

Hidden Patterns in Jehan Alain's  
"Jannequin" Fugato

Margaret Vardell Sandresky

Jehan Alain's *Variations sur un thème de Clément Jannequin* received its first performance on February 19, 1938 at the Eglise de la Trinité in Paris, with the composer at the organ. *Le Jardin Suspendu* and *Litanies* were also played on the program, and in 1939 these three were published together by Alphonse Leduc as *Trois Pièces*. The theme, "L'espoir que j'ai", was taken from *Echos de Temps Passé*, a volume of old chansons edited by J.B. Weckerlin, belonging to Alain's grandmother, whose name, A. Alberti, is inscribed on the title page.

Marie Claire Alain's detailed and informative *Critical Notes on the Organ Works of Jehan Alain*, which appeared in English translation by Norma Stevlingen in 2003, contains a facsimile of Alain's thematic catalogue of his own works from 1929 to 1938, where the *Variations* are number 118, *Litanies* number 119, and *Le Jardin Suspendu*, composed in 1934, is number 71.

Of the four named sources for this piece, one is from the family heirs, and one is from Alphonse Leduc; but the two most interesting are from his two friends, for whom he made manuscript copies. In both the latter, Alain gives the full name of his theme, *Variations sur l'espoir que j'ai d'acquiescer votre grâce, chanson de Clément Jannequin*. The first of these is dedicated to his friend from Conservatoire days, Pierre Segond, who, much later, was largely responsible for the restoration of Albert Alain's famous house organ, for which his son conceived most of his music. Jehan Alain wrote: "The copy is not beautiful but it is from the heart. It should be possible for the musician of the 20th century to preserve the sound of this old music. The language matters little; only the spirit speaks." And from a manuscript belonging to Aline Pendleton, an organist who played his music, he writes of the "freshness and tenderness of the music of the 16th century."

The theme, which is presented very simply on the Récit Hautbois 8', accompanied on Grand Orgue Bourdon 8' coupled to the pedal, contains a palindrome (F–G–A–B<sup>b</sup>–A–G–F) that occurs three times, at measures 3–5, 8–10, and

28–30. This idea is developed extensively in variation two, marked "Fugato," using the techniques of retrograde and inversion. Alain's seemingly loose and improvisatory compositional style is very tightly controlled in the episodic material and repeated in various ways six times, labeled alphabetically in the appended examples.

In each episode of the "Fugato," beginning at measure 86, two voices weave in palindromes. One of the voices consists of an octatonic scalar line moving in alternate whole steps and half steps, first up five steps and then down again in retrograde motion, then repeating itself. Such a scale consists of two tetrachords an augmented fourth apart. (For instance, in a scale on C, they would be spelled C–D–E<sup>b</sup>–F and F<sup>#</sup>–G<sup>#</sup>–A–B.) Against this line a second voice moves freely, creating a set of twelve intervals, which are then presented in retrograde, while the scalar line occurs four times in the space of the second voice. Such a plan is suggestive of a serial working out of the material. And indeed, serial reconstruction shows that Alain had a strict plan for these episodes, one that is a further development of the previous material. For instance, he begins and ends episodes on an augmented fourth or its inversion. This interval, worked into the pattern, seems linked to the augmented fourth between the two tetrachords of the octatonic scalar motion. In addition, the octatonic scale sets up a series of alternating triadic sonorities consisting of, among other sonorities, alternate major 6/3 and minor 5/3 triads such as are found in the five chords beginning at measure 52.

In the Leduc editions, each of these two voices is spelled presumably as it occurs in the octatonic scale, resulting in many of the vertical intervals being disguised by enharmonic notation. In the following examples, my notation addresses the passages in vertical diatonic intervallic spellings, in order to make them more easily recognized.

From the attached examples of a serial analysis it is clear that some of the intervals in these editions do not fit into the plan. For instance, Examples A, B,

Serial analysis of interval patterns in Alain's Fugato\*

O = Original, R = Retrograde, I = Interval inversion, Tr = Transposition

Example A, m. 87

Example B, m. 90

Example C, m. 98

Example D, m. 101

Examples E and F present new counterpoint to scalar line.

Example E, m. 114

Example F, m. 117

The only discrepancies between a serial analysis and the printed version occur at the transpositions shown in examples C and D, and never in the scalar line which always remains the same.

\*For ease in the reading of Alain's melodic pitch notation, some of the pitches have been transcribed enharmonically.

and D begin on an augmented fourth or diminished fifth. In Example C, the first interval should therefore also be a diminished fifth, and the A-flat in the lower voice should be A-natural. Calculated from bottom to top, the following intervals show the discrepancies and how they should read if the pattern is followed accurately:

Example	Printed Score	Serial Analysis
C1	A <sup>b</sup> to E <sup>b</sup>	A to E <sup>b</sup>
C2	C to A	B to A
C3	G to E <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup> to E <sup>b</sup>
C4	B to D	A to D
C5	F <sup>#</sup> to G <sup>#</sup>	D <sup>#</sup> to G <sup>#</sup>
C6	D to F <sup>#</sup>	B to F <sup>#</sup>
C7	F to F unison	C to F
C8	C to E <sup>b</sup>	A to E <sup>b</sup>
D1	A <sup>b</sup> to B	A <sup>b</sup> to B <sup>b</sup>
D2	D to G	D to F
D3	G to B <sup>b</sup>	G to D
D4	B <sup>b</sup> to D	B <sup>b</sup> to E
D5	G to E <sup>b</sup>	G to D

Examples A and B show Alain's original intervallic structure and his serial organization. In Examples C and D, the intervals on the staff are a direct transposition of the original and the discrepancies in the Leduc editions are written below the staff. Examples E and F show Alain's new counterpoint added to the same octatonic scale and illustrate the serial structure.

In the Critical Notes we read the following:

In May 1938, Jehan Alain entrusted copies of his *Trois Pièces* to Alphonse Leduc Editions (according to notes in his appointment book). "Monday, July 4, 1938: 2:00 p.m. M. de Miramon Leducq" (sic).

A first edition of the *Trois Pièces* bears the copyright 1939. Therefore it was reviewed by the composer before he left for the army.<sup>1</sup>

In view of my analysis, I think the performer must wonder if Alain really had the time to carefully proof his *Variations*, a tedious and time-consuming task for any composer. Perhaps he had to entrust this to someone who was not aware of the beautiful and sophisticated patterns Alain had designed, especially since the doubtful accuracy of pitch content in the Fugato stands in contrast to the careful accuracy of pitch content in Alain's 1935 intricate dodecaphonic "Fugue".

Notes

1. Marie Claire Alain, *Critical Notes on the Organ Works of Jehan Alain* (Paris, France: Alphonse Leduc Edition, 2003), 10.

Margaret Sandresky is a graduate of Salem Academy and College with a major in organ performance. She earned a master's degree in composition with a minor in organ at the Eastman School of Music, and later received a Fulbright Grant for the study of organ with Helmut Walcha at the Hochschule für Musik in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. She has held positions at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the University of Texas at Austin, the North Carolina School of the Arts, and at Salem College, where she is Emeritus Professor of Music. Her articles have been published in The Journal of Music Theory, Music Theory Spectrum, The American Liszt Society Journal, Ars Organi, The American Organist and THE DIAPASON. Her seven volumes of organ music are published by Wayne Leupold Editions, and her anthems are published by Paraclete Press. In 2004, she received the Distinguished Composer award given at the AGO convention in Los Angeles, and in 2006 was honored by St. Andrews College with the Sam Ragan Award for distinguished service to the Arts in North Carolina. Volume VIII of her complete organ works was published by Wayne Leupold Editions in July 2010. Her article, "Mendelssohn's Sonata III: A Composer's View," was published in the March 2008 issue of THE DIAPASON.

A Precious Gift  
from the Past  
for the Present  
and the Future

Supremely beautiful and blendable  
tonal color – a Gift from the Venetian  
School of organbuilding, a monumental part of our  
great heritage. The result: a versatile and flexible  
palette to make possible your finest work.

Intriguing? Let us build your dream.

**Fratelli Ruffatti**

Builders of Fine Pipe Organs to the World

www.ruffatti.com

Via Facciolati, 166 • Padova, Italy 35127 • organs@ruffatti.com • In the U.S. 330-867-4370