

The Royal Canadian College of Organists presents

Lecture-Recital on the organ works of Jehan Alain

Thomas Annand

Tuesday, November 8, 2011 7:30pm
St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa
82 Kent Street

Jehan Alain (1911-1940) was born into a musical family headed by his organist father, Albert. The elder Alain had built an organ in their home and home schooled three of his children (Jehan, Olivier, and Marie-Claire) on this now famous instrument. At age 16, Jehan Alain enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire, where he continued his organ studies with Marcel Dupré and composition with Paul Dukas. Alain was organist at Église Saint-Nicolas de Maisons-Lafitte and the synagogue at the Rue Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth prior to serving in the French army at the outbreak of the war in 1939. Alain died fighting the Germans in Petit-puyon in June 1940, at age 29.

In his short career Alain produced approximately 120 works (38 for organ) and, as a whole, his output is strikingly consistent and complete unto itself. Alain's music makes extensive use of the church modes, as well as colouristic dissonance. A somewhat rhapsodic approach to rhythm creates an ecstatic building up of bold, colorful and phantasmagoric sections in the *Litanies* and the *Trois Danses* that can be tremendously exciting to hear. In *Le Jardin suspendu* and short works such as *Choral dorien* he created smooth, mysterious textures that suggest an otherworldly, even divine presence.

This lecture - recital is geared to members and students alike and will focus on Alain's short but influential career as a composer for organ between 1929-1939. His few works for the instrument have become an important part of the wider organ repertoire and are a glimpse of the direction the French School might have taken had his career not been cut short by his death.