O n October 9, 2011, the organ and sacred music performance students at Duquesne University, under the direction of Dr. Ann Laboun-
sky, participated in a special masterclass given by Helga Elisabeth Schauerte-
Maubouet on the organ works of Jehan Alain. This masterclass is of particular signifi-
cance as it was the first time Alain’s organ works were performed together by students
from his alma mater, the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, and at
his home country’s university. It was also the first time these works were performed in
America, as they are not part of the standard repertoire. In fact, Alain himself was
enduring great hardship, as he was in the middle of a laborious editing project for
his complete works. This masterclass was an incredible opportunity for students to
receive direct instruction from a master organist on the works of a great composer.

Schauerte began her interest in the art of organ playing when she was young, for
13 years of age she became the chief organist at a local church in Lennestadt, Germany.
The story behind her inspiration to study Alain’s organ music began with Lithi-
es. The first time she heard this piece was during a performance by her newly-discovered organ which she assisted him with page turns and regis-
tration changes. She was struck by the expressive language of the piece and de-
termined to know more about it and its compos-
ers. Consequently, she began studying Alain at the Conservatoire of Rhein-Maun-
heim with Marie-Clare Alain in 1983, after fi nishing her degree at the University of
Cologne. As she advanced in her studies, Schauerte noticed technical and numeri-
cal discrepancies in the available editions of Alain’s compositions.

Schauerte, therefore, decided to perform her investigations in search of an authentic
interpretation of Alain’s works. Her Bärenreiter edition is the result of the study of
over a decade of intensive research. It contains countless performances and editions
of Alain’s music, preserved in his fam-
ily archives and scores from the French
National Library with all other known
manuscripts. As recently as 1975, add-
ditional compositions were discovered
in the Alain family archives and in 1987 in his family’s collection.1 Schauerte made
a great effort to create not only an
authentic interpretation of Alain’s piece-
s, but also to place them in their correct
order of his works. Within this chronol-
y, Schauerte disregards transcriptions
by other performers in favor of his own
interpretation of Alain’s music. This is so
that the theme in the pedal will be more
prominent than the accompanying
bricks. The students were fascinated by
the fact that Alain, in the original manu-
script, dictated that he wished the per-
former to double in octaves the pedal
theme, evocative of a tortured soul in
sight into the works and life of an inspir-
ating modern composer whose creative life
was tragically cut short during his mili-
tary service in World War II. The presence of great masters on the works of Jehan Alain with Helga Schauerte made a lasting impression upon those who participated. Alain’s life and music are inspirations that echo in the works of Jean Langlais and Olivier
Duruflé, as well as in numerous organ-
ists’ repertoires. Whether through a master-
class, a celebratory dinner with friends of Jehan Alain meeting each other for the
fi rst time, or the National French Cente-
ury Celebration of the Birth of Jehan Alain, musicians across the globe delight
in studying and internalizing the musical expression of this inspirational man and
will do so for decades to come.2

Notes
2. Ibid., 1: XXII
3. Ibid., 1: XVII
4. Ibid., 1: XVIII
5. Ibid., 1: XVI

Bibliography

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