of a noisy crowd of passengers.[1] Gavoty reported: "I have seen Jehan composing beside the cradle of his first-born, amid bawlings that gladden the heart of a father but generally sadden the ears of a musician."[2]

In addition to his remarkable powers of concentration, Jehan, despite a disposition to periods of illness, possessed an amazing resistence to fatigue. A long day's routine of school work and church duties left him still with energy and enthusiasm for music, for writing, for sketching, and for his family,[3] which came to include three children. Lise was born in 1936, Agnes in 1938, and Denis in 1939.

Gavoty, a frequent visitor in the Alain household, has given us some revealing recollections of those visits which bear recounting at length:

> Often a word was sufficient to invite me to spend Sunday at Saint-Germain. Along with some friends, I would embark, on a train loaded with food on the way there and bedecked with lilacs on the way back. Our group would invade the little apartment, decorated by the master of the house. In the vestibule, the head of a drunkard painted by Jehan looked defiant. Never did a masterpiece more enchant its own creator. "It is not necessary," he would say, "for an interior to be decorated to perfection. You run the risk of getting tired of that perpetual perfection, just as you get tired of the perpetual 'rare word' of witty people. . . . When I come home from Paris and encounter my drunkard in the vestibule, I am cheered up--as if somebody had told me that the Pope plays billiards." In the living room a large charcoal and chalk sketch showed four faces, each symbolizing one of the keyboards of the organ. That strange picture hung over the grand piano around which we gathered. One of us would dig up a manuscript. Somebody would seat Jehan, by force, on the bench. What is to be done in the

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 56.

3. Ibid., p. 47.

> presence of a piano except to play it? The composer would decipher his work carelessly and spiritedly, slowing down at the thorny passages, with his neck stuck forward. And he would seem to discover with us that still-so-new music that came out of him and which he had not yet learned to recognize. Bewildered by the unknown, we would often ask him to start over again; and he, obediently, would play the passage or the entire piece two or three times. Sincere, and as prompt to express our doubts as to show our enthusiasm, we did not spare our comments. When a phrase or a harmony would tear a delighted cry from someone, Jehan would turn the glare of his two eyeglasses toward the interrupter, as if better to probe into him, and would say sceptically: "You like that? You think it's all right? . . ."
>
> In fact, when a passage really pleased him, Jehan seemed to savor it with a completely new ear. He would concede: "Yes, yes, perhaps. . . ." We admired that emotion of the creator in the presence of his work--that enjoyment that was free of any vanity and which would betray itself by a little characteristic grimace and a sudden warmth in his playing.[1]

Jehan later moved his growing family to a pretty little country house, where he delighted in the garden, the trees, and the birds.[2] In regard to a visit there Gavoty wrote this recollection of a conversation with his friend:

> Leaning on the piano, I scrutinized his face while he was playing, carried away by the frenzy of interpretation. . . . I let out a sarcastic laugh at a particularly "peppery" harmony. "Oh, my good friend," he cried to me, "you can't stand anything but perfect harmony!" It is true that I could scarcely conceal my aversion to his calculated boldness, to which he often resorted in his desire to astonish. . . . "To sum it up," Jehan conceded, overcome with pity at the expression of pain on my face, "you think that the union of 'g' sharp of my right hand with 'g' natural of my left is bandy-legged and perverse? All right," he sighed comically, "let's resign ourselves to a marriage of convenience. . . ." And with a quick stroke of an eraser, he removed the offending note.[3]

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1. Ibid., pp. 47-48.

2. Ibid., p. 48.

3. Ibid., p. 49.

In 1936 Alain began to associate with a group of four young[1] musicians who called themselves "Jeune France" ("Young France"),[2] borrowing and reviving an expression which had been coined by Berlioz nearly a hundred years earlier. These four were Yves Baudrier, André Jolivet, Daniel Lesur, and Olivier Messiaen. The unifying factor of that group was not to be found in similarity of composing techniques but rather in the common aesthetic aspiration of its members.[3] As they stated in their manifesto, published in the program of their first concert on June 3, 1936: "The tendencies of this group will be diverse, but we do agree that our satisfaction can be only in sincerity, generosity, and critical conscience. Our aim is to create and to foster a living music."[4] One may search in vain for evidence of any great influence of these four men as a group. But individually each has made important contributions to French music. Messiaen, in particular, has had enormous influence upon the development of music, French and international, in the past 20 years; but this has been independent of "Jeune France." Actually, time has revealed that the greatest strength of the group was its effective publicity, for it did manage to secure sizeable audiences and favorable critical notices for its concerts.[5] And true

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1. These four men were all older than Alain. Baudrier was born in 1906; Jolivet in 1905; Lesur in 1908; and Messiaen in 1908.

2. Olivier Alain, loc. cit.

3. Claude Rostand, French Music Today, trans. Henry Marx (New York: Merlin Press, [1958]), p. 33.

4. Ibid., p. 36.

5. Ibid., p. 40.

to its motto of generosity, it welcomed musicians from outside its membership to appear as performers and composers at its concerts.[1]

It was as a "guest," then, that Alain joined two of these men on February 17, 1938, to present a program of organ music at the Paris Church of La Trinité, where Messiaen was organist and the instrument was a fine Cavaillé-Coll. Messiaen and Lesur each played some of their own works; and Alain performed his "Jardin suspendu," "Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin" ("Variations on a Theme of Clément Jannequin"), and the middle movement of the "Trois danses" ("Three Dances"), which he called "Danse funèbre pour célébrer une mémoire héroïque" ("Funeral Dance to Honor a Heroic Memory"). Afterward, one critic wrote that the works of those three men guaranteed to us "the high spirituality . . . of the young school of French organ composers."[2]

That was not Alain's first critical acclaim, however. In 1936 he had won the coveted first prize--with a purse of 3,000 francs--in the competition sponsored by the society known as "Amis de l'orgue" ("Friends of the Organ"), with second and third prizes going to Gaston Litaze and André Fleury.[3] Alain's prize-winning composition was his "Suite" consisting of the "Introduction et Variations, Scherzo, et Choral" ("Introduction and Variations, Scherzo, and Choral").

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1. Ibid.

2. Norbert Dufourcq, "Une audition de musique d'orgue," La Revue Musicale, No. 182 (March, 1938), pp. 221-22.

3. "Echos et Nouvelles," La Revue Musicale, No. 167 (July-August, 1936), p. iii.

By the end of 1939 Alain's talent was beginning to be known in French musical circles. His work as a composer for the organ had been described as early as 1937 in a bulletin of the "Amis de l'orgue" called "Le Jeune Ecole d'orgue français"[1] ("The Young School of French Organists"). Several of his organ works were published in 1938. And he was called one of the most promising young composers in the field in an important article, "Panorama de la musique d'orgue française au XX^e siècle"[2] ("Panorama of French Organ Music of the Twentieth Century"), which appeared in La Revue Musicale in 1939. But the Second World War was then just beginning, and it was soon to catch up many of the young men of France. Alain was called to the Army in August of 1939, leaving behind his wife and two little daughters. His son was born in November, but Jehan was to see him only once, when he was home on a short leave.[3]

Assigned to the 8th Cuirassiers as a motorcycle messenger, Alain spent the long winter of 1939-1940 in the snow near the border.[4] It would be incorrect, however, to assume that he gave up music in exchange for the military. Indeed, some of his musical activities during those cold, bitter months are typically amazing. For example, with the permission of his captain, he organized a group of fellow soldiers into a chorus which, with his customary amusing touch, he named "Petit chanteurs à la grosse voix" ("Little Singers with Big Voices"). In a

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1. Gavoty, La Jeune Ecole d'orgue français (Paris: Amis de l'orgue, 1937).

2. Dufourcq, "Panorama de la musique d'orgue française au XX^e siècle," La Revue Musicale, No. 189 (March, 1939), pp. 103-16.

3. Olivier Alain, loc. cit.

4. Ibid.

brief time he had trained them to sing in three and four parts, he himself writing and arranging music for them. During this period also he completed the orchestration of his "Trois danses." These three works, titled "Joies" ("Joys"), "Deuils" ("Sorrows"), and "Luttes" ("Struggles"), had been composed in a piano sketch toward the end of 1937. The second dance was transcribed for organ by the composer when he learned of the opportunity he would have to perform it in February of 1938, at the concert in which he collaborated with Messiaen and Lesur at the Church of La Trinité.[1] There is little doubt that Alain's ultimate intention was to score the three movements for orchestra.[2] However, during the year that followed, his very busy schedule--complicated by a series of attacks of appendicitis and finally an operation--kept him from completing that task. Fortunately, after entering the army, he first completed an organ transcription of the work, which he sent to an organist friend, Noëlie Pierront. The orchestral version, undoubtedly the composer's completed conception of the work, was lost somewhere in Belgium, along with a briefcase containing all the works he had composed during the war months.[3]

Alain took part in the Battle of Flanders and received two citations for his bravery in that ill-fated conflict.[4] He was among those evacuated from Dunkerque, reaching England on June 1, 1940. Within a few days, however, he was repatriated to France, where he enlisted

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1. Marie-Claire Alain, loc. cit.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Gavoty, Jehan Alain: musicien français, p. 107.

in a Free Corps.[1] The end came on June 20. Alain, in carrying out reconnaissance missions around Saumur, had been cut off for two days from his own unit. Thus he did not know that his group had been ordered to fall back. He joined a detachment which was attempting to defend Saumur from an enemy flanking movement through a little suburb called Petit-Puy. When a call was issued for a volunteer to reconnoiter the enemy lines, he answered it, as he had done so often those recent months. He rode on his motorcycle to the top of a vineyard-covered hill, arriving just as the enemy, in large numbers, began to ascend. Taking cover behind a ruined wall, Alain was surrounded by perhaps as many as thirty men. Surrender was possible, but he apparently never considered it, instead bringing down 16 men with his machine gun. Ammunition gone, he made a break for his motorcycle, hidden in the vines. It is said that, though unarmed, he turned and faced his assailant, when he realized that escape was impossible.[2] Thus he fell, in the ruins of a little garden, a bullet in his heart.[3] What he could not know was that an armistice would be signed only two days later.

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1. Olivier Alain, loc. cit.

2. Gavoty, Jehan Alain: musicien français, pp. 119-20.

3. Gavoty, "Jehan Alain: a Tribute," The American Organist, XXXIX (March, 1956), p. 88.

CHAPTER III

THE ORGAN MUSIC OF JEHAN ALAIN

The Catalogue and the Publications

The compositions of Alain, as they are listed in chronological order in the Gavoty catalogue[1] (see Appendix C), are given 93 Opus Numbers. Not included in this list are several transcriptions, some fragments, and a few "miniatures," including a "Post-scriptum" ("Post-script")[2] and a "Choral cistercien" ("Cistercian Choral"),[3] each but a few measures in length. The catalogue lists 45 works for piano, 22 for organ, one for string quintet, two for violoncello and piano, one for three wind instruments, and 17 for voice or chorus. Some confusion is evident in this list because the composer wrote some of these works in more than one version. The "Ballade en mode phrygien" ("Ballade in the Phrygian Mode") is for either piano or organ; "Lamento" is listed for piano but is published in an organ version; "Andante varié" for string quintet is a transcription of the variations of the organ "Suite"; the second movement of the "Suite monodique" ("Monodic Suite") for piano was transcribed for organ by the composer but is unpublished; "Fantasmagorie" for organ was developed later into the "Litanies"; "Intermezzo" for two pianos and bassoon was transcribed by the composer for organ.

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1. Gavoty, Jehan Alain: musicien français, pp. 195-204.
2. Ibid., p. 71.
3. Olivier Alain, loc. cit.

An examination of the catalogue shows that Alain was more interested in writing for piano than for organ in his early years. From 1929 through 1933 there are many more works for piano than for organ. However, for 1934 there are nine organ works but only one for piano. Compositions for organ, piano, voice, and chorus seem to be given about equal attention in the years following, with a particular emphasis on vocal works in 1938. For that year nine works are listed for voice or chorus, including three Masses. The "Aria" for organ is the only listing in 1939, for most of Alain's compositions of that year and of the early months of 1940 were lost.

The "Suite monodique" was published in 1935 and the "Deux chorals" ("Two Chorals") for organ in 1938. A set of three organ works consisting of "Le Jardin suspendu," "Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin," and the "Litanies" appeared in print in 1939. These were the only compositions by Alain which were published during his lifetime.

After Alain's death, most of his piano and organ works were published--in two sets of three volumes each, issued from 1942 to 1944. The set of organ works has subsequently been reissued in an enlarged and revised version, edited by Marie-Claire and Olivier Alain. These 22 works, plus the "Deux chorals," are the substance of Alain's output for the organ and form the basis for this study.

The Three Stylistic Periods

The organ compositions of Alain divide naturally into three chronological groups, representing stages of his development as a composer.

The first period covers the years from 1929 to 1933 and includes eight compositions. These are small works--some but one page in length--written in a language that is gentle and quiet. The composer had not yet discovered the sound of the full organ, which he would use later with great impact. The lines flow along, occasionally taking unexpected turns, embroidering the harmony with flashes of bright dissonant color. Many moods are reflected in these works, which are in turn whimsical, sad, thoughtful, or devotional. The rhythms fluctuate freely, sometimes with the movement of plainsong and other times with the cadence of recitative. These small works, almost crowded out of view by the piano compositions of the same years, reveal the original turn of mind of their composer. Yet they only begin to hint at the organ works that follow.

The second group, produced in the years from 1933 through 1939, show the breadth of thought, the depth of feeling, and the richness of originality of the composer. Beginning with the "Deux chorals" and including all subsequent works except the "Trois danses," they reveal a composer mature beyond his years to whom musical ideas came freely and were written down quickly. These are works of many genres, inspired by a variety of poetic, literary, religious, and philosophical ideas. They bear the unmistakable stamp of the composer's individuality--melodically, harmonically, and rhythmically. The manner is that of "disciplined improvisation,"[1] so natural to the organist; and form molds itself to the development of the musical idea. In this group of 16 works

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1. Fred Goldbeck, "Jehan (Ariste) Alain," Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Eric Blom (5th ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1954), I, p. 86.

are found preludes, variations, fantasies, chorals, a chaconne, a prelude and fugue, a suite, and works of free form.

One work stands apart in the third classification--the "Trois danses." This composition, the grandest in its conception and most elaborate in its structure of all the organ works, may well be the composer's masterpiece. If so, it is an unfinished masterpiece, for circumstances prevented its full development. Though the existing version may not be all its creator intended, we are fortunate to have it, for it is the composer's only work in a large form. Indeed, perhaps part of its power is its promise of what might have been, had events taken a different turn.

An Analysis of the Music

Melody

It was natural that Alain, with his background in the tradition of the French organ school, would conceive of his music horizontally rather than vertically. Gavoty said: "Accustomed from early youth to revere counterpoint like an idol, he flees the vertical and does not write a line the horizon of which cannot be made out in the distance."[1] Yet despite the contrapuntal texture which generally characterizes Alain's music, his style does not always give equal importance to every voice, and he frequently employs melody with contrapuntal accompaniment.

It will be shown later that much--if not most--of Alain's music contains a high degree of chromaticism. But it is a free chromaticism--

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1. Gavoty, Jehan Alain: musicien français, p. 79.

one based neither on the chromaticism of late nineteenth century systematic tonality nor on the chromaticism of twentieth century systematic atonality. One would expect Alain's melodic material to be chromatic, and such sometimes is the case. Yet perhaps more frequently his melodic material reveals other types of tonal organization, which, considering Alain's disdain of systems, we can assume to be intuitive rather than calculated. These melodic structural organizations are the following: modes (Church modes and Greek modes); synthetic scales; modal modulation, interchange, and fluctuation;[1] and reiterated melodic motives.

Modes

With the exception of only three of his compositions, all of the melodic material in Alain's organ works was original. Contrary to what one might expect of a composer for the organ, Alain made only two settings of melodies borrowed from the liturgical music of his church, and these are both early works. They both, naturally, use the Medieval Church modes.

The "Postlude pour l'office de Complies" uses, with transposition and some modification, portions of the following Gregorian melodies:

1. Antiphon: "Miserere mihi Domine" (Hypomixolydian)
2. Hymn: "Te lucis ante terminum" (Hypomixolydian)
3. Short Response: "In manus tuas Domine" (Hypolydian)
4. Antiphon: "Salva nos, Domine, vigilantes" (Hypomixolydian)[2]

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1. The terms "modal modulation," "modal interchange," and "modal fluctuation" are suggested in Vincent Persichetti's Twentieth-Century Harmony (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1961), p. 40.

2. Liber Usualis (Tournai, Belgium: Desclée and Co., 1959), pp. 266-72.

The "Variations sur Lucis Creator" ("Variations on Lucis Creator") is a setting of the first verse of the ancient hymn for Sunday at Vespers, "Lucis Creator optime" (Hypomixolydian).[1]

Considerably later, in 1937, Alain wrote a theme and variations on a Renaissance chanson which he called "Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin." This was actually a misnomer, for the melody was not by Jannequin but was, rather, from an anonymous chanson, "L'e spoir que i'ay d'acquerir vostre grace," contained in the collection published by Attaingnant in 1529.[2] For the theme Alain used the melody in the Renaissance Aeolian Mode (transposed to G, as was the original), with slight rhythmic modification. In the variations he departed freely from the original mode.

The Aeolian Mode, or natural minor, appears also in the "Petite Pièce" ("Little Piece"), transposed to G and F Sharp. Another occurrence of the Aeolian Mode is a very effective one--in a chant-like solo passage, at the conclusion of the "Aria" where its simplicity is in sudden contrast to the chromaticism which has preceded it.

The Dorian Mode, transposed to D Flat, is the basis for the melodic material of the "Litanies." The quasi-Gregorian style of the melody suggests a deliberate use of the Church mode by the composer.

It has been suggested that three of Alain's organ works use the

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1. Ibid., p. 256.

2. M. Henry Expert, Les Maîtres Musiciens de la Renaissance Française (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1897), V, p. 13-15.

Greek modes.[1] These are the "Ballade en mode phrygien" and the "Deux chorals."

The "Ballade," in the first and last of its three sections, does seem to make use of a mode which might, as the title suggests, be the Greek Phrygian (D to D, on the diatonic scale). This melodic material is transposed sequentially through several pitches, but the mode is firmly re-established at the conclusion.

The "Deux chorals" do not correspond so readily to modal titles, and the suggestion that they are cast in the Greek modes seems highly questionable. The "Choral dorien" ("Dorian Choral") uses as its melodic material a hybrid major-minor scale--the ascending portion of the melodic minor. Its tonic is D (and later, when transposed, F and A). The concluding chord of the work is a minor triad on E, but this hardly justifies the claim that the Greek Dorian (E to E) is its basis. The melodic material of the "Choral phrygien" ("Phrygian Choral") reveals not even a synthetic modal basis but is instead quite free chromatically. Only at the beginning, at a middle cadence, and at the end is there a suggestion of harmonic stability--a D Minor chord, perhaps the justification for the Greek Phrygian description (D to D).

Synthetic scales.

Some of Alain's melodic material is based on arbitrary arrangements of tones into "synthetic scales." Here the composer's ear was

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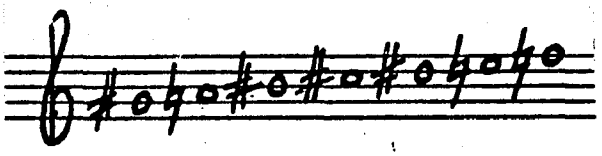
1. Dufourcq, La Musique d'Orgue Française de Jehan Titelouze à Jehan Alain, 2d ed. (Paris: Librairie Floury, 1949), p. 243.

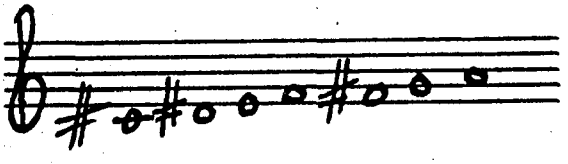
undoubtedly his guide, and it seems highly unlikely that he was concerned with the question of whether or not his melodies outlined synthetic or original scales. The following are examples of synthetic scales in Alain's music:

The melody of the "Berceuse sur deux notes qui cornent" ("Lullaby on two Ciphering Notes") is based on the following seven notes:

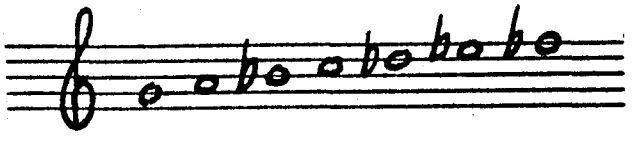
Part of the melodic material of "Lamento" uses this set of notes:



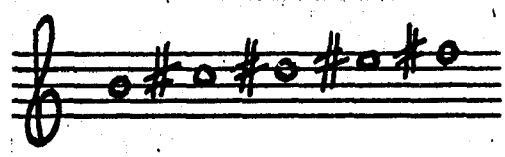
The melodic material of "Grave" is based on the following:



The chaconne melody of "Le jardin suspendu" is based on the following:



Near the end of the "Première fantaisie" ("First Fantasy") is a strikingly simple melodic passage based on the following five tones:

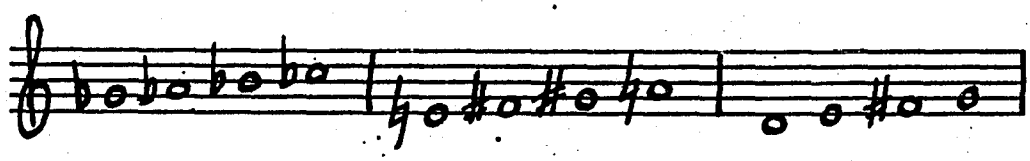


Modal Modulation, Modal Interchange, and Modal Fluctuation

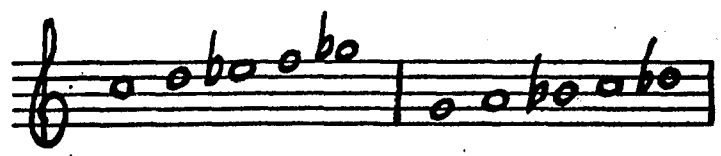
Beginning in 1934, with the "Suite," and continuing through all of Alain's works, a subtle organization can be found in some of his melodies--particularly those of a sustained and extended nature. These involve "modal modulation," "modal interchange," and "modal fluctuation."[1]

Modal modulation occurs when a melody moves from one tonal center to another but keeps the same structural pattern. The following two examples are illustrations of this phenomenon:

In "Climat" ("Climate") a melody moves through the following tonal schemes--the same four-note interval structure at three pitches:

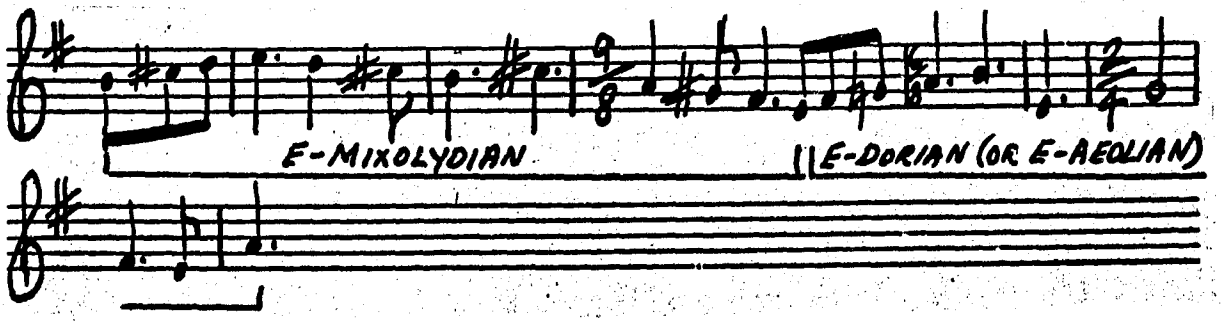


In "Petite pièce" a melody based on five tones "modulates" from C to G:



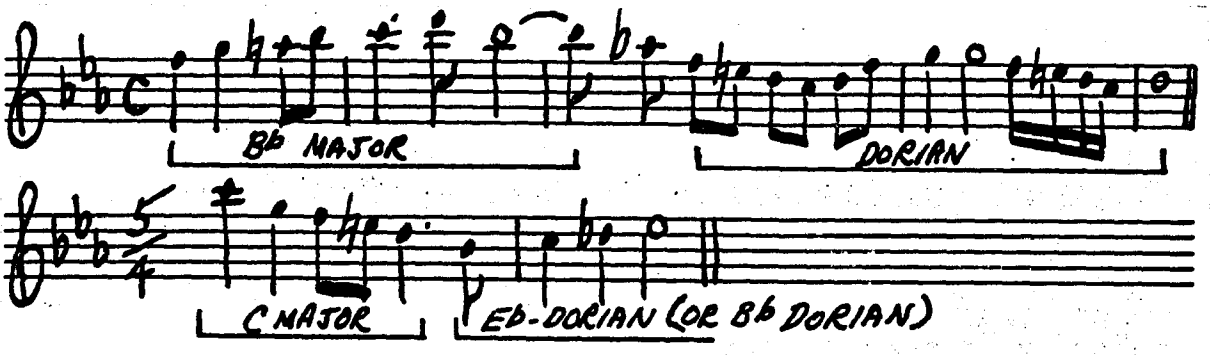
1. "Modal" is here intended to indicate any structural scale-like pattern, whether of the Medieval or Renaissance modes, the major or minor scales, or synthetic scales of as few as four tones.

Modal interchange occurs when a melody keeps the same tonal center but shifts from one modal pattern to another. This melodic passage from the "Deuxième fantaisie" ("Second Fantasy")[1] illustrates this effect:



Modal fluctuation is a more complicated concept. It occurs when a melody moves from one tonal center to another and also changes from one interval structure to another. When this phenomenon occurs in Alain's music, the different melodic-modal segments may be directly connected, or they may be separated by intervening material. The following examples illustrate modal modulation:

The "Prelude" of the "Prélude et fugue" ("Prelude and Fugue") contains this melody:



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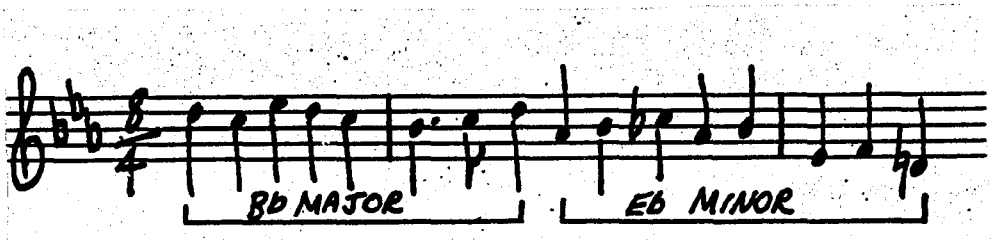
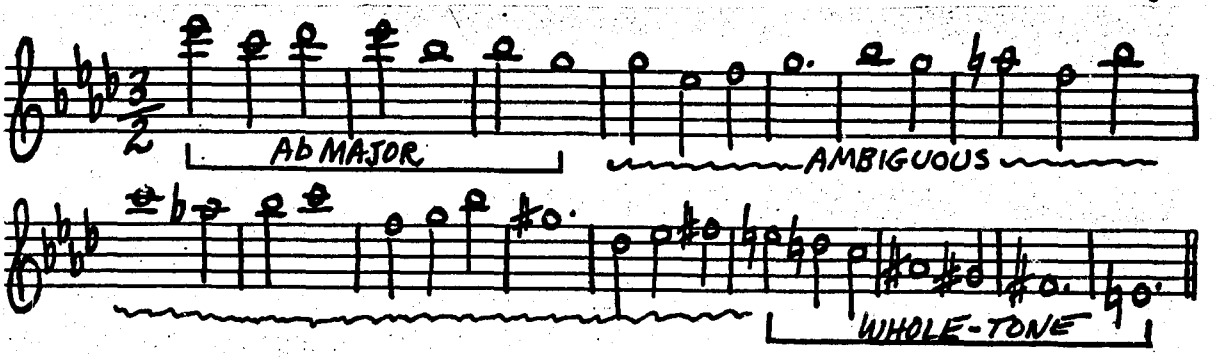
1. This example and all those which follow are included by permission of Alphonse Leduc & C^ie, 175, rue Saint Honoré, Paris, Owners and Publishers.

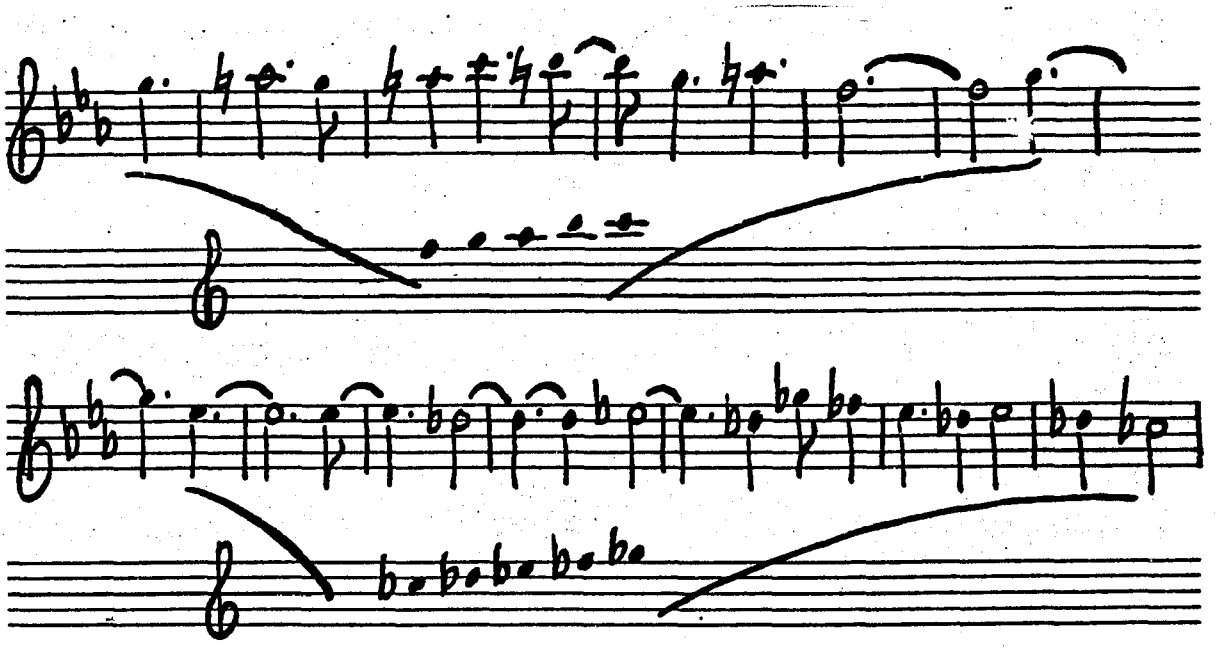
In the "Variations" from the "Suite" the following is found:



The "Choral" from the "Suite" contains this remarkable melody:



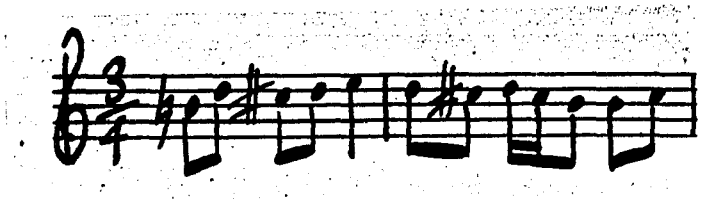
The "Aria," possibly Alain's last extant composition for the organ, contains this long melody, each half of which (as the accompanying diagram shows) outlines a five-note modal pattern:



Reiterated Melodic Motives

A characteristic feature of much of Alain's organ music is the reiteration of a melodic motive or phrase. This figure is sometimes short, but typically it is from 10 to 15 notes and built on four or five tones. In the simplest form of this method, the motive is repeated, its interval structure unchanged, both at the same pitch and at other pitches.

One of the clearest examples of this technique is found in the first of the two "Danses à Agni Yavishta" ("Dances to Agni Yavishta"), in which the following motive is repeated many times and, in the course of the two-page work, is transposed to B, F, D, A Flat, and E:

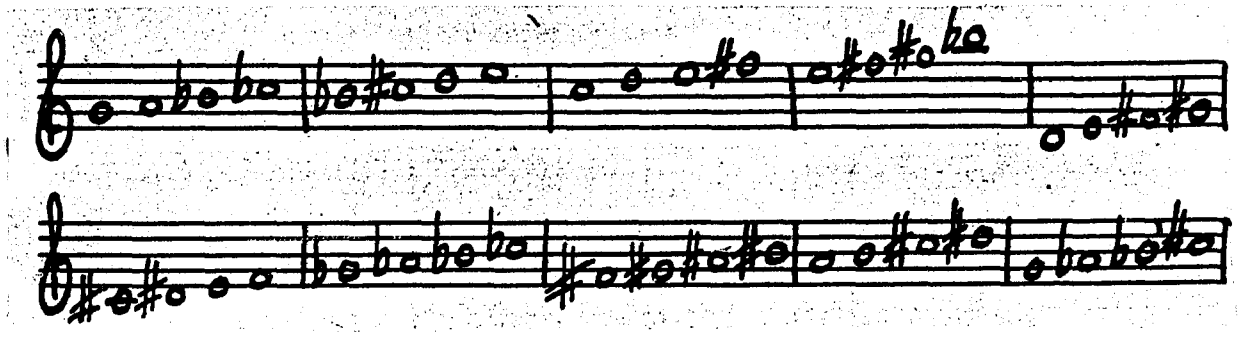


The second of the "Danses à Agni Yavishta" is developed in essentially the same manner.

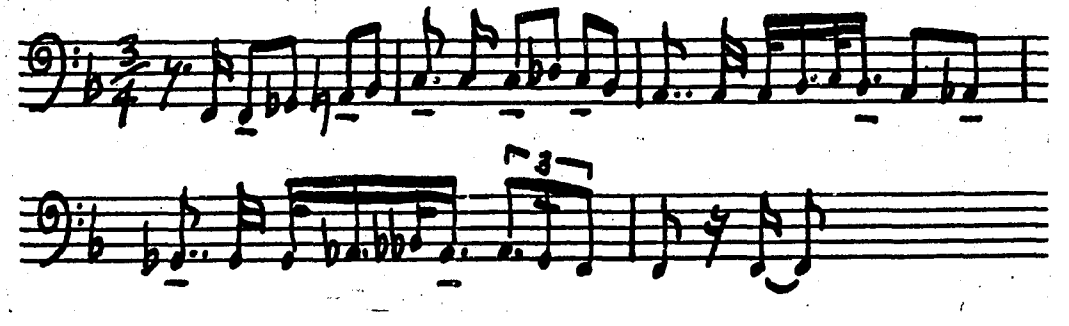
A much more advanced concept of the repeated motive forms an essential feature of Alain's most mature style, particularly as shown in the "Trois danses." Here the motive is "transformed" through expansion or contraction of one or more of its intervals. The transformed motives are also "transposed" to many different pitches.

In the first of the dances, "Joies," one of the two main themes involves four tones. In the many repetitions of the 12-note melodic passage (in this movement and also in the third movement, "Luttes,"

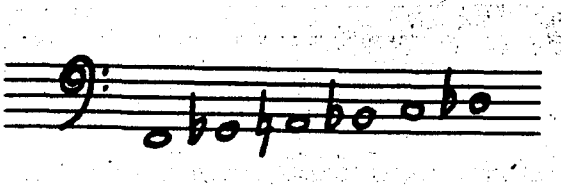
where it recurs), the interval structure is varied many times, though the general shape of the motive remains the same. The following are the interval structures of the motive in its various repetitions:



In the second of the "Trois danses," "Deuils," a long, sinuous theme is stated at the outset, as follows:



Despite some slight chromatic ornamentation (the A Flat) and enharmonic spelling, the theme is built on the following 6 tones:

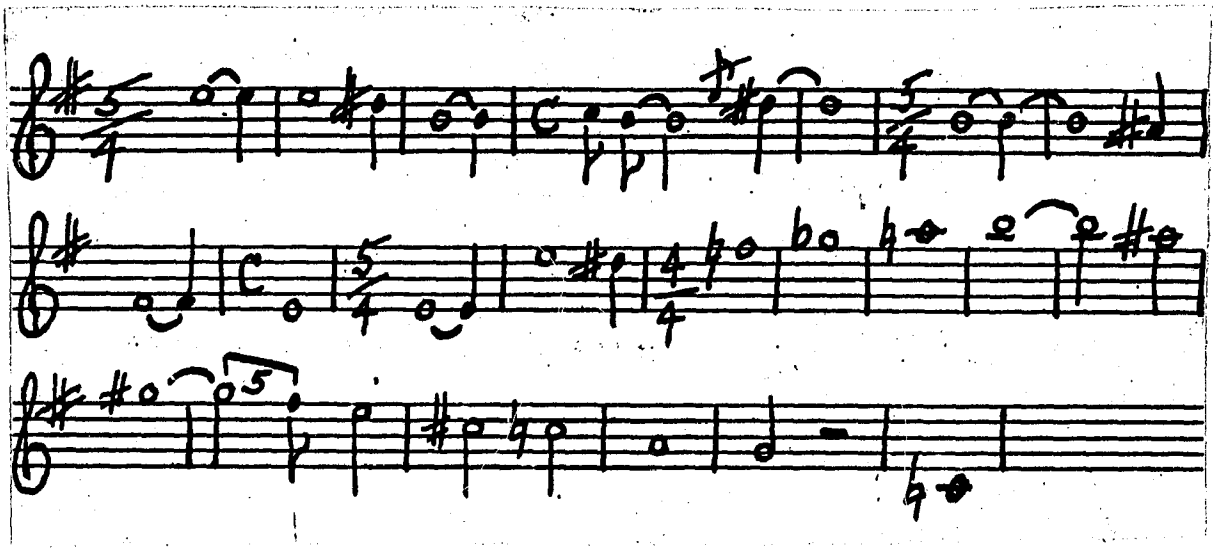


In the course of this movement and the third movement, "Luttes," where it also appears, this whole theme or portions of it are transformed through expansion and contraction, repeated on every degree of the chromatic scale.

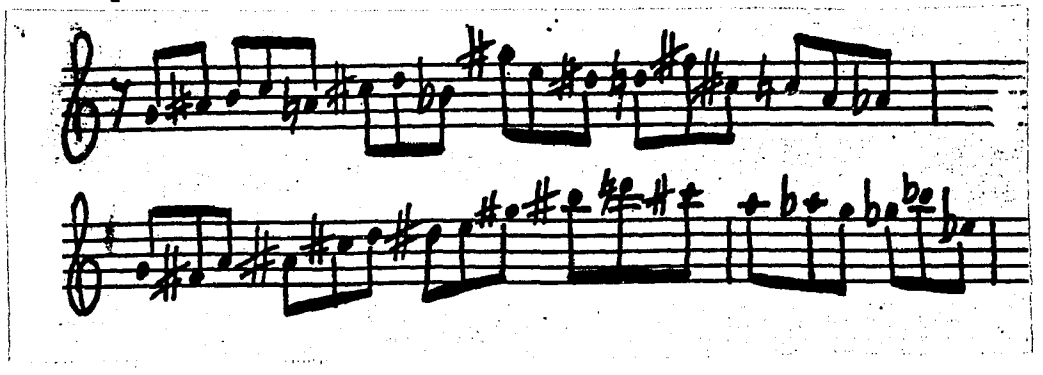
Free Chromaticism

Some of the melodic material of Alain's organ music is freely chromatic, involving no apparent interval patterns. The "Fugue" of the "Prélude et fugue," for example, uses all 12 tones of the chromatic scale, but not as a "tone row."

The complete freedom with which the composer employs enharmonic spellings complicates the examination of his chromatic melodies. The following example from "Deuxième fantaisie" illustrates Alain's free treatment of chromaticism and enharmonic spelling:



The melodic arabesque from "Le jardin suspendu" illustrates the same point:

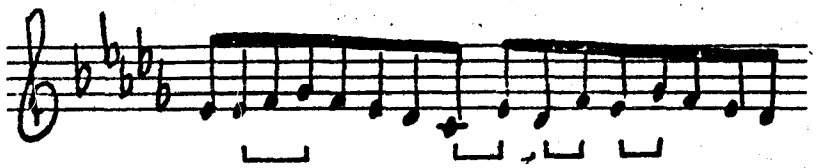


Melodic Intervals

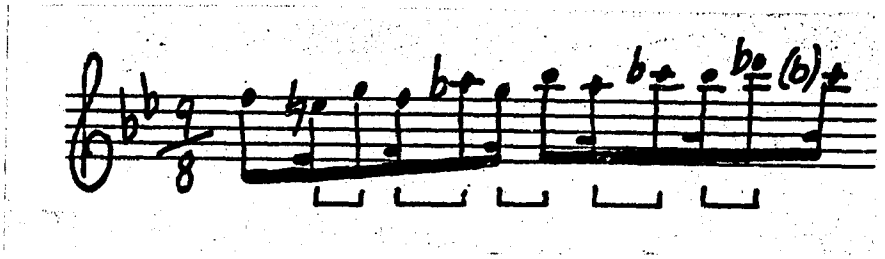
An examination of the interval makeup of Alain's melodies, disregarding tonal considerations, reveals some interesting developments and trends in his organ music. It will be observed that, despite the high incidence of chromatic alteration, there is more conjunct motion (by whole or half step) than disjunct (skip of greater than a whole step). This is true throughout the whole catalogue of Alain's works.

The most common skip is the interval of a third, major or minor. An occasional obvious use of the third in a passage seems to be a feature of the style, as is shown by the following examples:

"Variations" ("Suite")

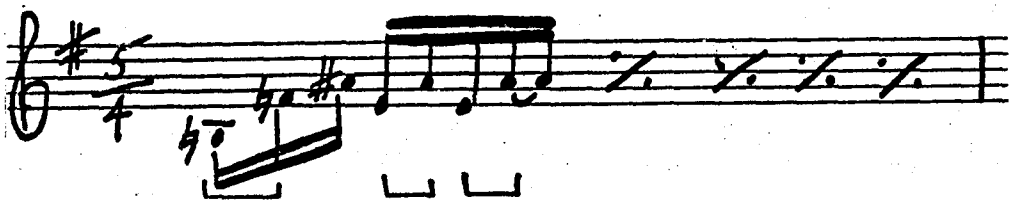


"Litanies"

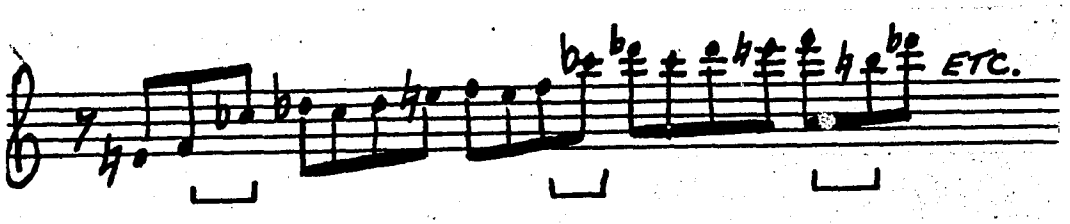


"Deuils" ("Trois danses")

Except for one early work ("Lamento"), very few augmented and diminished intervals are found until 1934, in the "Choral phrygien."[1] From this time on, however, augmented and diminished intervals of every description begin to appear, with an increasing use being made of the tritone as a favorite melodic skip until it becomes a characteristic feature of the melodic style. The following selections from the many examples illustrate the use of the tritone:



"Deuxième fantaisie"



"Prélude" ("Prélude et fugue")

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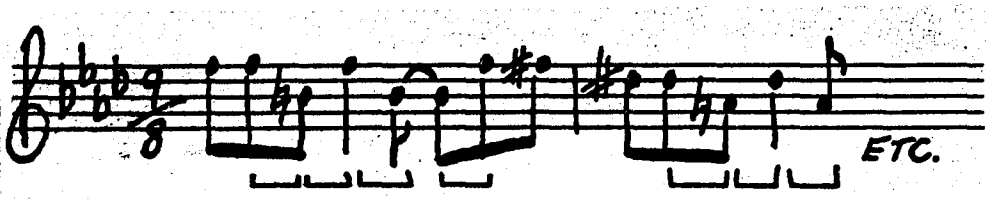
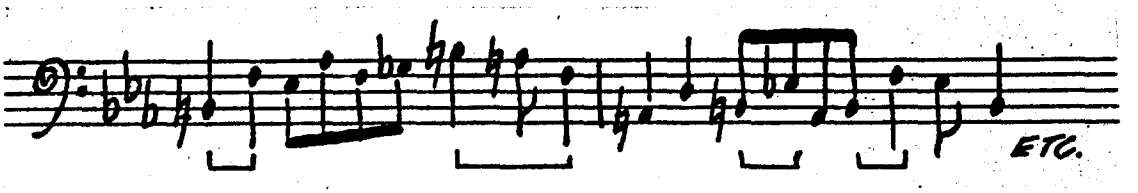
1. The composer's free enharmonic spelling often makes exact interval analysis impossible. For example, the triple diminished fourth (!) in measure 34 of the "Choral phrygien" sounds, in context, like a major second.



"Intermezzo"



"Aria"

"Joies" ("Trois danses")

Harmony

The organ music of Jehan Alain lies outside the realm of traditional harmony. This is not to say that it does not use the traditional harmonic materials. (The triad, for example, appears more often than any other chordal type.) But Alain's manipulation of the materials was hardly traditional. Nor was it systematic. Yet the harmonic sound of his music is a characteristic feature, which indicates some consistency in his harmonic technique. A complete and detailed harmonic

analysis of all of Alain's organ music is beyond the scope of this study, and it would be tantamount to a monograph on non-traditional harmony. But certain general observations regarding large-scale tonal organizations, harmonic combinations, chordal vocabulary, and chordal relationships will reveal the general harmonic style of Alain's music.

Large Scale Tonal Organizations

While Alain's music is not constructed according to traditional harmonic tonality, it is not atonal; and the existence of tonal centers is immediately apparent in his music. It is the manner in which these tonal centers are defined and the ways in which they are related that sets them apart from traditional harmony.

Practically none of Alain's organ music can be analyzed, even in a very general way, in a key or tonality. Three exceptions are:

1. The theme of the "Variations sur Lucis Creator," which is for the most part harmonized in triads built on tones found in the Mixolydian Mode.

2. The theme of "Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin," which, borrowing the melody and much of the harmony from the source, is harmonized in triads built on tones in the Aeolian Mode.

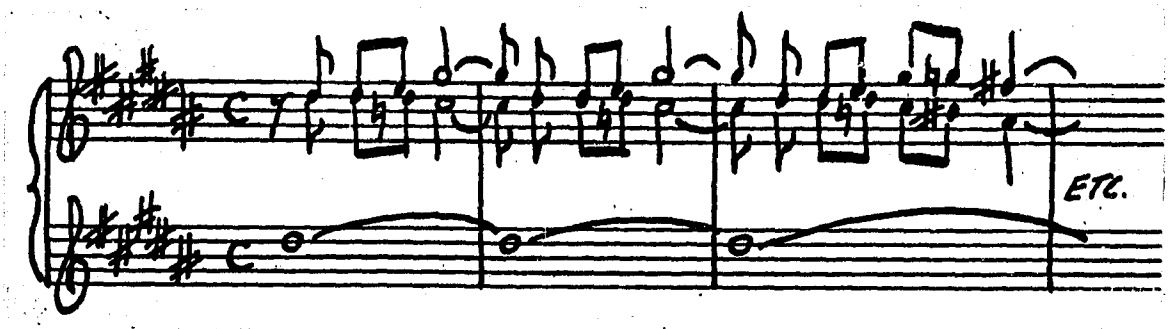
3. The fugue of the "Variations sur Lucis Creator," which is rather clearly in the key of C Major, with an almost text-book exposition of the fugue subject.

Obviously, numbers one and two (mentioned above) were influenced harmonically by the borrowed modal material and number three by the academic requirements of fugue writing.

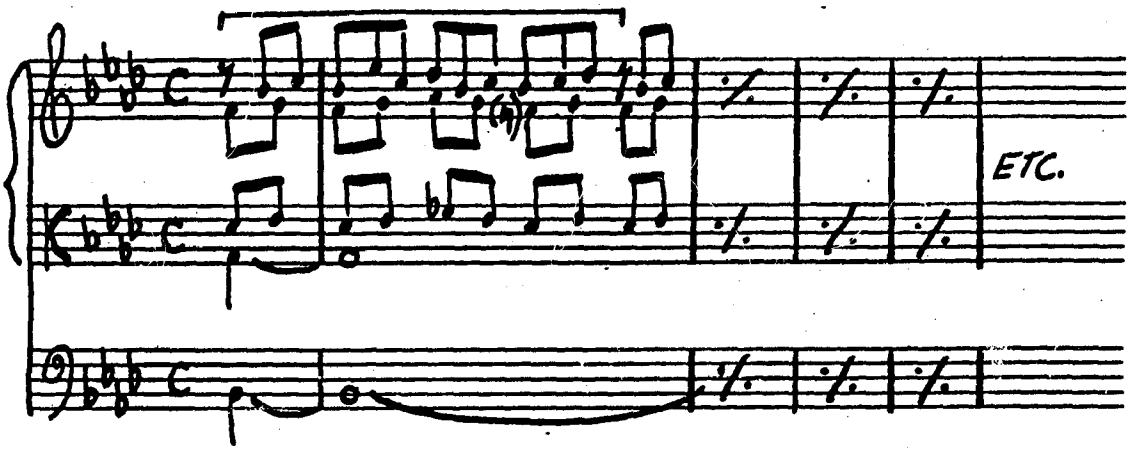
But for the most part, tonality is treated with the greatest freedom by Alain. His music is contrapuntally constructed, and the harmonies that result, while neither incidental nor (it is to be assumed) accidental, actually serve more to color the texture than to advance the movement. That is to say, the chords do not as a rule "progress," but the forward motion is often projected by other means than harmonic. Viewing the larger outlines of the music reveals it to be extremely sectional, each section often with either a "complete" harmonic pattern or a static harmonic quality. This condition exists despite the considerable amount of harmonic activity taking place above, or superimposed upon, the tonal center or harmonic center. These sections typically do not connect through modulation or through a gradual shift of tonal center; rather they often follow one another in such a way as to produce harmonic "surprise."

Probably the most obvious manner in which Alain's music establishes a tonal center is through the use of a pedal tone or pedal chord. This is characteristic of the whole catalogue, and, indeed, the first organ work, "Berceuse sur deux notes qui cornent," is built upon two sustained tones--a C Sharp and D Sharp which persist throughout the piece. Pedal tones (sometimes sustained, sometimes repeated notes), double pedal tones, and pedal chords are found in some degree on almost every page of Alain's organ music. The "Intermezzo" begins with a B Flat pedal which sustains for more than two pages. Of course, with harmonic movement above (or below) the pedal tone, the harmony is not completely static; but the influence of the pedal tone as a center cannot be

denied, as is shown by the following example from the "Scherzo" of the "Suite":

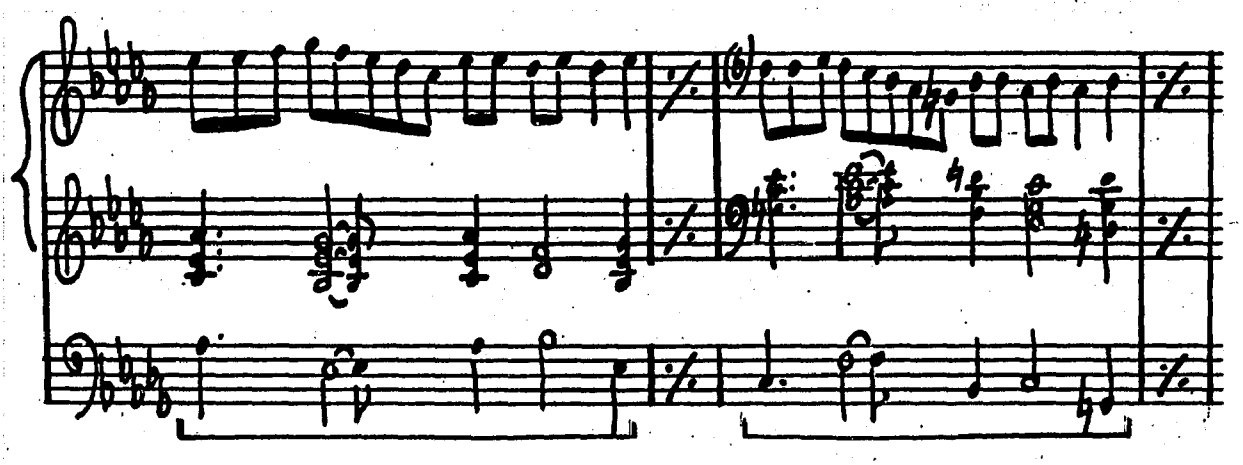


A tonal center is also established through the use of a harmonic pattern (or melodic figure outlining a harmonic pattern) repeated in ostinato fashion. Repetition is a feature of Alain's style, and the reiteration of a melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic figure becomes more and more a pronounced characteristic in his mature works. Frequently the ostinato figure is combined with a pedal tone or pedal chords, as in this example from the "Intermezzo":



When the pedal tone or chord is harmonically unrelated to the ostinato figure, two concurrent tonal centers result.

A tonal center is also established by a phrase which, while involving considerable harmonic movement, contains a sufficiently strong cadential feeling to sound relatively complete in itself. In the "Litanies," for example, almost every measure contains a complete melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic structure, with the whole work giving the effect of a musical mosaic. The following excerpt clearly illustrates this effect:

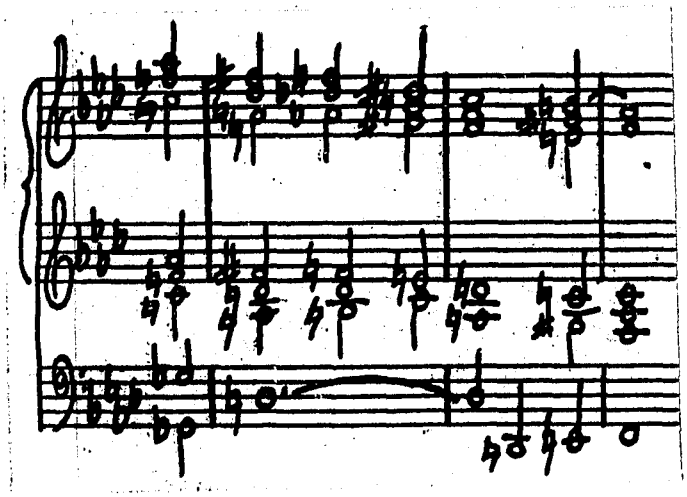


"Litanies"

It is in Alain's manner of connecting tonal centers that there seems to be no consistent practice. Tonal centers in a relationship of seconds, thirds, perfect fourths, perfect fifths, and (especially in the late works) the tritone can be found. Frequently there will be a common tone in the chordal structure ending one segment and beginning the next, but this is not the rule. There seems to be, in fact, a calculated boldness in the juxtaposition of tonal segments, just as there is in many of the other harmonic details.

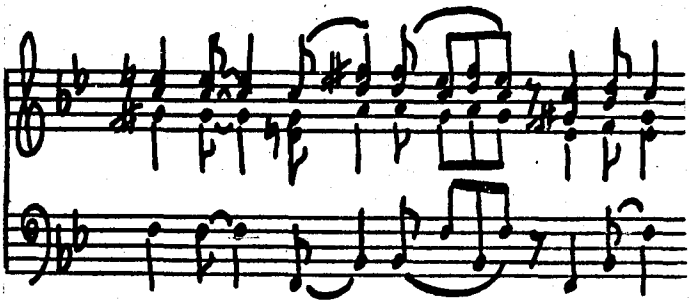
Harmonic Combinations

Polytonality is said to be present only when two or more structures, each adhering to a separate key, are combined.[1] Since even small sections of Alain's music do not adhere to keys, his music cannot properly be called polytonal. However, in his music unrelated melodies frequently move against each other and unrelated chords are often combined. This effect should be described as polyharmonic, and it can be found in all the works, becoming more and more a common characteristic in the late works. The polyharmonic sound is used more for color and dissonant embellishment than for actual harmonic motion on two or more planes. The following examples are illustrations of Alain's use of polyharmony:

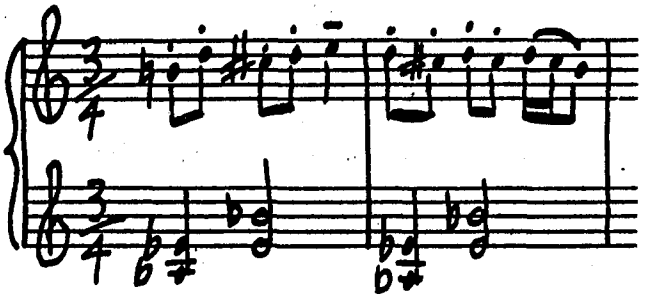


"Choral" ("Suite")

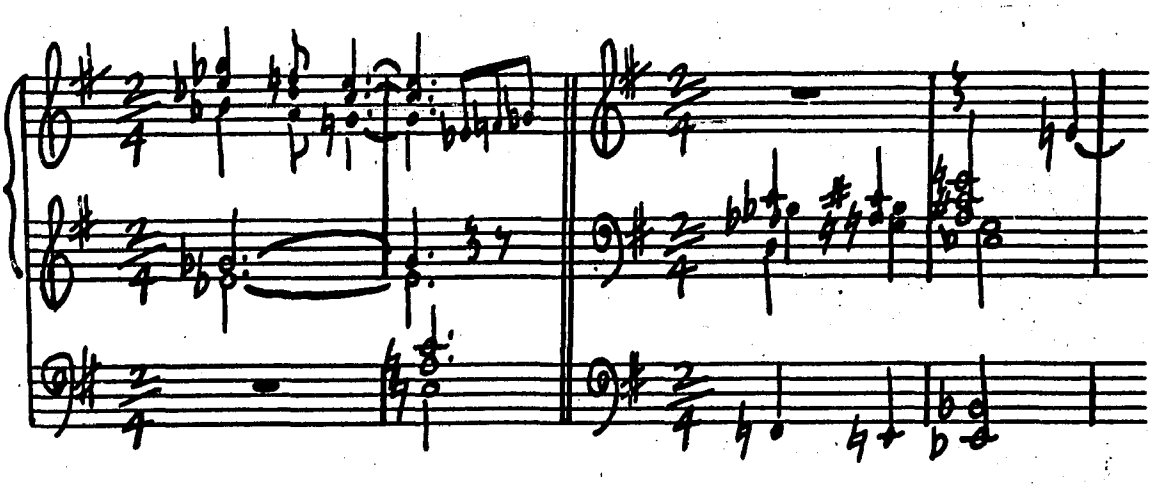
1. Persichetti, op. cit., p. 136.



"Joies" ("Trois danses")



Number One of the "Danses à Agni Yavishta"



"Deuxième fantaisie"

Chordal Vocabulary

In Alain's organ music can be found examples which spell every chord in the twentieth century composer's harmonic vocabulary. There are chords built in thirds (all types of triads, sevenths, ninths, etc.); chords in fourths and fifths; chords in seconds and sevenths; chords with added tones; and compound chords made up of a diversity of intervals. However, exact analysis of Alain's chordal structures is difficult if not, at times, impossible, because of the absence of traditional chord "function"; the "non-chord" tones produced by the contrapuntal movement; the ambiguity resulting from polyharmonic combinations; the freedom with which the composer drops, adds, or sustains a tone or tones in movement from one chord to another; and the free enharmonic spelling.

Chordal Relationships

Three principal factors produce the characteristic harmonic quality of Alain's music. They are:

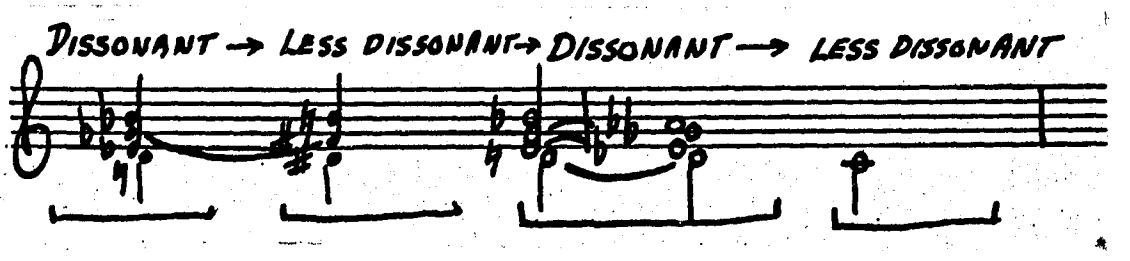
1. The triadic harmony which generally forms the basis of the harmonic fabric avoids the traditional tonic-subdominant-dominant root relationship, except in rare instances.

2. The complex chromatic counterpoint which characterizes a large part of the music mixes with the basic triadic structure to produce dissonant compound constructions.

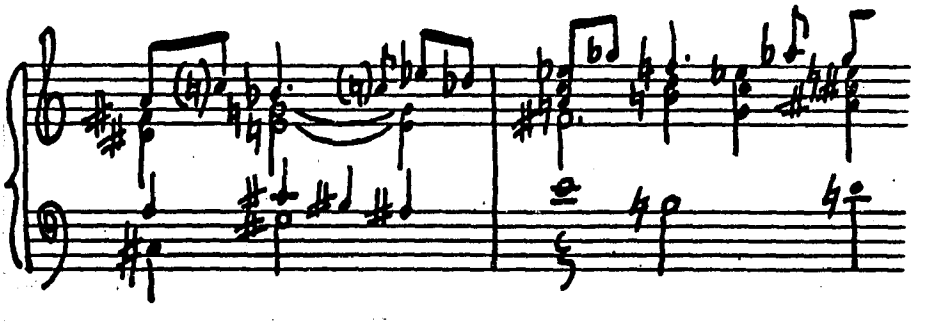
3. The combination of unrelated harmonic and melodic materials on different planes (polyharmony) creates a variety of complex harmonic

effects which cannot be analyzed satisfactorily by chordal spellings. (This includes the use of dissonant pedal tones and chords.)

Thus, strong forward harmonic progression is not a characteristic of this music. Rather, the harmony is often static or retrogressive, the forward motion being achieved by melodic and rhythmic means. Some forward motion, it must be admitted, is achieved through the resolution of dissonant chords into less dissonant, as in this example from "Le jardin suspendu":

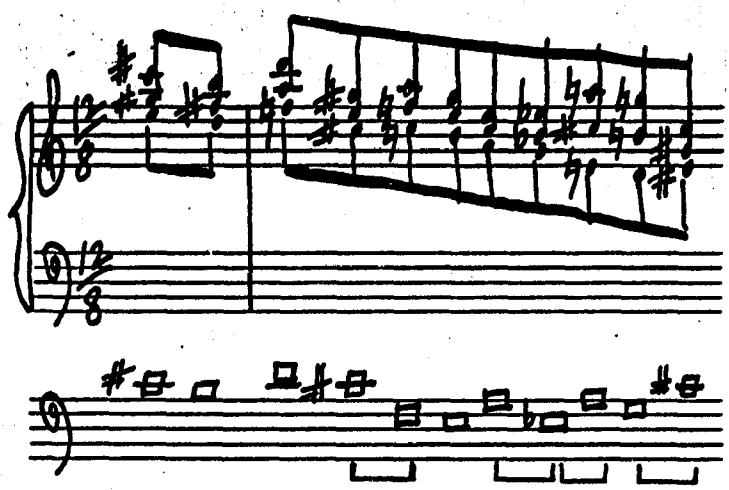


But passages of successive, more or less equal, and unresolved dissonance can be found, as in the following example from the "Introduction et Variations" ("Suite"):

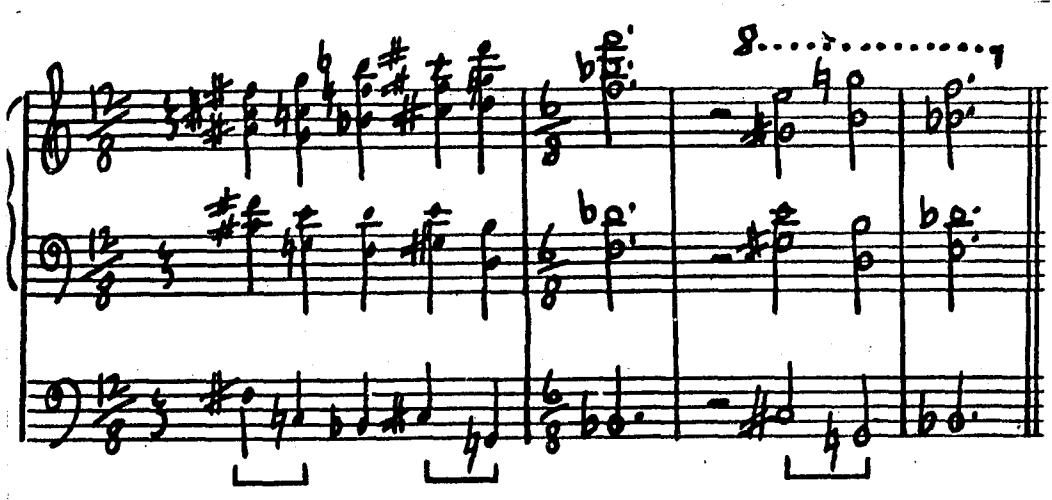


The root relationship between the chords of tertian harmony follow no apparent rule, and all intervals are found, including the perfect fourth and perfect fifth (see the example from the "Litanies" on page 41). But the tritone becomes a favorite relationship as Alain's

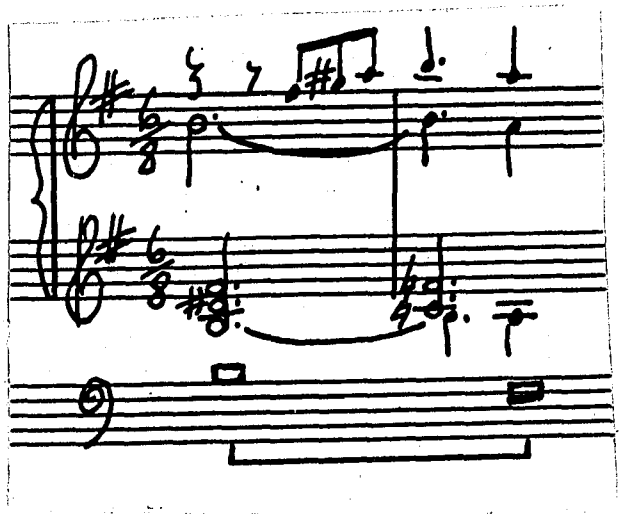
music increases in maturity, and it is that tritone relationship which, to a great degree, gives the harmony a characteristic quality. The following examples illustrate the variety of root interval relationships and the importance of the root relationship of a tritone:



"Introduction et Variations" ("Suite")

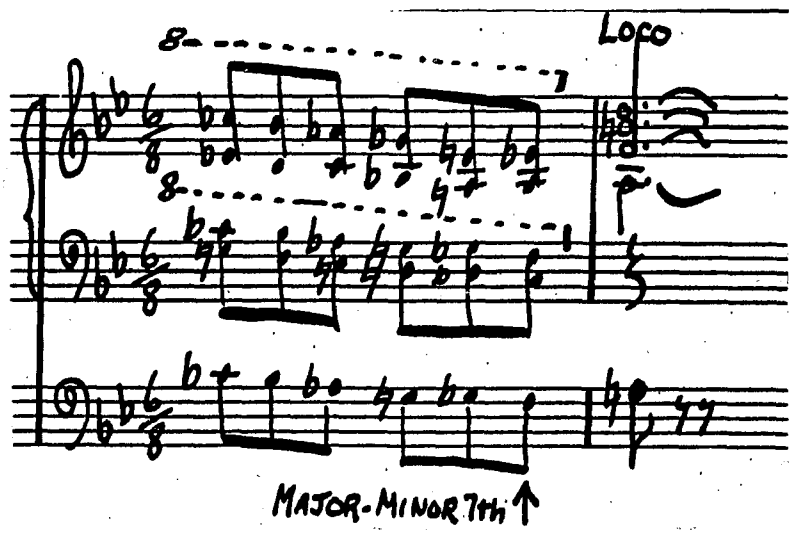


"Introduction et Variations" ("Suite")

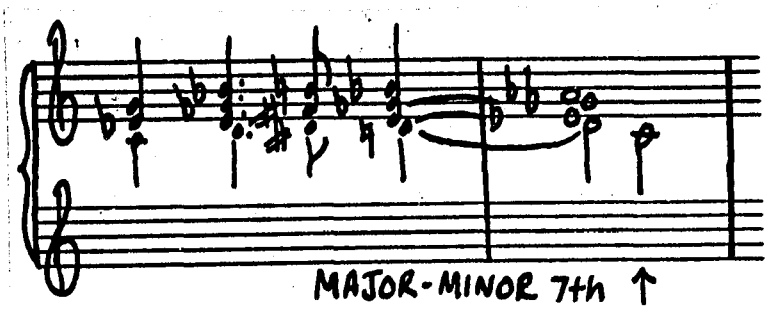


"Deuxième fantaisie"

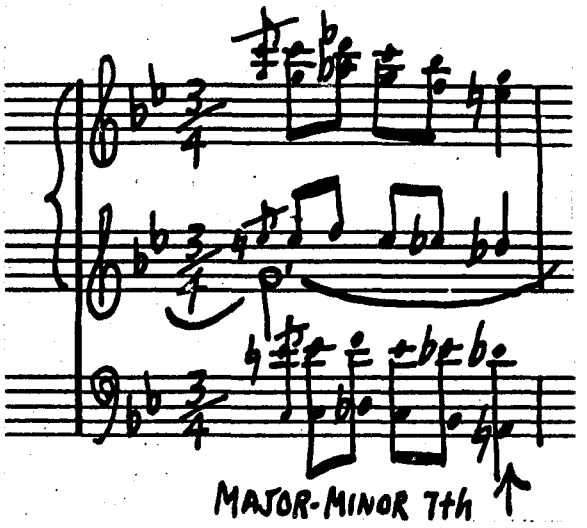
The tritone is directionally vague; but it is also unique in color--a color which apparently appealed to the composer and which may explain his fondness for diminished seventh and major-minor seventh chords. The unexpected appearance of these two chords, in a sharply dissonant context, is characteristic of Alain's harmonic style, as illustrated by the following examples.



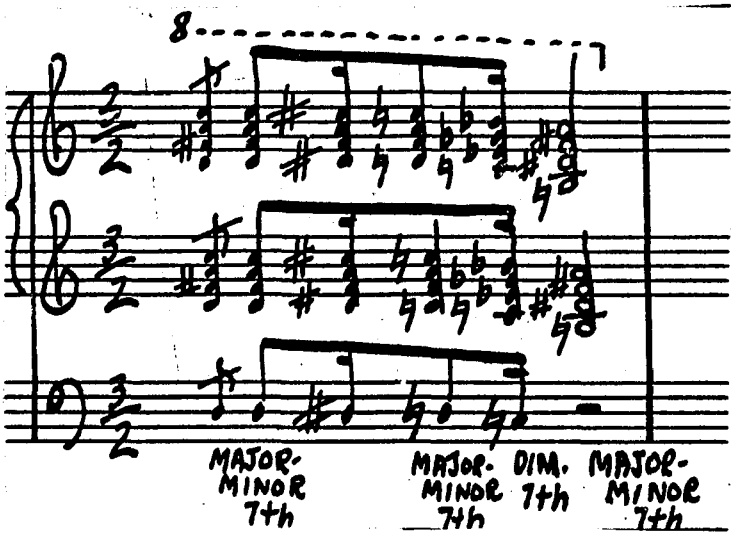
"Deuils" ("Trois danses")



"Le jardin suspendu"

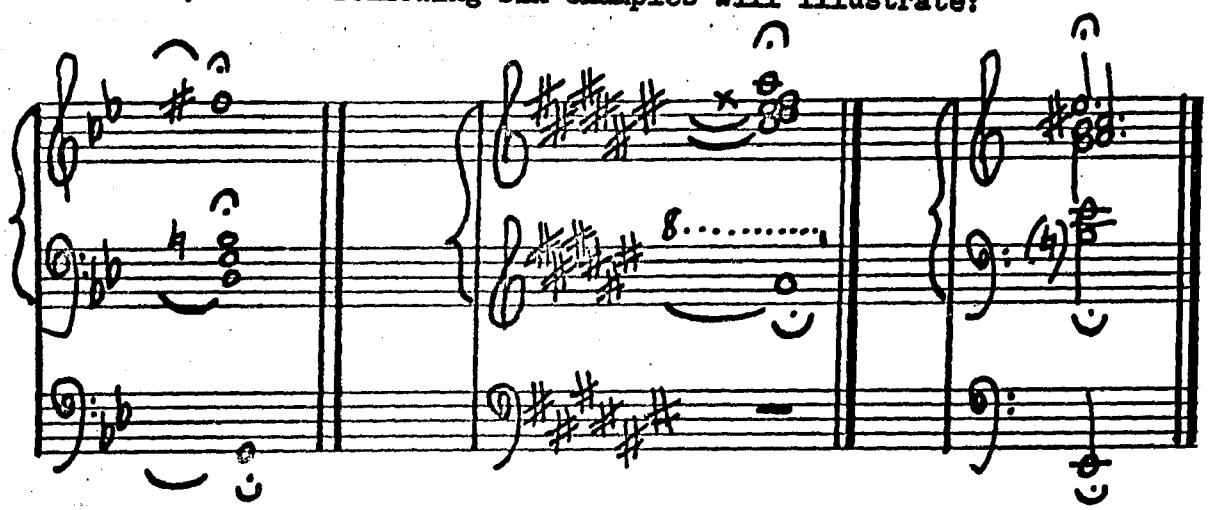


"Deuils" ("Trois danses")



"Luttes" ("Trois danses")

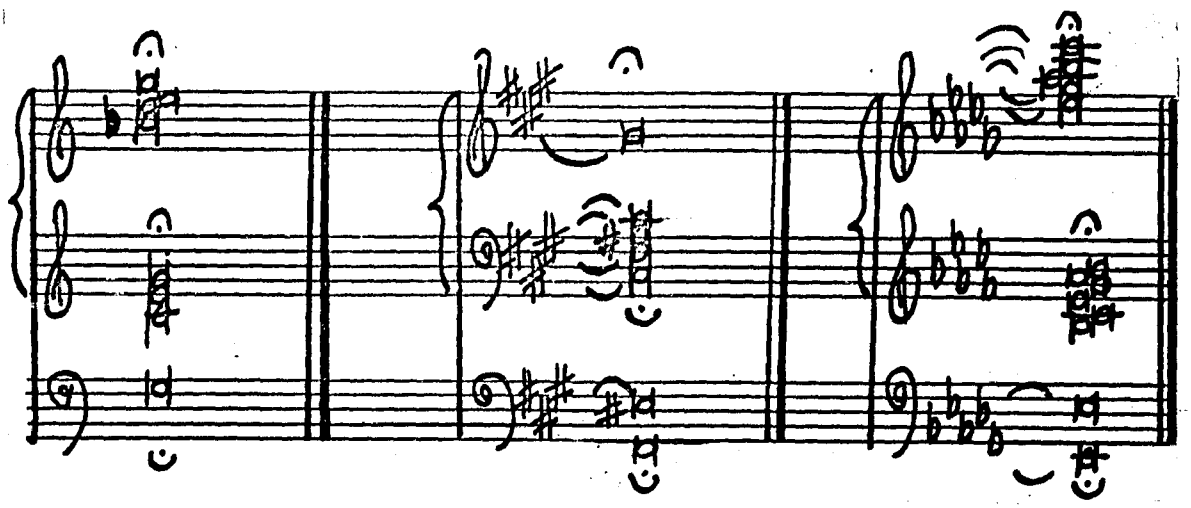
Indicative of the intentional harmonic vagueness of Alain's music is the fact that 10 of the 30 complete movements constituting his organ output conclude with chords lacking a feeling of finality--that is, chords other than triads, open fifths, or unisons. These concluding chords vary from simple sevenths to extremely complex constructions, as the following six examples will illustrate:



"Postlude pour l'office des Complies"

"Berceuse sur deux notes qui cornent"

"Climat"



"Aria"

"Première fantaisie"

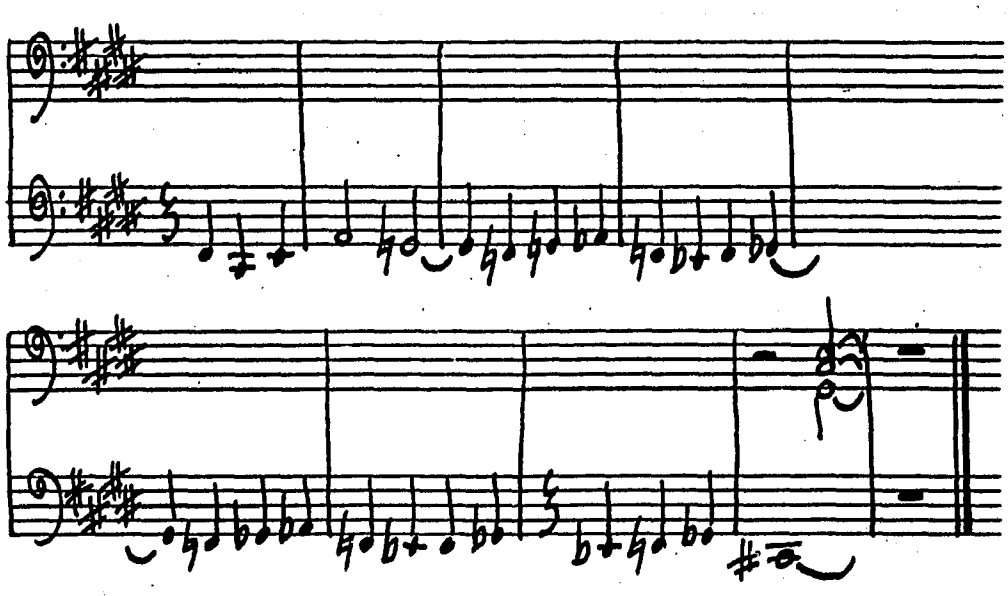
"Litanies"

Texture

Alain's organ works without question were conceived contrapuntally, with great freedom as to the movement of the voices and the resultant harmony. There is, however, considerable variety in the texture of his works, and a fluctuation of texture between simple and complex within a single movement is characteristic of his style.

Categories of Texture

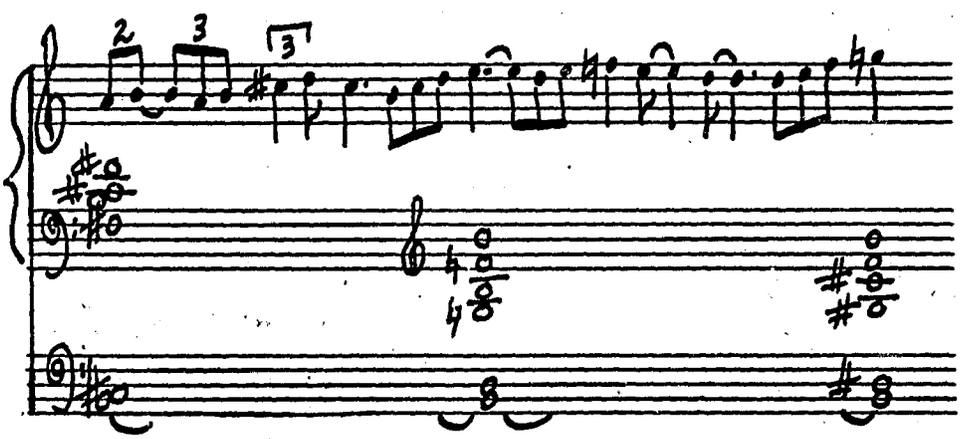
Monody.--Several of Alain's works contain sections or passages consisting of unaccompanied monody, either as a single line or doubled at the octave. Such passages are prominent in the "Litanies," the "Suite," the "Trois danses," and the "Deuxième fantaisie." The small early work called "Grave" is almost entirely monodic, the following example being its conclusion:



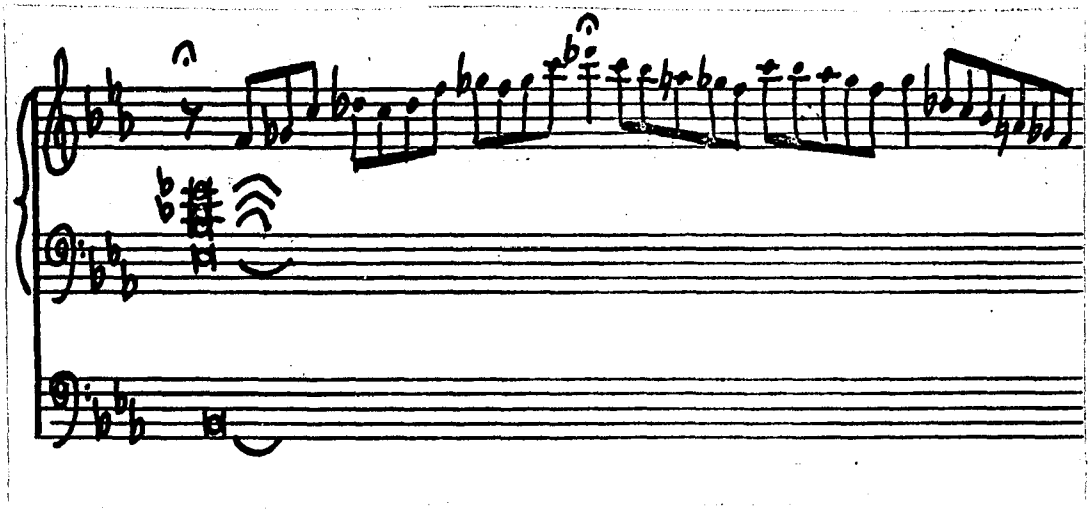
Solid chords.--Several examples can be found in which chords move in solid blocks--never, however, without some attention to the horizontal lines (see examples from "Introduction et Variations," page 46, and the example from "Luttes," page 48).

Melody with accompaniment.--Two types of melody with accompaniment are common.

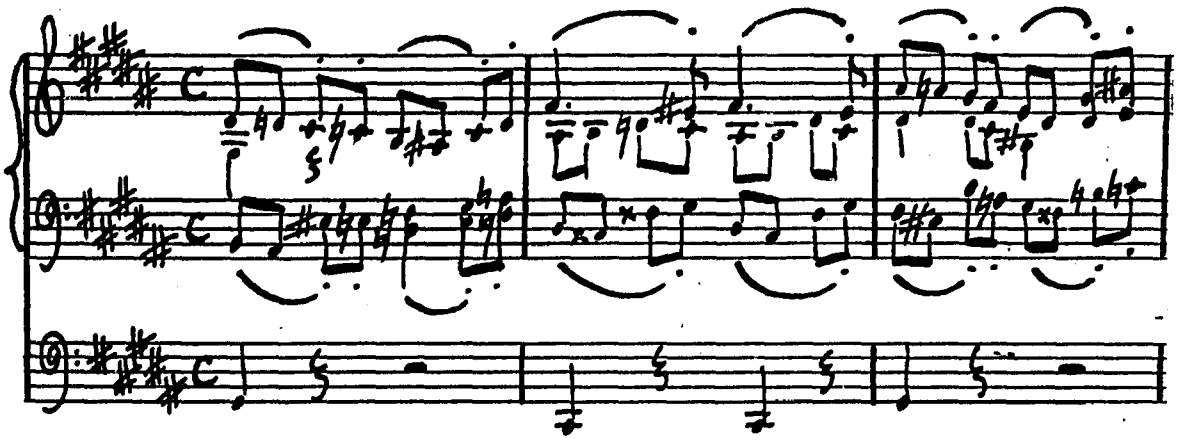
1. The first type is melody with chordal accompaniment. This accompaniment may be vigorous and rhythmic, as in the "Litanies" (see example, page 41), or it may be sustained, as in the "Deuxième prélude" ("Second Prelude"). The rhythmic nature of the melody probably influenced the type of accompaniment. In the following example from the "Deuxième prélude" the melody is in the manner of a free recitative:



Also, sustained chords may accompany a cadenza-type melody, as in the following example from the "Prelude" of the "Prélude et fugue":

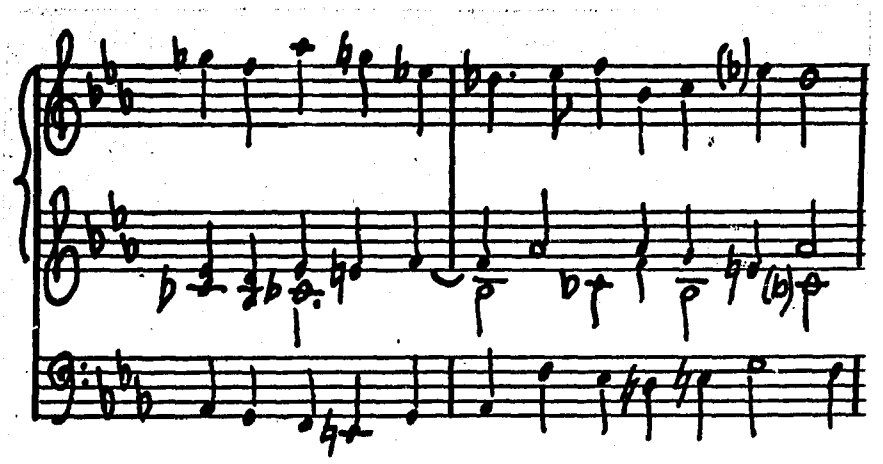


2. The second type consists of melody with an accompaniment which is contrapuntal but the lines of which are melodically subordinate to the primary melody, as in the following example from the "Scherzo" from

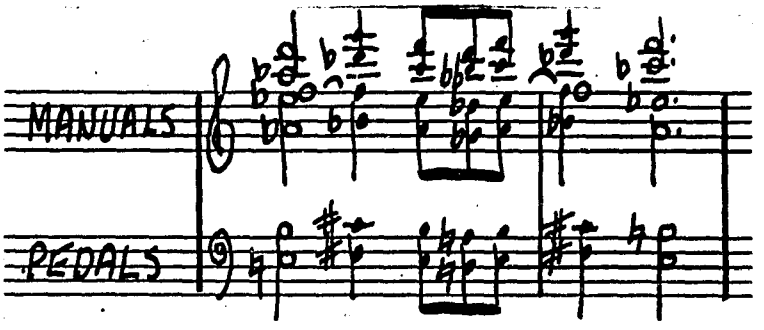


Essentially contrapuntal texture.--Two types of essentially linear movement are found.

1. The first type consists of lines which contain an approximate balance between similar and contrary motion, as in the following example from the "Introduction et Variations" ("Suite"):



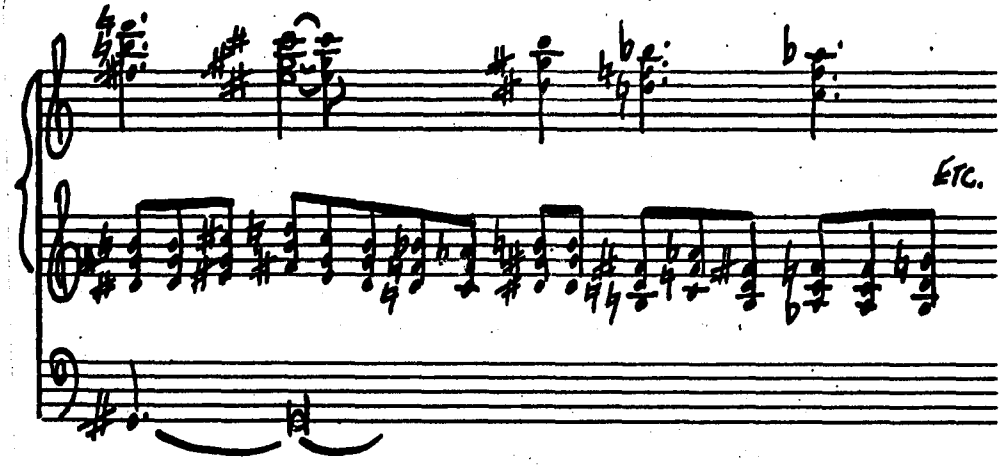
2. The second type consists of exact or almost exact parallel motion in the different parts. This is a particular characteristic of "Deuils" and "Luttes" from the "Trois danses" and of a number of other works. The following excerpt from the "Première fantaisie" clearly illustrates the composer's use of parallelism:



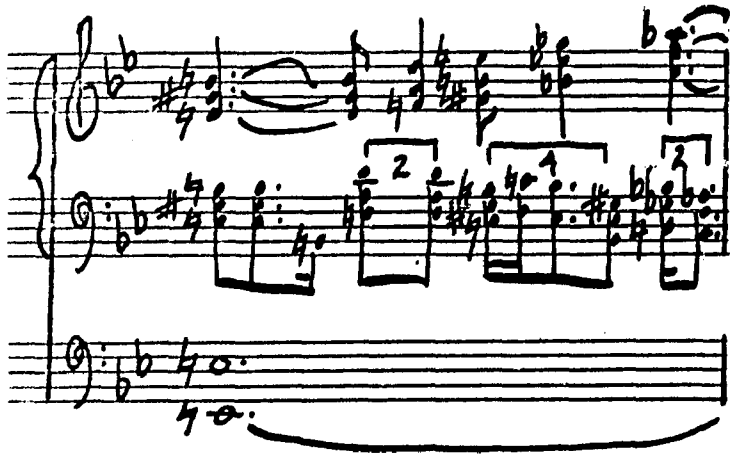
Movement of Chordal Masses Polyphonically

A technique consisting of the movement of two chordal masses (each basically a harmonic expansion of a melody) against each other, often over a sustained pedal tone, is a characteristic of Alain's style. This is essentially an expansion of the concept of two contrapuntal lines into two contrapuntal masses, and it results from polyharmonic considerations. This technique is found throughout Alain's

music; and particularly important use of it is made in the "Litanies" and the "Trois danses," examples from which follow:



"Litanies"



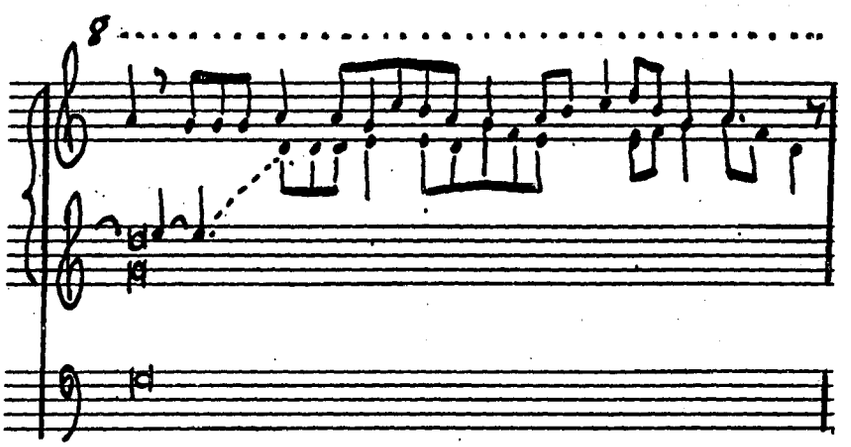
"Joies" ("Trois danses")

Traditional Contrapuntal Practices

Fugue.--Alain wrote only a few pages in fugal style. These are contained in "Variations sur Lucis Creator," "Prélude et fugue," and "Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin." Apparently the

confines of fugal writing were not compatible with the normal free flight of the composer's imagination, although it must be admitted that his fugal writing in the Jannequin "Variations" is a model of free treatment!

Canon.--Canonical imitation, strict and free, can be found in approximately one-third of Alain's organ works; but the use of canon is not sufficiently consistent or conspicuous to be an essential characteristic of the composer's contrapuntal style. It is, in fact, almost a surprise to encounter a canon, such as the one at the conclusion of the "Aria," of which the following is an excerpt:



Free imitation.--With the exception of the few examples of canon mentioned above, almost no contrapuntal imitation is found in Alain's music, a fact which clearly sets Alain apart from most composers for the organ.

Rhythm

The vitality of Alain's music results to a considerable degree from the composer's inventiveness in the use of rhythm. It is interesting to note that this aspect of his music reveals a development from the conventional and traditional in his early works to the unusual and original at the end of his career. And it is also revealing to see that Alain avoided systems in rhythmic matters, just as he did in melodic, harmonic, and contrapuntal practices.

Metrical Rhythm

Metrical rhythm is defined as that in which every time value is a multiple (or fraction) of a fixed unit of time and in which accent normally recurs in regular intervals.[1] Only a few of Alain's organ works fall into this category, these for the most part early works. They are: "Berceuse sur deux notes qui cornent," "Lamento," "Variations sur Lucis Creator," "Grave," "Premier prélude" ("First Prelude"), "Choral" ("Suite"), both "Danses à Agni Yavishta," "Climat," and parts of "Petite pièce" and "Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin."

Measured Rhythm

Measured rhythm is that in which every time value is a multiple (or fraction) of a fixed time unit but which lacks regularity

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1. Apel, op. cit., p. 640.

in recurrent accents.[1] In this category is found most of Alain's music, although the general and specific directions to the performer regarding rubato and rhythmic freedom can be said to place much of it in the category of "free rhythm."

Changing meter.--Many of the organ works are barred throughout, but they change time signatures freely. The "Scherzo" from the "Suite," for example, changes meter in sections of from two to a dozen or more measures, moving readily from one to another of the following: 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, and 7/4. A shift of meter for each measure is not found throughout any one work, although the middle section (13 measures) of "Le jardin suspendu" (which contained no time signatures in the original edition) actually changes meter each measure, including: 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 6/4, and 7/4.

Complete rhythmic unit.--An unusual rhythmic technique is found throughout the "Litanies" (excepting the final nine measures) and in much of the "Aria," neither of which employs time signatures. In this technique each measure contains a complete rhythmic pattern, not necessarily similar (in accents or in number of rhythmic units) to the preceding or succeeding measure. The example from the "Litanies" on page 41 and the following example from the "Aria" illustrate this technique:

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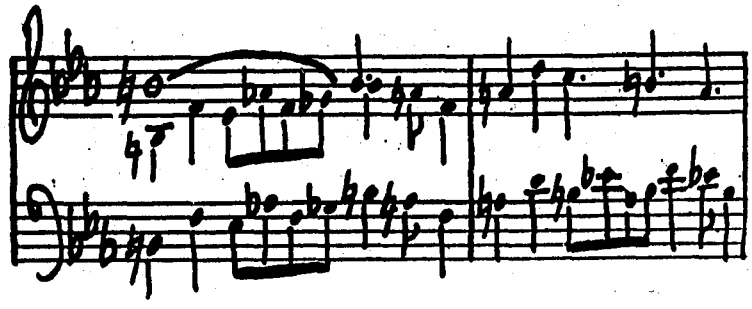
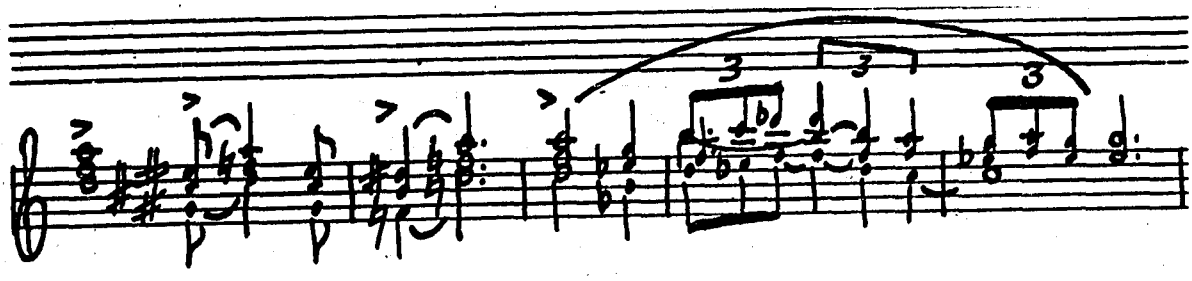
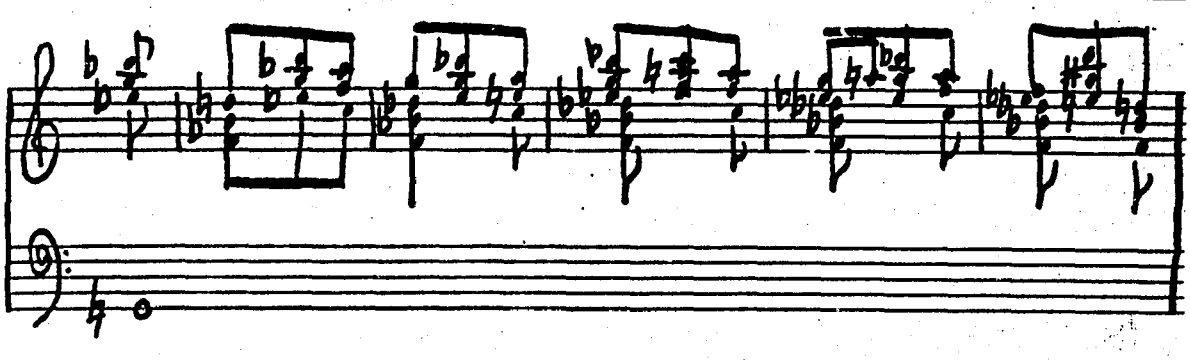
1. Ibid.



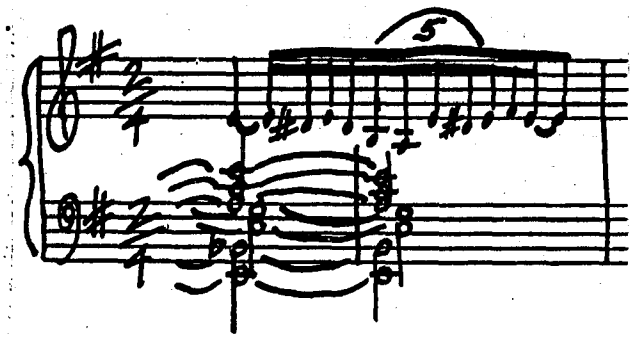
Freely barred measures.--In a few of Alain's organ works bar lines were added apparently to increase legibility, as in this example from the "Première fantaisie":



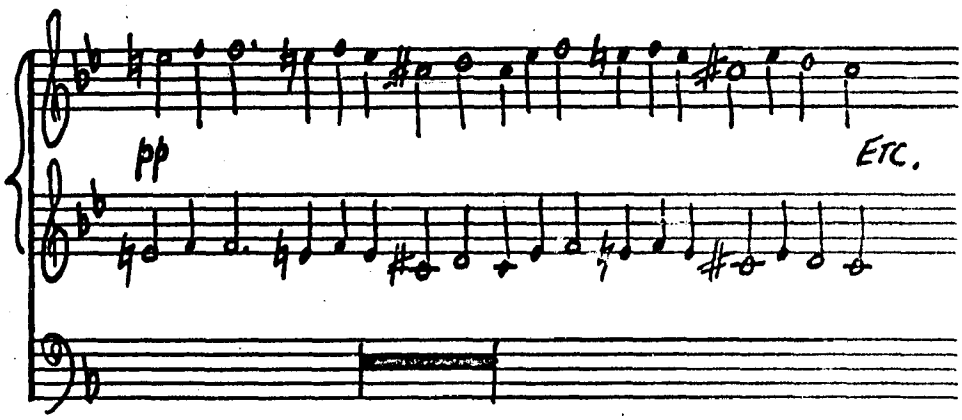
Unusual barrings.--Deviations from normal barring practices sometimes occur. The following example from the "Première fantaisie" is barred in polymetric fashion in order to produce a desired accent:



The following example from the "Deuxième fantaisie" is barred in such a manner as to give the melodic passage rhythmic freedom:



Absence of bar lines.--One example ("Deuxième prélude") contains no bar lines--not even one at the end. Several examples can be found in which long unbarred passages occur. Sometimes the rhythm is like that of a cadenza (see the example from "Prélude et fugue" on page 52) or a recitative (see the example from "Deuxième prélude" on page 51). Or it may be chant-like, as in the conclusion of "Deuils," an excerpt from which follows:



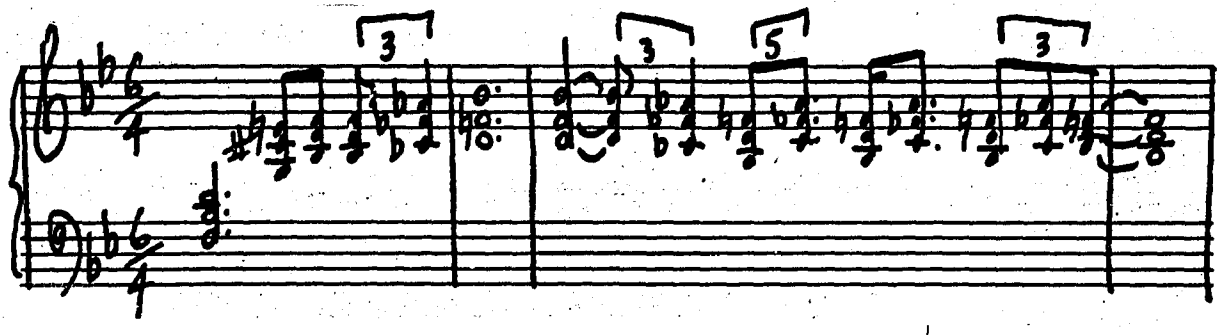
Rhythmic Constructions

Melodic.--A very clear development in the rhythmic structure of Alain's melodic material appears as the works are placed in chronological order. The trend is from relatively simple metrical style to

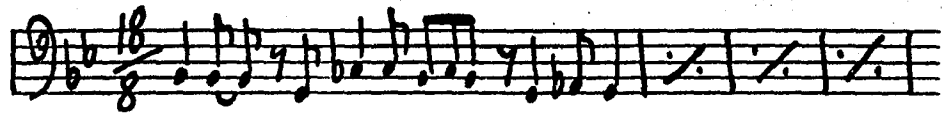
a very complicated style which gives the effect of freedom but which is actually measured. The first appearance of this characteristic manner is in the "Deuxième prélude," in which the unit of measure (the quarter note) is divided freely into combinations of twos and threes (see the example on page 51). This technique of "controlled freedom" continues to develop until it reaches its culmination in the remarkable rhythmic structure of the "Trois danses."

Polyrhythmic.--The simultaneous combination of dissimilar and complicated rhythms in different parts did not become a characteristic of Alain's style until late in his career, although isolated brief examples occur earlier. The height to which he carried this technique can be seen in the "Trois danses," the rhythmic structure of which deserves to be examined in some detail.

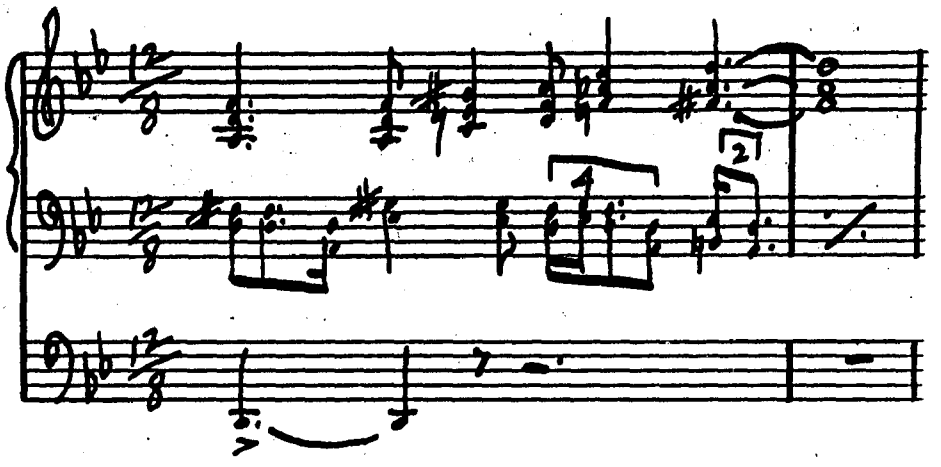
The first theme of "Joies" begins, in a slow tempo, as follows:



This is succeeded by a second theme, which is repeated many times with the same rhythmic structure, though with melodic and harmonic variation, its original statement being:

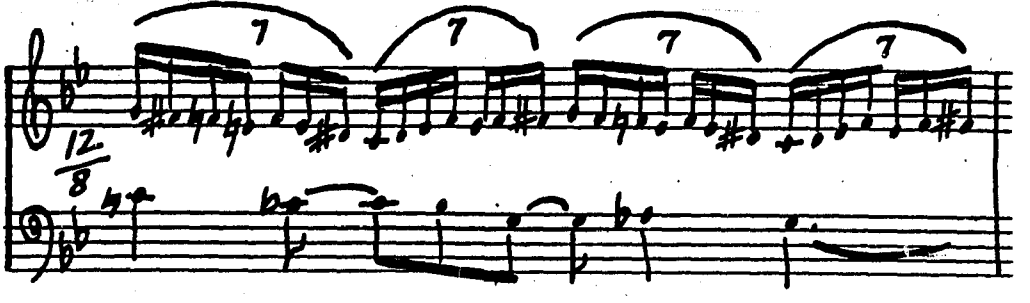


These two themes are developed successively until the approximate midpoint of the movement, where the treatment abruptly changes. With no departure from the compound meter, two complicated rhythmic structures are combined as follows:



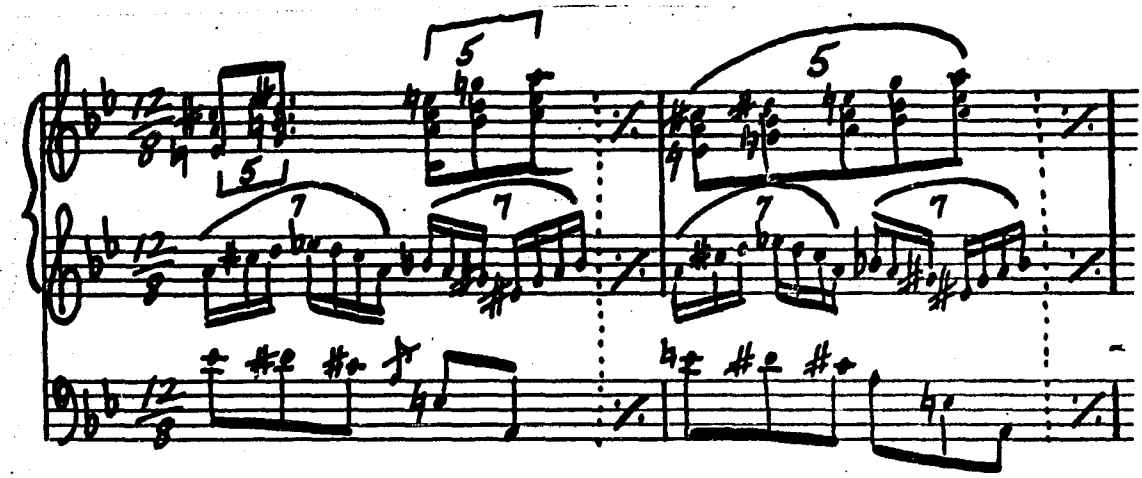
"Joies"

The upper part is the first theme recast in compound meter, while the lower part is a transformation of the second theme, still in the same meter. These two themes are developed in a similar polyrhythmic manner through the middle section of the movement. The concluding portion combines a rhythmic figure based on the first theme (in the left hand) with a running figure in septuplets (in the right hand)--three against seven--as follows:



"Joies"

The climax is reached in a passage of which the rhythmic complexity can better be illustrated than described:

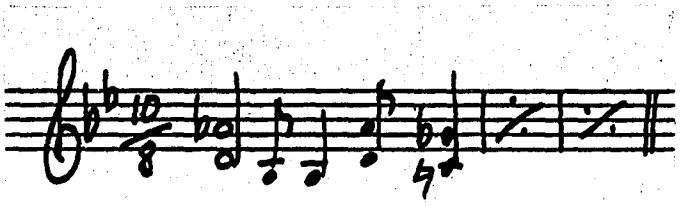


"Joies"

"Deuils," the second movement, is dominated by one theme, a long, ponderous melody using dotted and double-dotted rhythms in such a way as to produce curious, lurching, agogic accents. The rhythm is further complicated by marks indicating prolongation of certain notes (see the example from "Deuils," page 33). The first section of this movement consists of eight repetitions of this theme, with various contrapuntal-harmonic treatments and with a coloratura ornamentation of the last measure of the theme, as follows:

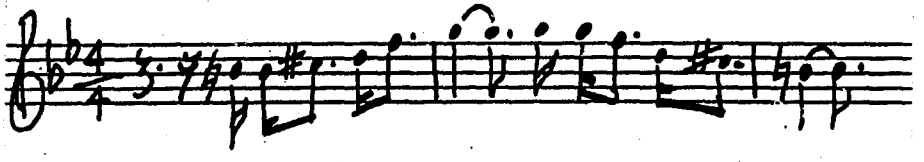
"Deuils"

A second theme then appears, containing an unusual rhythmic pattern, as follows:



"Deuils"

The first theme returns and is given a somewhat varied form. A strongly accented, truncated version of the first theme then appears, as follows:



"Deuils"

This motive is repeated twenty times, with the second theme or the coloratura motive from the earlier section interjected occasionally. The calm conclusion of the movement is free, unbarred unison writing (see the example from "Deuils" on page 59).

"Luttes," the third movement, is built entirely on thematic material from the previous movements. It uses the two themes from "Joies" both successively and simultaneously and alternates with them the strongly accented version of the first theme of "Deuils," which becomes the rhythmic basis of the triumphant final page of the movement. (The second "Deuils" theme does not appear.)

Thus is found in the "Trois danses" the fullest development of Alain's rhythmic practices, a vital testimonial to his rhythmic ingenuity.

Form

Even a casual acquaintance with Alain's organ music reveals the fact that to him idea came first and form came second. He seems, in fact, to have been completely unconcerned about the formal structure of his music, content to allow the form to flow out of the idea. The result might have been chaos, but it was not; for the composer possessed an instinct for form which served him particularly well in the short works which constitute most of his output and even bound together coherently his one essay for organ in a larger form, the "Trois danses."

It is not surprising to find that freedom in form is characteristic of music which pays so little heed to tradition in other matters. Nor is it unexpected that the composer's early works are nearer to traditional forms than his late works, which show more freedom and originality in all ways.

Several examples in traditional forms can be found among the organ works composed before the year 1935. The "Deuxième prélude" and the "Choral phrygien" are in the form of strophic songs of two stanzas. "Climat" is in a simple binary form. The "Ballade en mode phrygien," "Lamento," "Premier prélude," "Choral" ("Suite"), and "Petite pièce" all correspond generally to ternary form. The composer's imagination seemed less constrained, however, in the works which were free or were in one of his favorite forms--the theme and variations. ("Le jardin suspendu," it should be noted, is a chaconne, consisting of the theme and five variations.)

Beginning about 1935, complete freedom of form characterized most of the music, and larger-scale outer designs gave way to inner manipulations of ideas. Two basic principles--repetition and variations--became the composer's characteristic technique. A typical mature work by Alain contained from two to half-a-dozen or so basic musical ideas or themes--melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, or more often a combination of these. The composer's usual method was to treat these ideas successively, with previous ideas recurring frequently, often in varied form. (Only the "Trois danses" contains consistent simultaneous treatment of different themes.) The composer thus achieved unity through reference to previous ideas and diversity through the introduction of new themes or the variation of old ones. Such a method produces music that is sectional, and such indeed is a characteristic of Alain's music.

As Alain's style developed, it became more typical that repetitions of thematic material usually occurred in pairs. The second statement of the theme would often be a sequence of the first (that is, the same melodic material at another level). Alain's most succinct example of repetition, variation, and sequential treatment of thematic material occurs in the first of the "Danses à Agni Yavishta" and his most involved and elaborate in the "Intermezzo," "Litanies," and the "Trois danses."

One might expect a student of the great Dupré and (whether he would have admitted it or not) a descendant of the organ symphonists Widor and Vierne to make some attempt in the sonata form. And from the

hand of a composer who so extravagantly admired Johann Sebastian Bach one might hope to find more than one lone prelude and fugue. And certainly one would be justified in looking for at least one organ choral on a liturgical theme from a man of profound religious convictions, who earned his living in the musical service of the Catholic Church. All three of these forms were a part of the curriculum of a student of improvisation at the Paris Conservatoire. Alain must indeed have been thoroughly proficient in these forms, for he improvised a "choral figuré," a prelude and fugue on a theme, and a movement from a sonata on two themes for a competition of the "Amis de l'orgue" in 1939, winning Honorable Mention.[1] And he took the First Prize at the Conservatoire in Improvisation that same year.[2] But in his compositions he went where his fancy led him--away from the restrictions of set forms.

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1. Gavoty, "Concours d'improvisation et d'execution des Amis de l'orgue," La Revue Musicale, No. 192 (July, 1939), p. 49.

2. Olivier Alain, loc. cit.

Registration

The contrapuntal texture of his music and, more specifically, his registrations, reflected the reverence in which Jehan Alain held the great Baroque Masters of the organ. In matters of registration he may very justly be labeled a neo-classicist.

In Alain's formative years he was exposed to two quite different concepts of organ design. The organ built by his father in his home approximated the sound of the Classic French organ of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see Specifications, Appendix A). On the other hand, the Cavaillé-Coll at the church where he assisted his father was a typical nineteenth century French "symphonic" organ. The Classic organ held for him the greater attraction.[1]

It was during the decade of the 1930's that great interest was shown in France in the preservation and restoration of those organs which were considered historically important. In 1933, through the Inspector-General of Historic Monuments, the French Government created a Commission on Organs to oversee that activity. A committee including every distinguished French organist was appointed, and Albert Alain was one of them.[2] There are a number of accounts of pilgrimages by Jehan to hear and play those old organs, and his registrations are a clear indication of their appeal to him.

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1. Marie-Claire Alain, loc. cit.

2. Dufourcq, "The Policy of the Organ in France," The Organ, XXXIII (October, 1953), p. 90.

Registration of French Baroque organ music was a highly stylized technique and differed considerably from contemporaneous practices in other countries. In general it can be said that contrast in color and dynamics was its guiding principle, with clarity of line an essential. And the weakness of the pedal, both in the organs and in the organ music of the period, is noticeable.

Years later César Franck, inspired by the great organs of Cavaillé-Coll, began a tradition in which the organ was thought of as an instrument of symphonic color. His successors--Widor, Tournemire, Vierne, and Dupré--had all worked in his shadow, creating music which was always symphonic in sound and often so in form. But a revolution in organ design and organ music was taking place in the 1930's, and Jehan Alain was part of it.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Alain was quite specific as to registration. His early pieces and many of his later works show a particular lightness and clarity in registration--simple combinations of 8' and 4' stops, single 8' or 4' stops on the manuals, and often only 8' stops in the pedal. He preferred the somewhat rough sound of the Cromorne and Vox Humana (without tremolo) to the smoother "orchestral" reeds, both for solo and ensemble. He made some use of the expression pedal, but far less than the organ symphonists; and a general concept of terraced dynamics holds through all his works.

Few organ composers have been so detailed and so specific in regard to registration as was Alain. In performing some of the

larger works the organist is constantly occupied with registration, not only in changing from manual to manual but also in changing stops. The lone American organist, solely dependent upon his dexterity and mechanical aids, can sometimes only approximate the registrations which might be achieved fairly easily on a French organ, with the customary assistant to manipulate the stops. Some of the sudden alternations between manuals are more difficult on the American organ than on the French because of the different disposition of manuals. (The French Récit and Positif are adjacent manuals, above the Grand Orgue; their American counterparts, the Swell and Choir, are separated by the Great.)

Some of Alain's registrations bear the clear mark of the organ in his home, which had a "cut pedal," a device by which the lowest octave of the pedal could play one stop while the upper octave-and-a-half could play another. This accounts for a number of passages, both specified and unspecified, in which the left foot plays a 16' stop and the right foot plays a solo passage on a 4' stop or mixture ("Intermezzo," "Deuxième prélude," and "Lamento"). The curious use of the Gros Nazard in "Le jardin suspendu" stems from the Alain house organ, which possessed such a stop--a large-scaled, very soft wooden stop of 5 1/3', actually a manual Quint. At one point Alain specified a short solo passage for the Gros Nazard only, as it was apparently the color and dynamic level he wanted. The passage, of course, sounds a fifth higher than it is written.

The Positif Cornet on the Alain house organ was composed of four stops which could be drawn separately or together--of 4', 2 2/3', 2', and 1 3/5' pitches. There was also a Larigot (1 1/3'). Alain's selective use of these five stops can be found in many of his registrations and particularly in the "Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin."

In at least two of his works--the "Litanies" and the "Trois danses"--Alain exceeded the dynamic and color limitations of the Classical concept of registration. These works require the full spectrum of the symphonic organ, from the warm string celestes to the fiery reeds and from the highest mutations to the 32' pedal stops. But though the composer sometimes unleashed the full fury of the organ in these works, in other quiet passages he was more than usually meticulous regarding details of registration. For, although the color and force of the Romantic organ are called for, the manner is Classical--contrast in dynamics and timbre.

Alain's music requires not so much a Classic organ as a Classical style in registration. It should be recalled that Alain triumphed in the presentation of three of his works at the Church of La Trinité in 1938, playing a fine Cavaillé-Coll, an excellent example of a medium-sized Romantic French organ (see Appendix B).

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Alain's Style

Jehan Alain's music is so individual that its style cannot be said to belong to or derive from any school or system, and it cannot be found to resemble that of other composers except in a few details and isolated examples.

Alain's most obvious departure from tradition was his harmonic originality, both in large-scale and detailed designs. He carefully avoided traditional tonality, but he did not find a solution to tonal problems in any system. Instead, he constructed his music in small blocks, each of which focused upon a tone or harmony, these sections being connected, like the links of a chain, through melodic and rhythmic development.

Alain forged his melodic materials from Church modes, synthetic scales, and fragments from major, minor, whole tone, and pentatonic scales, with these often fluctuating, modulating, or interchanging. Though he used scale elements melodically, he avoided amplifying his hints of modes and keys into large tonal organizations. And he clouded the harmonic issue with free melodic and harmonic chromaticism, using his ear for a guide and spelling so enharmonically as to remove any vestige of doubt as to his disavowal of traditional harmony.

The indecisive, nondirectional tritone early began to appeal to Alain, and it was the favorite melodic and harmonic interval of his mature works. He avoided traditional harmonic progression from the beginning, preferring instead harmonic surprise--the shock of extreme dissonance or the startling blandness of unexpected simple triads and sevenths, starkly standing out from a dissonant background.

Of course he could not eschew all the traditional materials and methods or he would have had neither foundation nor building materials. His foundation was based on tradition and was a natural one for an organist--counterpoint. Yet he essayed only three works, two of them surely to be considered "student works," in the highest form known to the contrapuntalists of the past--the fugue. Rather he brought to his contrapuntal texture his own melodic and harmonic manner, developing form as he worked. Melodic variation, textural variety, and abrupt contrast gave diversity to each of his movements, while repetition of rhythmic and melodic motives gave them unity.

Repetition came to be the most conspicuous detail of Alain's technique. Rhythmic motives, in his last works, were reiterated almost ceaselessly. Melodic development accommodated itself to rhythmic patterns. Melodic repetition was very common, melodic sequence less so, and--curiously, considering the usual practice of composers for the organ--melodic imitation very rare. Repetitions came to occur most often in twos or multiples of two; but unwanted symmetry was prevented by the inclusion of lone figures or an odd number of repetitions.

Although rhythm was the life blood of Alain's music, rarely did his works drive forward with regular accents. Most of them, instead, while strongly but irregularly accented, moved with a perpetual rubato, continuously molding and reshaping their lines. Hardly a page failed to contain some direction from the composer regarding rhythmic freedom. Those who knew the composer's own playing said that only a few of the organ pieces should be performed in a rigid tempo.

Although Alain favored pictorial and suggestive titles and was inclined to append poetic epigraphs to his works, there is little specific description in his music. Even those few organ pieces in which he attempted oriental exoticism ("Danses à Agni Yavishta" and "Première fantaisie") hardly tell tales of "violet lanterns" or recite "opium laden poems." Rather they merely shed a soft light of faint exotic color. Alain's kinship to the Impressionists, especially in his early works, cannot be denied. But it is, for the most part, kinship of mood rather than of method. It is true that common elements can be found--parallel movement of intervals and chords, frequent use of the tritone, modality, whole-tone scales, unresolved dissonances, and irregular phrase constructions--but the manner is Alain's own and the sound, in the mature works particularly, is far removed from Debussy or Ravel.

Alain's Independence

Admitting, as Claude Rostand has done, that Alain is "a true independent: a virtuoso of individualism, freedom of thought, and technique,"[1] we cannot fail to wonder how he himself felt about the

1. Claude Rostand, op. cit., p. 112.

music of other composers. Regarding this Gavoty wrote:

> As far as I know, he had only two real loves: Bach, the source of all harmony, and the French Classicists of the seventeenth century, whose freshness enchanted him. We spoke little of Chopin and Beethoven. Franck made him uneasy with his constant search for the ecstatic. Debussy attracted him but had no real hold on him. He liked Fauré and yet was suspicious of his intoxicating charm. . . . There were few allusions to his contemporaries, for basically, like many creative artists, he was not really interested in the music of others.[1]

Critics, while emphasizing Alain's originality, have professed to finding occasional resemblances between Alain's music and that of some of his contemporaries and predecessors. Yet not one has offered proof. It would be unreasonable to expect Alain's music to be completely unrelated and alien to the tradition of French music in general and French organ music in particular. But one is not likely to find in Alain's music specific examples of the influence of Franck, Widor, Tournemire, or Dupré, to mention only some of those who have been cited. The danger of trying to trace a specific influence in Alain's music is well illustrated by the remarks of two experts in regard to the "Scherzo" of the "Suite," which admittedly is Alain at his least characteristic. Gavoty wrote: "There can indisputably be found in it the imprint and mark of Paul Dukas--his manner, his rhythm, his brilliance."[2] But Norbert Dufourcq said: "There is in his 'Scherzo' perhaps some resemblance to the style of Dupré."[3] Another writer might

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1. Gavoty, Jehan Alain: musicien français, p. 74.

2. Ibid., p. 80.

3. Dufourcq, "Panorama de la Musique d'orgue française au XX^{e} siecle," p. 112.

have been just as secure in noting a certain likeness between this very chromatic and vigorous work and the scherzos of Louis Vierne!

One writer has suggested the influence of Messiaen upon Alain's music.[1] It is true that the composers were friends. And Messiaen greatly admired Alain's music, even dedicating a work to him, saying: "To Jehan Alain, who should love my music, since I love his."[2] But there is not a trace of Messiaen's music in Alain's. Any similarity is superficial and coincidental. For in Alain's works there is none of Messiaen's rigorous system, which involved his non-retrograde rhythms, scales of limited transposition, added-time-values, isorhythms, and Hindu Ragas. Messiaen's highly literary conception of music,[3] his extensive use of Gregorian melodies, and his feverish mysticism are all separated by a chasm from Alain's direct personal manner. Even their common attraction to Asian music was coincidental, for Alain's works reflecting this interest were composed before the two men became acquainted, which was not until 1936.[4]

Alain's Place in the Annals of Organ Music

Alain's organ music, it has been said, divides into the usual three periods--early, middle, and late. The early works are admittedly

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1. Rostand, op. cit., p. 114.

2. Olivier Alain, loc. cit.

3. André Hodeir, Since Debussy: a view of contemporary music, trans. Noel Burch (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), p. 117.

4. Marie-Claire Alain, loc. cit.

immature and somewhat reflective of other schools and styles; the middle period shows remarkable maturity for a young man not yet thirty; and the last work, "Trois danses," seems to stand at a threshold, promising splendors beyond. What must be realized is that all of these works might today have been considered "early" and "immature," had Alain lived to exceed them and to develop his style fully. And if we find an unevenness of quality and inconsistency of manner, let us remember that many of these works were merely sketches; and, had the composer lived, they might never have seen the light of publication. Therefore, though there is not a page that fails to offer something of interest and value, we must remember to judge Alain only on the basis of his best.

It would be futile to speculate as to the position Alain will occupy in the annals of organ music in the years to come. Today, a quarter of a century after his death, some of his works occupy an honored place in the programs of recitalists and are enthusiastically received by audiences. But fashions, in music as in all things, are fickle. The composer, who seemed from time to time to have presentiments of an early death, once wrote in his notebook: "When I am dead, will anyone remember me?"[1] If, in the aesthetics of the future, sincerity of purpose and originality of thought are given any value, we can answer his question with a confident "Yes!"

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1. Gavoty, Jehan Alain: musicien français, p. 97.

APPENDIX A

SPECIFICATIONS OF THE ALAIN HOUSE ORGAN[1]

Récit		Positif	
Quintaton	16'	Cor de nuit	8'
Gambe	8'	Salicional	8'
Voix céleste	8'	Flûte douce	4'
Flûte cônique	8'	Quarte de nazard	2'
Salicet	4'	Gros nazard	5 1/3'
Octavin	2'	Nazard	2 2/3'
Cromorne	8'	Tierce	1 3/5'
Hautbois	8'	Larigot	1 1/3'

Grand Orgue		Pédale	
Bourdon	16'	Soubasse	16'
Montre	8'	Basse	8'
Flûte harmonique	8'	Flûte	4'
Prestant	4'	Cornet	IV

1. The organ has been enlarged to four manuals. This specification, furnished by Marie-Claire Alain, is of the organ as it was played by Jehan Alain.

APPENDIX B

SPECIFICATIONS OF THE ORGAN AT THE PARIS CHURCH OF LA TRINITÉ[1]

Récit		Positif (continued)		Grand Orgue (continued)	
Flûte	8'	Doublette	2'	Plein jeu	V
Bourdon	8'	Piccolo	1'	Bombarde	16'
Gambe	8'	Cornet	V	Trompette	8'
Voix céleste	8'	Basson	16'	Clarion	4'
Flûte	4'	Clarinette	8'	**Pédale**	
Octavin	2'	Trompette	8'	Bourdon	32'
Voix humaine	8'	**Grand Orgue**		Contrebasse	16'
Hautbois	8'	Montre	16'	Sous-basse	16'
Trompette	8'	Bourdon	16'	Flûte	8'
Positif		Montre	8'	Bourdon	8'
Quintaton	16'	Bourdon	8'	Violoncelle	8'
Flûte	8'	Flûte	8'	Flûte	4'
Salicional	8'	Gambe	8'	Bombarde	16'
Unda maris	8'	Prestant	4'	Trompette	8'
Flûte	4'	Quinte	2 2/3'	Clarion	4'
Prestant	4'	Cornet	V		

1. This organ is typical of the builder, Aristide Cavaillé-Coll. It was dedicated in 1869. The specifications are from Félix Raugel, Les Grandes Orgues des Eglises do Paris et du Département de la Seine (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1927), pp. 219-20.

APPENDIX C

CATALOGUE OF THE ORGAN WORKS OF JEHAN ALAIN[1]

OPUS NUMBERS	TITLE	YEAR OF COMPOSITION
2	Berceuse sur deux notes qui cornent	1929
10	Ballade en mode phrygien	1930
21	Postlude pour l'office des Complies	1932
28	Variations sur Lucis Creator	1932
32	Grave	1932
43	Variations chorales sur Sacris solemnis	1933
46a	Premier prélude	1933
46b	Deuxième prélude	1933
47	Deux chorals	1934
48	Suite	1934
50	Le jardin suspendu	1934
51	Première fantaisie	1934
52	Deux danses à Agni Yavishta	1934
53	Climat	1934
56	Petite pièce	1934
58	Prélude et fugue	1935
62	Fantasmagorie	1935
63b	Intermezzo	1935

1. Gavoty, Jehan Alain: musicien français, pp. 118-124.

OPUS NUMBERS	TITLE	YEAR OF COMPOSITION
73	Deuxième fantaisie	1936
78	Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin	1937
79	Litanies	1937
81	Trois danses	1937-1938
88	Monodie	1938
93	Aria	1939

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