

## CHAPTER 2

### BIOGRAPHY OF PERFORMERS

#### 2.1 Marie-Claire Alain

Marie-Claire Alain was born in 1926 into a family of musicians at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, near Paris in France. She studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur of Paris where she won four *Premier Prix*. After this she won several awards in international competitions. Marie-Claire Alain's tours have taken her throughout the world giving over 2000 concerts, either as a recitalist or as a soloist with orchestra.

She is also greatly in demand as a pedagogue. Famous for her lectures illustrated with musical examples, Alain bases her teaching on extensive, unrelenting musicological studies into the organ repertoire and the performance of Early, Romantic and Symphonic music. Alain's recording catalogue contains over 250 records and over 60 CD's. These recordings have won her fifteen major French and international record awards.

The town of Lübeck awarded Alain the *Buxtehude Prize*, crowning her action favouring Early German music. Budapest awarded her the *Franz Liszt Prize*. On this occasion she was also decorated with the Danish *Danneborg Order*. Alain is also a member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Music.

Alain is a Doctor honoris causa of the Colorado State University and of the Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. In France she is a Commander of the *Légion d'Honneur* and a Commander of the *Ordre National du Mérite*.

In 1984 Alain was named 'International Performer of the Year' by the New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Over the past two decades, Marie-Claire Alain has been recording exclusively for Erato Disques.

## 2.2 Jacques van Oortmerssen

Jacques van Oortmerssen was born in 1950 in the Netherlands where he began his music studies at an early age. He then furthered his studies at the Rotterdam Conservatory, studying the organ with André Verwoerd and piano with Elly Salomé. Here he also earned the distinction *cum laude* for his final examination and was given a special prize for improvisation. In 1974 he continued his studies with Marie-Claire Alain in Paris, France, where he was awarded the *Prix d'Excellence* in 1976. After this, he also studied piano receiving his degree as soloist. In 1977 he was awarded first prize at the Dutch National Improvisation Competition in Bolsward and the second prize in the Tournemire Competition at St. Albans.

Since 1979 Van Oortmerssen has been Professor of Organ at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam where his organ class attracts students from all over the world. He is in great demand as a guest teacher and recitalist at many conservatories and universities in many different countries. In 1982 Van Oortmerssen succeeded Gustav Leonhardt as *Organiste Titulaire* of the Waalse Kerk in Amsterdam with its magnificent Christian Müller organ (1734).

Van Oortmerssen is an active composer, an organ consultant and a member of the baroque ensemble *Tirata Amsterdam*. He is also in demand as a concert recitalist worldwide and is becoming increasingly active as a conductor. In addition Van Oortmerssen is associated with the University of Göteborg, Sweden, as a visiting organ teacher and affiliated with the organ research project at the Göteborg Organ Art Center.

For the academic year 1993/1994 Van Oortmerssen became Betts Fellow in Organ Studies at Oxford University and as a recitalist appeared in many international festivals such as the BBC Proms. It is also during these festivals that his interpretations of Bach and early music have brought him widespread fame. In 1995 Jacques van Oortmerssen began recording the complete organ works of Bach on the most important historical organs in Europe.

He has been a jury member at the following international competitions:

- Grand Prix de Chartres
- International Schnitger Organ Competition
- Dublin International Competition
- Odense International Organ Competition
- South African National Organ Competition

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Principal 12'	Principal 8'	Principal 6'	Principal 4'
Principal 10'	Quintadena 8'	Principal 4'	Principal 2'