

THE ALKAN SOCIETY

(Registered Charity number 276199)

<http://www.alkansociety.org>

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Alkan Bicentenary - the celebrations commence

Although, not surprisingly, his contemporaries Wagner and Verdi are being well-bruited in 2013, and despite his not getting a look-in at the BBC 2013 Proms season, Alkan's bicentenary has got off to a roaring start. Gratifyingly, books and recordings being issued in time for the celebrations (see below). The [past events](#) page of the Society's web site already lists concerts and events that have been held in Finland, Germany, Italy, France and throughout England (and Wales). [Future events](#) will spread the geographical net even wider – Switzerland, Canada, the USA, Chile, South Korea, Belgium, Slovakia, Scotland, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Australia and Mexico (where the Society's President will be performing in December). We set out a list of the delights to come on pp. 13-18 of this Bulletin, where we highlight in particular events being supported by your Society. It is getting difficult to keep the website up to date with all the news, but we invite members to let us know of anything they hear about which we have not yet caught up with. We hope to see many of you at the events which we are supporting.

Books

Charles-Valentin Alkan, by Brigitte François-Sappey and François Luguenot.

Collection Horizons/Bleu Nuit éditeur (n.p.) 2013. 173 pp. ISBN 978-2-35884-023-1.

€20.00.

Le passant du Pont de l'Europe; Charles Valentin Alkan entre tradition et la modernité, by Anny Kessous Dreyfuss.

Aix en Provence: Editions Massareth 2013. 357 pp. ISBN 9782-91194-217-4. €38.00

One can only express the greatest pleasure that both of these books make an appearance doubly welcome in Alkan's bicentenary year.

Mme. François-Sappey and M. Luguenot bring together in their concise volume almost all the facts, as they are known today, about Alkan's music and life respectively. In fact as regards

the works themselves perhaps little of significance, in terms of fact and documentation, has emerged since Ronald Smith's 2000 revision of his pioneering biography, which like the present volume sets out a structural division between the man and the music. Mme. François-Sappey covers her area ably, if a little drily, and provides thoughtful perspectives complementing, and often contrasting with, Smith. As regards the life however M. Luguenot has been assiduous in poring over the French music journals of the period, and has also been able to take into account the recently emerged correspondence with Masarnau. As a consequence, although there remain substantial lacunae in elucidating Alkan's movements and activities year by year, (let alone month by month, or day by day), Alkan can thanks to his efforts appear, as a man, a little less of an enigma.

And yet....it is almost forty years since Smith first issued his biography. In that time, the trickle of Alkan recordings has grown, if not to a flood, at least to a discernable inundation, to the extent that publishers are now scratching around for unrecorded works. The appearance of Alkan's music in a recital is no longer regarded as quite so much of a red letter day, and his name can appear even in newspaper articles without being inevitably connected with furniture unsuited to health and safety regulations.

It is a pity therefore that it seems the time has not yet come when Alkan can be treated, as others of his musical contemporaries have been, with a biography which can integrate in a single flow the thread of his life with the revelation of his art, and might even dare to speculate, beyond mere narrative, on the context of these within the culture and the progress of his country (and indeed of Europe as a whole) in the nineteenth century. It must be conceded that perhaps limitations on size of this volume – which is part of a series of handbooks presently extending from Gesualdo to Jolivet – precluded the larger atmosphere which the authors perhaps desired.

But this chance has been missed in the present volume; and in its absence there are disconcerting lurches to stereotype. I gritted my teeth as Mme. François-Sappey began her section with Bülow's anointing of Alkan as "the Berlioz of the piano". Certainly this is, as the author comments, an '*expression saisissante*', but is it not as, or indeed more, limiting than it is illuminating? – particularly when, as she notes, it descends from Schumann's condescending critique of the composer. The dubiousness of this epithet can be clear when we consider its obverse. What value would there be in calling Berlioz 'the Alkan of the orchestra'? They indeed share an interest in exploring sonority (completely different types of sonority) which can perhaps be traced in part to the French composers of the revolutionary period such as Gossec and Méhul, or the eccentric harmonic concepts of Reicha; but no such background is addressed or investigated here. Berlioz's credo of the artist as hero of his own works is one explicitly renounced by Alkan in his deeds and (in his critiques of Liszt and others) in his correspondence, and only once – in the '*Grande sonate*' op. 33 – approached in his own major compositions. Alkan's demonstrable skills as a miniaturist are nowhere reflected in the oeuvre of Berlioz. (Interesting to note, by the way - and not commented on in the book - that the personal paths of the two, both of them ultra-Parisians, seem rarely to have crossed). Then again, the expansiveness of Berlioz seems to proceed from the heart and the emotion; in Alkan, more from relentless, indeed often obsessive, ratiocination.....

M. Luguenot has provided us with an indispensable groundwork to Alkan's biography and we shall remain signally indebted to him for this, at least until his fuller biography (of which we hear convincing rumour) of the composer appears and displaces this summary. The seventy pages allotted to M. Luguenot here (inclusive of illustrations) must have been for him an excruciating straitjacket. This can excuse the occasions where he drops tantalising hints – as

to, for example, the 'letters presently inaccessible which indicate that towards the end of his life' Alkan was reconciled with his 1848 rival Marmontel, or to 'certain letters of the 1850s' which show that Alkan 'maintained close and familiar relations' with Louise, duchesse de Lannes, in whose *salon* he had made some of his debut recitals in the 1830s. Let us hope that more of these will be revealed in the collection of Alkan's correspondence to be edited by M. Luguenot, and which is announced in the present volume. M. Luguenot tells us much, and all of it valuable, but we await his further revelations with impatience.

Mme. Kessous's book is very different in character and indeed is a remarkable contribution to addressing the lacuna mentioned above in published treatments of Alkan, in making an imaginative attempt to assess his art in the contexts of his era and his personality – specifically, in this case, Alkan's debt to his Jewish religion and traditions. Not that Mme. Kessous exercises her imagination without respect to evidence; quite the contrary, as the detailed research she has undertaken sheds powerful light both on the man and his music.

The book's title refers to the correspondence that Mme. Kessous has recognised between the 'passing' pedestrian in the 1877 Gustave Caillebotte painting *Le Pont de l'Europe* (now in the Kimball Art Museum in Fort Worth, and reproduced on the book's cover) and the (in)famous photograph of Alkan from the back.



Mme. Kessous notes that the subject of Caillebotte's image is not what we ourselves can see, but is what the mysterious 'passant' can see – something about which we may speculate, but can never be certain. This is an analogy for the way in which 'the musician sets out – through his network of titles, annotations, unusual words ('mots inusités'), musical allusions, harmonic choices – an ambiguous relationship between the listener and a world of which he himself has the sole coherent vision, for his system of reference must remain with him alone.' Alkan gives clues to the messages his music conveys, but 'keeps the key to the universe he elaborates'. Moreover, as Pierre Brunel expresses in his preface to this book, Alkan though more or less fixed in Paris, was able not only to be a 'passant-interpreter' of his own creative world, but an intermediary, as Mme. Kessous demonstrates, between East and West (his Jewishness and his Frenchness), and, with his attachments both to his Jewish traditions and his love of Beethoven, Mozart, Handel and Bach, between tradition and modernity, as her subtitle asserts. Alkan's life coincided with important changes in synagogue practice amongst French Jewry and with changes in Jewish life at a time of French political change and development; Mme. Kessous points the way to a clear comprehension of these changes and their effects.

The central portion of Mme. Kessous's book is devoted to an intensive study of the three manuscript *Anciennes mélodies juives* now at the Conservatoire in Geneva. This extends to many fascinating discoveries about their dedicatee, the scion of the Russian Imperial Court, Zina Mansouroff, whom Alkan 'inherited' as a pupil from Chopin and who went on to become a friend of Friedrich Nietzsche and a fellow-student of counterpoint, under Adolf Ruthardt, with Wagner's proto-Nazi son-in-law Houston Stewart Chamberlain – a rather piquant chain of contacts.¹ Mme. Kessous's investigation of the music, its origins and its parallels is no less thorough and rewarding. Her further investigations into religious, cabbalistic and Talmudic symbolism and references in Alkan's music are both original and stimulating. Every future scholar of the music of Alkan will need to take into account this fascinating and original exploration of an aspect of Alkan's life – his Jewishness – often mentioned but never yet so clearly illuminated.

DC

Recordings

The Society has been notified of a number of new recordings of Alkan works, some of the material being 'first recordings'. We hope to include reviews of some of these in future bulletins. Amongst the recent issues are:

- **Stephanie McCallum's** recordings of the first two books of *Chants*, (op. 38) plus the first recording of *Un fusée*, op. 55. (Toccata TOC0157). This is the first of two discs which will include the complete *Chants*. This recording was supported by your Society.
- **Vincenzo Maltempo's** recording of the *Grande Sonate* op. 33 and the *Symphonie* op. 39 4/7.
- An Alkan recital including the *Grande Sonate* op. 33 by **Pascal Amoyel** (La Dolce Volta LDV 11) (Piano Classics 5065001863622)
- A recording by **Allessandro Deljavan** including the *Sonatine* and the *Trois grandes etudes* op. 76 (Classique)

All these works can be purchased [via the Society's Amazon website](#) link.

We understand that further Alkan recordings are under way this year from **Vincenzo Maltempo** and **Tomasz Kamieniak**, amongst others.

Alkaniana

Alkan/Masarnau – II: Alkan in Piscop

We continue our series of translations into English of Alkan's correspondence with Santiago Masarnau, now in the Spanish Historical Archives (see Bulletins 87 and 88). The translations of letters 4-7 in the sequence have been very kindly provided by **Julian Haxby**, and, as previously, the meticulous transcription of Alkan's often frantic handwriting by **François Luguenot** has proved invaluable, as have his notes. The tasks of Julian and François have not been made easy by Alkan. The letters are characterised by erratic spelling, grammatical idiosyncrasies and tangled flow of ideas, all of which however are consonant with the very

¹ In fact Mme. Kessous may have missed one small link between Zina Mansouroff and Alkan. In the 1850s Alkan wrote a letter inviting a Professor Lassigne to play 'chez le Prince Troubetskoi'. (Smith, op. cit, II, 253). Trubetskoy was the maiden name of Zina Mansouroff's mother.

fraught emotional states which Alkan displays in them. As we have already suggested, the Masarnau correspondence throws a completely new light on aspects of Alkan's life and character – as well as on his works.

We leave readers to make their own assessments of Alkan as he reveals himself. However the letters introduce us to new locations and new relationships formerly undocumented. The four letters translated below are connected with Alkan's resolution to take himself out of Paris for a few days each week to devote himself to work (presumably composing) so as to 'restart' the career he apparently believes is already 'stalling'.

Of Alkan's previously unknown country address, M. Luguenot writes: 'The village of Piscop, then in the department of Seine-et-Oise, now in Val d'Oise, is situated in the west of the commune of Écouen, 1 km west of Saint-Brice-sous-Forêt, bordering the forest of Montmorency. It is located 20 km, that is, exactly 5 leagues, from the centre of Paris. Today, Piscop retains a rural atmosphere despite its proximity to Paris and other large centres such as Montmorency and Sarcelles. The village is sited on a hillside. There are several chateaux nearby, including Blémur, Luat, and Château-Vert. In 1836 Piscop had 263 inhabitants; its population was 370 in 1901 and about 688 in 2007.'

We alas have no clue as to the identity of the mystery lady of letters VI and VII, so attractive but apparently so emotionally crippling, who seems to have been a major source of Alkan's emotional disturbance. M. Luguenot compares her with the Duchesse de Langeais in Balzac's 1834 novel of that name (who was herself based on Balzac's real-life mistress, the Duchesse de Castries). Bearing in mind the apparent death of a former lover mentioned in Alkan's letter III (January 3, 1835, see Bulletin 88), (is she the lady mentioned in letter V as enjoying Masarnau's waltz?) it would seem that Alkan was destined to be unlucky in love.

Other points of particular interest in these letters include Alkan picturing himself offering a prayer in church (letter IV) (rather than in a synagogue), and the mention of the completion of his '12 Caprices' (i.e. opp. 12, 13, 15 and 16/1-3). Then there is the mystery of his references in letters IV and V to a visit to England in the spring of 1835, a previously unknown foreign excursion....Alkan's interest in the *Lieder* of Schubert (letter V) may also be noted. At this time, only eight years after his death, Schubert was not renowned outside Vienna and would have had few partisans in France, so this is an interesting indication of Alkan's lifelong partiality to the German musical tradition.

DC

IV
To Masarnau in Madrid
[Paris, 18-19 August, 1835]

If it is in order to put yourself the greater in the wrong, dear Santiago, that you have not written to me for such a long time, that's certainly very generous; but, I assure you, a little less stoicism would please me more.

My good friend! Isn't it enough for us to be far from each other as we are, without the penalty being added of the negligence of each of us to tell the other what's up? I really don't know where I am up to since the last time I heard from and spoke to you; I mean I don't know whether to take up your story or to continue with mine. I was on my trip to England, from where I wrote a letter, I think, in which I asked you to send me one I could have on my return to Paris.

Almost three months have passed, and the very deep silence on your part has not made them shorter.

But when I tell you everything, that won't make me more interesting to your eyes; on the contrary, added to the ill-humour which forms my character, my demanding nature, my rancour, I will seem more annoying than ever and thus expose myself even more to what? your vengeance, or your indifference? – no, I prefer number 1 to number 2.

So, do you want me to laugh? Very well, do so, be satisfied. It's a shame that I have such rubbishy (vilaines) teeth; since I saw you I've lost yet another, and I'm afraid if this continues, I shall no longer have a jaw when you return. When you return - this phrase is so powerful that I have to gather my powers (une tension d'esprit) to comprehend its full scope. I say that almost as if I would offer a prayer at church. Mechanically I will ask God to be good to me, hardly thinking of the immensity of the prayer I address to him. I ask you when you will come back, reflecting all-the-more that this would make me go mad with happiness - and yet just recently this news has rung in my ears – did it come from the Piñeiros, from Gomis, from Field?² I don't remember now, but certainly I heard someone say it.

I don't know whether, even if you had stayed in Paris, my friendship for you would have been even greater than it has been during your absence, during your silence. But now I no longer have dark thoughts, it somehow seems possible to count on someone, someone like you who pleases me in every way, so that I can often at last experience ecstasies, intuitions and moments of perfect happiness; even though that's possible when I'm far from you.

But enough rambling, although, however, it's your fault that I'm so confused that I don't know whether I used to talk to you in verse or in the purest prose; for it's so long since I have done so. I'll tell you though, that I'm ashamed to have done nothing for a year; apart from having stalled in my career (*reculer dans mon métier*) "and perhaps, alas, in the writings of my very few friends "; I have just rented a small room within 5 leagues of Paris, where I can retreat for 2 or 3 days a week and work, if the memory of my friends past and present doesn't torment me too much in the solitude where I shall find myself; for there is no one in this hamlet, which consists of 8 or 10 houses. It is called Piscop, if you want to know, but it's not the place to write to me "if you have to write", that's always at Paris.

(Tuesday midnight - August 18, 1835) Goodnight, until tomorrow.

I scarcely dare continue with this letter, whose opening could make you believe that I need hellebore³ rather than news of my friends. But last night it occurred to me, for the first time in a long while, to work a little at my piano, and after having played some of Weber's sonatas (which almost made me cry, they are so beautiful and poetic) I turned to embrace someone, or to tell someone "I love you", and as there was no one beside me I took some paper and wrote to Madrid. If Weber had lived, and had seen how hearing his masterpieces had made a mess of my poor head, he would have been ashamed and cast his work into the flames. But it's not my fault if, when I'm overfull of sweet sentiments, that I sometimes seek to console myself by writing mere nonsense. I really think that those who say, that one shouldn't feel what one wants to paint, are right; because I do not think it would be possible to love someone more than I love you, and moreover, that it would be possible to tell you this more

² The Piñeiros: Spanish family in Paris, whose daughters Alkan had inherited as pupils from Masarnau. Field: the English pianist Henry Ibbott Field (1797-1848). Gomis: the Spanish composer José Melchor Gomis (1791-1836). *Ed.*

³ Hellebore features in Greek mythology both as a deadly poison and as a cure for hysteria. *Ed.*

stupidly. - I can say with Molière's M. Jourdain⁴: "Oh! my parents, how I wish you had not made me study!"

Your friend

C:V:A

[signature]

Paris

V

To Masarnau in Madrid

Piscop, near St. Brise, Seine-et-Oise, chez. Mr. Pahin, 6 November, 1835

At last I am settled here, as I wished to be, before writing to you. After many difficulties, and having eliminated all obstacles to my plan, now, barring exceptional circumstances, I intend regularly to spend three days a week in this hole. I will describe this apartment and this place to you later.

How much pleasure your letter gave me! How lovely it is to know that one has a real place in the heart of a friend whom one loves and esteems! I feel that if I were to lose your friendship it would have the same mental effect on me as if, physically, someone were to sever the limbs most necessary to me. Oh, stay my friend for as long as I live, and I will never complain of providence, whatever my circumstances, thanks to you.

One rebuke: why did you never speak to me about yourself? About your friendships and your loves? Do you fear my indiscretion or my age? I can reassure you on both counts. I can keep a secret, and I can love, or could once. Shall I tell you? My jealousy, which is almost as strong in friendship as in love, makes me think that Field has gained a closer intimacy with you on this subject. Perhaps I would never have spoken to you so indiscreetly if in your last letter you had not spoken to me about the Ballade that you have just composed and that you say caused you to shed so many tears. Please, if you love me, send me this Ballade so that I may weep over it as well. Tell me why you wrote it. Is it perhaps...? I do not want to ask anything. But as for your music, I will tell you that several of the things that you played for me gave me the utmost pleasure. I would like, or at least I ask, you to send me not only your Ballade but everything of yours that you can and that I do not know. Also the Sonata, parts of which you played for me before you left, if it has been printed. Do you think that I have forgotten the motif, so tender and graceful, in the Trio of your Valse?⁵ The one that gave so much pleasure both to my beloved and to myself:



Or the opening of the theme of your Sonata? No, it is all firmly fixed in my mind. And if you would like me to send you something of my own, once I have done it (because at present my

⁴ Character from Molière's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, although, as M. Luguenot points out, he does not use these exact words.

⁵ This is from '*En Hampstead*' from Masarnau's '*Los Cantos de los Driadas*', (González and Salas, '*El epistolario de Charles Valentin Alkan a Santiago de Masarnau*', in *Cuadernos de Musica* v. 20, p. 150 n. 1) of which, Julian Haxby has discovered, a highly indifferent performance can be found on YouTube by those who can be bothered to seek it. The '*Cantos*' were published in 1831. Alkan was to quote this melody again in a letter to Masarnau of 1869. *Ed.*

studies are confined to working at the piano), as well as some songs of Schubert that I think you do not know, send me quickly a package of your works. I have prattled long enough.

Tell me, is it a long time since you received news from Field? For my part, he has not written me a single word since his departure, despite the fact that we were as good friends as ever when we parted. I cannot explain this silence.

You probably know about the Piñeiro family's latest adversities. What an unfortunate family, particularly the mother.⁶ I saw them last just two or three days ago. The elder daughter is no longer taking lessons, but the second is doing well. We are making a start on harmony. I am only sorry that Mme Piñeiro will not allow her to play good music. Despite the fact that her fingers are not yet very nimble, she understands it very well and loves it greatly. It means that we must constantly fall back on M. Henri Herz's *Airs Variés*. However, we did recently read through Beethoven's Op 27 no. 2 together, and fairly well.



Did I tell you that in London I met somebody with whom I spoke about you? Scudero.⁷ I did not see much of him, but he seemed like a charming young man. Do you know him? I heard Moscheles play two new concerti, which are very fine, the 6th and 7th.⁸ If they have appeared in Paris, I will send you something, with the rest. How should I send it? Probably by stagecoach. In any case, tell me soon if you do not want me to show you my remaining teeth. Farewell already? It seems that barely a minute has passed since I saw you, yet not the slightest distraction has intervened between us since this morning.

C:V:A

[signature]

⁶ The family had suffered bereavements, referred to in the earlier letters. (See Bulletin 88).

⁷ 'Scudero' has been tentatively identified as "Pedro Escudero (1791-1868) famous Spanish castrato and violinist, first professor of violin at Madrid's Royal Maria Cristina Conservatoire, who eventually became a notable violin figure throughout Europe." (González and Salas, op. cit, p. 150 n.2). However the spelling and age would seem to be against this. The castration by the way was apparently the result of an accident, rather than a career move. Could this in fact be the French critic Paul Scudo (1806-1864) who was later to write about Alkan in the *Révue de deux mondes* in 1853 – with perhaps a playful suffix to his name? *Ed.*

⁸ This statement is complex to unriddle. Henry Roche informs your Editor that Moscheles did indeed play the first movement of his Seventh Concerto in London on May 1, 1835 (although there is no evidence one way or the other as to whether he played the 6th Concerto at this time). This could (more or less) be consonant with Alkan's statement in letter IV, dated 18th August, that he had been in England 'nearly three months ago.' But at the time, according to Moscheles himself, the concerto was still incomplete. Alkan could not have heard the whole concerto – unless maybe Moscheles gave him a run-through of the project at a private meeting. Mr. Roche tells us that Moscheles left London in July, and spent the rest of the year on the Continent; he played the 6th and 7th Concertos (the premiere of the latter) at Leipzig on October 9th, probably with Mendelssohn conducting. *Ed.*

VI

**To Masarnau in Madrid
[Paris, 18 April 1836]**

Scold me soundly, dear Santiago, scold me soundly. But do not think that I want to be scolded for not having written to you for so long. No, I have given you none of my news since December because I could not. You believe me, do you not? I want to be scolded for quite different things, which I will recount to you in this letter.

Though you have heard no news of me, I however have had news of you from the Piñeiro family. They will soon be joining you, it seems. I wish I were in their place, I assure you, because I hunger and thirst to see you. And, as always, I have a desperate desire to travel. But... I will continue my letter. As for you, you seem to have abandoned your plan to come and see me, since you have promised Madame Piñeiro to give her daughter lessons. That is a pity for me because, if I had a friend such as you with me, I would recover the energy and impetus that I used to have and that seem to have abandoned me forever. You seem not to believe it, my dear friend, but it is quite true that I have published nothing since (meeting) you and have written not a dozen pages. But now I have 8 or 10 days a month that are entirely my own. I spend them in the countryside. Alone, or almost alone, and I almost always return without having done anything, having wasted my time. Do you understand? I lack something. One of the cogs in my machine has ground to a halt. I am alive, but I am not myself, and everything conspires to keep me in this state. I have met a young person, good, pious, intelligent and well-educated, young and pretty, but entirely lacking in poetry. A young woman who has striven from her earliest years to husband all her passions. Someone who, when reading a book, whether sad or happy, looks in the mirror to keep her expression unaltered. Understanding all the beautiful things, but unable to share her appreciation with you. Never an exclamation, never any cordial enthusiasm; always calm. Oh! That is not what an artist needs, an artist who has known the most poetic and the most expressive person who ever existed. And yet I am bound, and I find it difficult to separate myself from this new lover. Even though every one of her glances, her words, makes me grow cooler, more sensible, if you will. Though the blood slows in my veins, and my thoughts slow in my head. She was due to go abroad, but I think unfortunately that she will remain. What can I do? She loves me and has done much for me. Perhaps I love her too, but she is killing me. She has killed me. Oh, if I had you with me, perhaps I would detach myself, perhaps I would become something once more. My life is ebbing away. I am 22 years old. 10 of my rivals have reached their zenith, whilst I languish. Making fine resolutions from afar, lacking the strength to hold anything close. But what are you doing? Does your country leave you a little more leisure to ponder some of the avenues that you pursue? You know so many things that I feel you must never be bored, must never rest, never waste a minute. But I hope that you think often of me, who always has you in his thoughts and who would give so much to see you for a moment, to have you in my small room at Piscop, which you would like much more than the copse in my garden, where I have sat so often without you.

Farewell. I love you.

C:V:Alkan

[signature]

Richault has found no way of exchanging music with you. But tell me what you wish me to give the Piñeiro family for you, and miss no opportunity to send me your Ballade.

VII

To Masarnau in Madrid Piscop, 22 October 1836.

I am in the midst of the Montmorency Forest, where I sometimes go to work, and though I promised not to write to you before hearing that Spain's fortunes have improved, I cannot resist the desire to converse with you a little. If you find it inappropriate for an old friend to speak to you about his petty affairs and his irksome friendship, then throw my letter into a corner and read it whenever you may wish to rest your mind from the important thoughts that must occupy you. As I was saying, I have used these recent fine days to come here to compose a little, in the pure forest air that surrounds my hermitage. I am at present on a hill, with a beautiful view. The leaves are beginning to fall, but the sun is still warm and this is one of those moments when one would give years of one's life to share one's feelings with a friend (*amie*), a mistress. With a friend (*ami*) who is far away, with a friend (*amie*) who is no more. Oh, my friend! How badly you have misunderstood the nature of the liaison of which you speak. Or I expressed myself badly. You have doubtless encountered such women along your way - outright scarecrows, artificial women, almost heartless, I would say. Women who, having a little knowledge, are pedantic, full of coquettish behaviour that is much more intolerable than mere coquettish appearance. Women who chill your heart when they say "Good Lord, how beautiful," because they have studied the gesture to accompany that exclamation. No poetry, only affectation, and unfortunately beauty. This is the portrait of the woman whom I detest much more than I ever thought I loved her. My heart is empty and grows drier with each passing day. I still wish to recall my former hopes, the time when I had honest men and women close to me, when my flow of ideas granted me a range of moods that I tried to reproduce in my compositions. Now I am the same at all hours. My ideas have come to a halt. I am very organised. I never do anything foolish. I study grammar and ancient history. At least if I had you near I would study astronomy and mathematics and would carry to the heavens the monotony and listlessness that are so much part of my present mood. I have completed my 12 Caprices⁹ and they are to be engraved. How can I send them to you? I have not seen the Piñeiro family for some months. But I would like you to have them. I have not received your Ballade. At a soirée one evening, someone unknown to me asked: "Have you received a visit from a Mme. Moral¹⁰, who has news for you from Spain?" I wrote to Passy the following day, and I have a letter dated two months ago but no Ballade. I returned. Nobody. I have heard no more said. As for (?) let me know if you would like me to approach him. He came here and I went there, but we have never met again. When will I have news of you? When will I see you again? When will I know all the details of your life and character, which I already love so much? Field has written to me since his return to England, but I will not write to him again. Farewell. I love you with all my heart.

C:V:A

[signature]

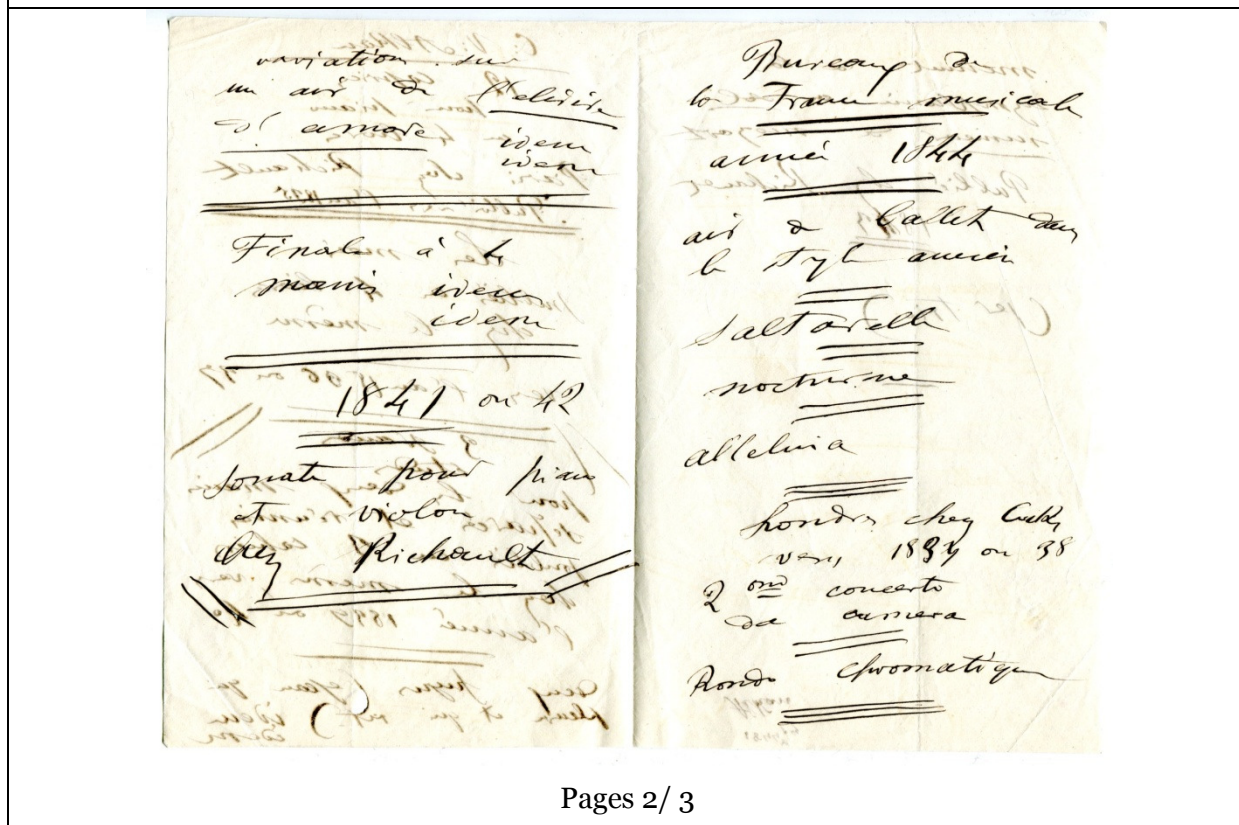
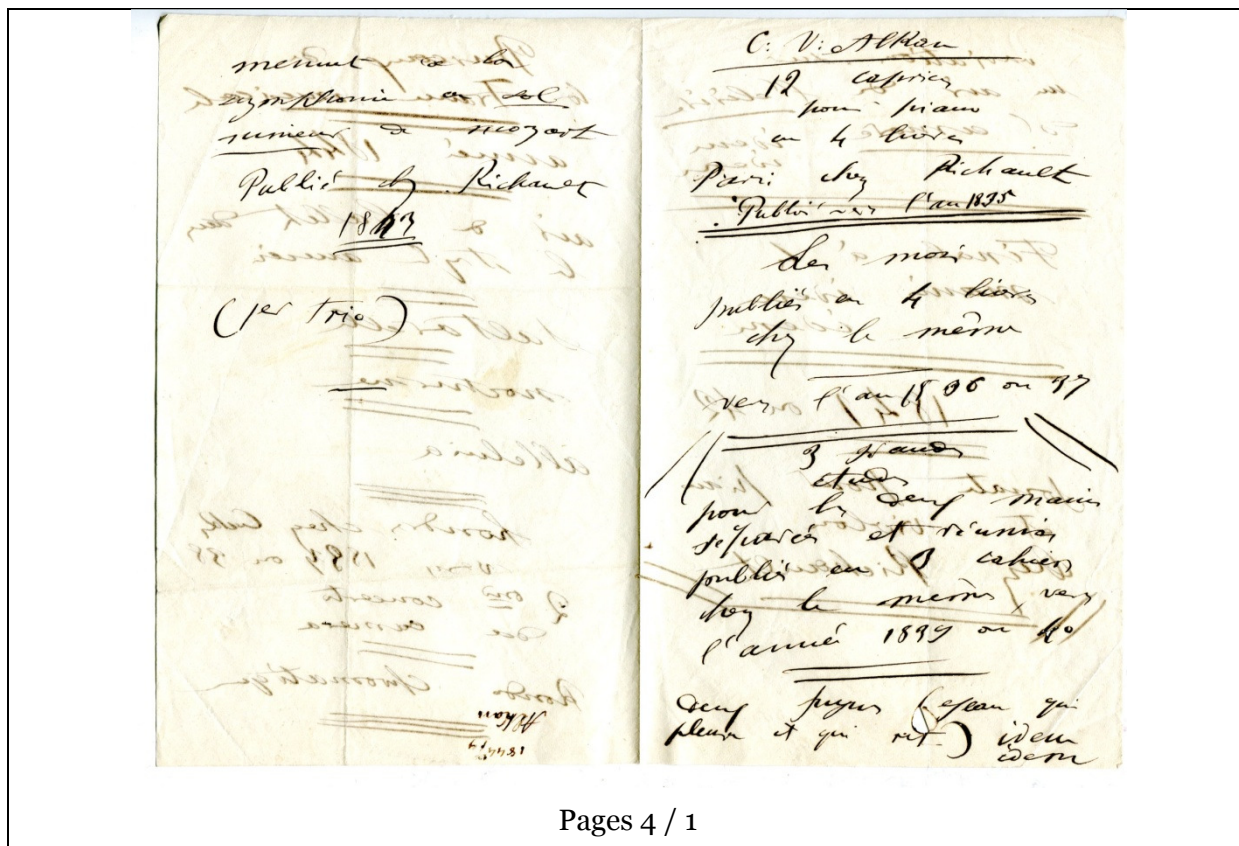
On the height of Blémur,
Montmorency forest,
Near Piscop.

⁹ Published by Richault in 1837 in four collections as *Trois Improvisations* op. 12, *Trois andantes romantiques* op.13, *Trois morceaux dans le genre pathétique* op.15, and *Tre Scherzi* op. 16. Ed.

¹⁰ Unknown.

Alkan's Catalogue

A private collector has kindly agreed to share with the Bulletin images of two remarkable pieces of Alkaniana in his collection.

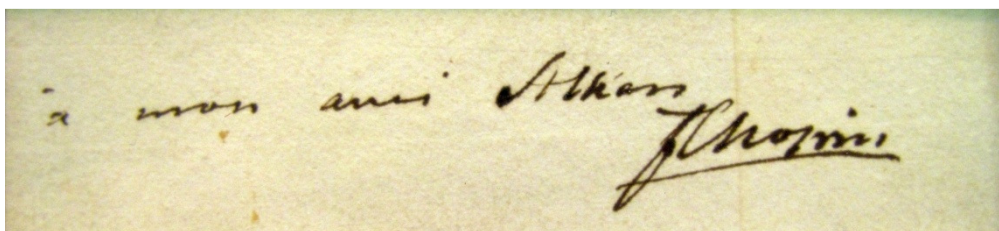


The first item is a list in the composer's hand on folded octavo of works published between 1837 and 1844 and presumably written in 1844 before the publication in that year by the Bureau central de musique, (referred to in the list as the 'Bureaux de la France musicale') of *Le chemin de fer* op. 27 and *Désir* (without opus number). The purpose of this aide-memoire is unclear – perhaps it was indeed a listing made for the Bureau. The list was known at the writing of Ronald Smith's biography; he notes there that '[A] rough catalogue dating from the mid-1840s in Alkan's hand...demonstrates that a memory which could recall a complete concerto after thirty years was incapable of dating compositions accurately less than a decade after their publication. Probably Alkan was impatiently disinterested in such matters.'¹¹

Missing from the catalogue are *Les mois* (1838), the A minor study written for Zimmerman's method, and the *Duo* op. 21 for violin and piano; but then as the op. 30 *Trio* only appears in brackets, perhaps the list was intended only to include piano works. The pieces listed as published by Cocks 'about 1837 or 1838' were in fact published in 1833 and 1834, and therefore in fact predate the *Caprices* (opp. 12-13 and 15-16) with which the list begins. The early sets of variations, (including those published by Cocks) are all ignored. The text of the list reads:

C : V : Alkan / 12 caprices / pour piano / en 4 livres / Paris chez Richault / Publiés vers l'an 1835 // Les mois / publiés en 4 livres chez le même / vers l'an 1836 ou 37 // 3 Grandes / Etudes / pour les deux mains séparées et réunies publiés en 3 cahiers chez le même, vers l'année 1839 ou 40 // deux fugues (Jean qui pleure et qui rit) idem idem [page] variation sur un air de l'elisire d'amore idem idem / Finale à 4 mains idem idem // 1841 ou 42 // Sonate pour piano et violon chez Richault // Bureaux de la France musicale // année 1844 // air de ballet dans le style ancien // Saltarelle // nocturne / alleluia /// Londres chez Cocks, / vers 1837 ou 38 // 2ond concerto / da camera // Rondo chromatique /// [page] menuet de la symphonie en sol mineur de mozart / Publié chez Richault / 1843 // (1er trio)

At the end of the last sheet is written, upside down, and apparently in a different hand, '1844 p4 [?] Alkan'.



The second document is a mere scrap in size, 30mm. x126 mm., in the handwriting of Frederic Chopin, 'à mon ami Alkan F. Chopin.' The owner tells us that the piece 'has a vertical crease through the "h" of Chopin's name. That crease was most likely created by a metal plate that was impressed into the paper during the engraving process for the title page of some edition of Chopin's music, as the paper itself is of the same weight and stock used for title pages. Probably cut from the actual music sometime during the 19th century.' One wonders whether this was someone's lucrative 'salvage' from Alkan's library which vanished after his death.....

¹¹ Ronald Smith, 'Alkan, *The Man: The Music*' (2000), II, 260.

Recitals

London and Cambridge

The year has started well for Alkan with concerts all over Europe, as a quick glance at the 'past event' section on the Society website will show. In London the Society's President gave a recital on February 12 at the City music society in London, on which 'Pythagoras' reports:

Last Tuesday's concert in the City Music Society's lunchtime series can only rank as a paradigm example of the Alkan Society fulfilling the purpose of its existence - "To promote the education of the public in the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the life and work of Charles Valentin Alkan." Every seat in the Great Hall of the Bishopsgate Institute was filled, indeed there were people standing. The programme, made possible with support from the Society, opened with Beethoven's two Sonatas Op.27 and closed with Alkan's *Symphonie* from the great studies in the minor keys. Most pianists would have played Beethoven before the interval and Alkan after it. Leslie Howard, however, played the entire programme, as is his wont, without an interval and there was, surprisingly, not the slightest jolt. He demonstrated exactly how to make a Steinway play with the most ravishing tone at all levels of volume and all areas of the keyboard. He also showed great skill in timing his concert precisely to suit those for whom a lunchtime concert means a lunchtime concert.

Among other Alkan events, Tom Wakefield gave a recital on February 23rd at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, which included the first movement of the Alkan Concerto with the 'authorised' cut signified by the composer, the *Petit Conte* and the *Andante romantique* no. 2. These were performances of great insight and feeling and thoroughly rewarding. The anniversary atmosphere was enhanced by performances of Bach (of crystalline purity), Chopin, the Schutz-Evler 'Blue Danube' transcription, Joplin, 'Jelly-Roll' Morton, and not least, Mr. Wakefield's own set of variations on 'Happy Birthday to You', at which the shades of, among others, Liszt, Schumann, Chopin and Alkan himself had assisted. Mr. Wakefield had earlier in the day been adjudicator, with Francis Knights, in the Alkan Competition which this year was won by Sasha Valeri Millwood of Girton College (a former runner-up of the competition), who played the first two movements of Mozart's Piano Sonata in F major K332 and Alkan's *Esquisse* Op.63/41: *Les Enharmoniques*.

Calendar of Forthcoming Events

The following events are listed at the time of going to press on the Alkan Society website, from which links to most events can be found. We will continue to regularly update the website throughout the year so do check for additions and changes.

Concerts supported by the Alkan Society

UK

Friday 10 May 2013. University of Hertfordshire, as part of 'Mayfest'. Lunchtime concert. Piano recital by Jonathan Powell to include Smith 'Al contrario' and **Alkan Concerto First movement op. 39/8**. Event supported by the Alkan Society

Friday 24 May 2013. Oxford, Jacqueline du Pré Music Building . Piano recital by Jonathan Powell to include Sorabji 'Le jardin parfumé', Busoni 'Fantasia contrappuntistica', and **Alkan Concerto op. 39/ 8-10**. Event supported by the Alkan Society.

Sunday 26 May 2013. Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge at 13.00. Piano recital by Jonathan Powell to include White Sonatina no. 8 (extracts) **and Alkan Concerto op. 39/ 8-10**. Event supported by the Alkan Society

Tuesday 28 May 2013. University College London, Haldane Room. Piano recital by Jonathan Powell to include Busoni 'Fantasia Contrappuntistica' and **Alkan: Préludes from op. 31 and Concerto op. 39/ 8-10**. Introduction by David Conway (Alkan Society). Event supported by the Alkan Society.

October/November 2013 (dates tba). Cardiff University/Brighton/Manchester University. Piano recital by Jonathan Powell to include Finnissy, Liszt, and **Alkan Concerto op. 39/ 8-10**. Event supported by the Alkan Society

Monday 25 November 2013. St. Michael's, Cornhill, London. Organ recital by Nicholas King of music by **Alkan**. Event supported by the Alkan Society. Details tba.

Thursday 28 November 2013. St. James's Church, Piccadilly, London. Afternoon and evening concerts of music by **Alkan**, details tba. Event supported by the Alkan Society.

As part of the 'Indian Summer in Levoča Festival, Slovakia (www.lbtfestival.eu)

Saturday 5 October 2013. Theatre, Levoca, Slovakia at 19.00 Concert by the Kapralova Quartet to include Vranicky, Bodorova, Brahms and **Alkan: 3 Motifs (arr. R. Murphy) and Quartet Fragment**. Event supported by the Alkan Society.

Sunday 6 October 2013. Congress Hall, Levoca, Slovakia at 15.00. Concert by Igor Karško (violin), Jozef Lupták (cello) and Mark Viner (piano) : **Alkan: Grand duo concertante op. 21 (violin and piano): Trio, op. 30: Sonate de Concert, op. 47 (cello and piano)** Event supported by the Alkan Society.

Monday 7 October 2013. Congress Hall, Levoca, Slovakia at 15.00. Recital by Tomasz Kamieniak. To include Wagner/Liszt, Lutoslawski, Poulenc, **Delaborde: 2 Petites preludes and Alkan: Le Festin d'Esoppe op. 39/12; L'incendie au village voisin op.35/9; Minuetto alla tedesca op.46; Marche quasi da cavalleria op. 37; Andante romantique op. 13/2; Etude for the left hand op. 76/1**. Admission free. Event supported by the Alkan Society.

Monday 7 October 2013. Congress Hall, Levoca, Slovakia at 19.00. Recital by Klára Kolonits (soprano) and Daniel Dinyés (piano). To include Wagner, Schumann, Dinyés and **Alkan: 3 anciennes mélodies de la synagogue**. Event supported by the Alkan Society.

Other Events featuring UK Society members

Thursday 30 May 2013. New North London Synagogue, 80 East End Road, London N3 2SY at 19.30. **An Evening with Alkan**, introduced by David Conway. Jonathan Powell (piano) and Claudia Conway (soprano) - programme includes Alkan: Synagogue Mélodies, selections from Préludes op. 31 and Concerto op. 39/ 8-10.

Sunday 21 July 2013. Wigmore Hall London. Recital by Leslie Howard to include Liszt, Verdi and **Alkan: Trois petites fantaisies, op. 41 and Symphonie pour piano seul, op. 39/4-7**.

Sunday 18 August 2013. Husum Festival, Germany at 11.00. Colloquium (in German): **'Has Charles-Valentin Alkan's music got a Chance in Germany?'** Speakers include Peter Grove, Dr. Hartmut Lück and Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Rathert.

Sunday 25 August. Chetham's School. Recital by Leslie Howard to include Schubert and **Alkan: Symphonie pour piano seul**, op. 39/4-7.

Thursday 21 November- Saturday 23rd November 2013, Paris. **International Colloquium: 'Charles-Valentin Alkan, le piano visionnaire.'**

Thursday 21 November: Bibliothèque Nationale Française : 'Sources, réception et postérité.'

Friday 22 November: Conservatoire: 'Connaissance, analyse et interprétation.'

Saturday 23 November: Musée de la Musique: 'Facture instrumentale et répertoire.'

Speakers include David Conway (The Alkan Society).

Sunday 8 December 2013. Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City. Recital by Leslie Howard to include Liszt, Verdi and **Alkan: Trois petites fantaisies, op. 41 and Symphonie pour piano seul, op. 39/4-7.**

Other Alkan concerts and events

UK

Friday 10 May 2013. St. James's Piccadilly, London. Piano recital by Angelo Villani to include Debussy, Chopin, Wagner/Liszt and Alkan Barcarolle op. 65/6.

Wednesday 22 May 2013. University Memorial Chapel, The Square, off University Avenue, Glasgow G12 8QQ at 19.30. Organ recital by Gerard Brooks, to include Hollins, Wagner, Pierné, Meale, W S Lloyd Webber and Alkan.

Sunday 9 June 2013, Pushkin House, London at 15.00. Karl Lutchmayer (piano) plays Liszt, Chopin and Alkan: Concerto for solo piano op. 39/ 4-7.

Sunday 16 June 2013. Woodhouse, Holmbury St. Mary, Surrey RH5 6NL at 17.00. Piano recital by Omri Epstein to include Chopin 24 Preludes and Alkan: Carnaval, op. 74/2, Le tambour bat aux champs op. 50/2, La chanson de la folle au bord du mer op. 31/8, Posément op. 35/11.

Friday 21 June 2013 Regent Hall, Oxford St., London at 13.00. Aleksander Szram plays Liszt, Chopin and Alkan: Capriccio alla soldatesca Op. 50 No.1, Le tambour bat aux champs Op.50 No.2 and "Quasi Faust" from the Grande Sonate Op.33. Admission free.

Wednesday 3 July 2013. Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, Guildford at 12.00. Recital by Elena Vorotko on an 1848 Pleyel fortepiano, to include Clara Schumann, Chopin, and Alkan: Le Festin d'Esope op. 39/12.

Monday 8 July 2013. St. Lawrence Jewry, Guildhall, London at 13.00. Piano recital by Elena Vorotko to include Clara Schumann, Chopin, and Alkan: Le Festin d'Esope op. 39/12.

Sunday 21 July 2013, Pushkin House, London at 15.00. Karl Lutchmayer (piano) – recital to include Alkan.

Saturday 2 November. St Mary's Old Church, Church St, London N16 at 13.00 as part of the 2nd Stoke Newington Contemporary Music Festival . New completions/versions of Alkan: Fragment for String Quartet by Michael Finnissy, Susie Self, Adam de la Cour, Neil Luck and others.

Sunday 3 November. St Mary's Old Church, Church St, London N16 at 11.00 as part of the 2nd Stoke Newington Contemporary Music Festival. Gabriel Keen plays premiere of 'Concerto for Piano Solo' (homage to Alkan) by Brian Inglis.

Canada

Friday 31 May 2013 Church of Saint-Lambert, Quebec, Canada
Billy Eidi (piano) plays preludes by Heller, Fauré and Alkan.

Ukraine

Friday 17 May 2013. Masterklass, Lavrska 16a, Kiev, Ukraine at 20.00. Piano recital by Jonathan Powell to include Sorabji 'Le jardin parfumé' and Alkan Concerto op. 39/ 8-10.

Russian Federation

Monday 20 May 2013. Russian Institute of the History of the Arts, St. Petersburg at 14.30. Presentation by Anny Kessous of her new book, *Le Passant du Pont de l'Europe. Charles Valentin Alkan entre tradition et modernité*. Musical illustrations to be provided by Dmitri Berezin (cello) and Alexey Viakhirev (piano) .

France

Tuesday 21 May 2013 Conservatoire à rayonnement régional de Paris, Paris, France
Françoise Gnéri (viola) and Claire Désert (piano) play music by Onslow, Gouvy and Alkan: Sonate de concert (viola transcription).

July 2013 Nancy, France

Billy Eidi (piano) plays preludes by Heller, Fauré and Alkan.

Monday 4 June 2013. Musée Mandet, Riom, France at 12.30. Jérôme Rigaudias plays Alkan: Grande Sonate 'Les Quatre Âges' op. 33.

Saturday 15 June 2013. Lille Piano Festival at 16.30. Recital by Guillaume Vincent to include Rachmaninoff and Alkan: Grande Sonate 'Les Quatre Âges' op. 33.

Sunday 16 June 2013. Lille Piano Festival at 10.00. Recital by Claire Désert and colleagues to include Chopin, Brahms, Saint-Saens and Alkan: solo piano pieces

Sunday 16 June 2013. Lille Piano Festival at 16.30. Piano recital by Cyril Huvé to include Chopin, Liszt, and Alkan: Symphonie for piano solo op. 39/4-7.

Sunday 16 June 2013. Lille Piano Festival at 16.45. Recital by Lidija and Sanja Bisjak to include Chopin, Liszt, Ravel and Alkan: Reminiscences de Don Juan.

Thursday 20 June 2013. Orangerie du Parc de Bagatelle, Paris at 16.30. Piano recital by Florian Noack to include Heller, Chopin, Lutoslawski and Alkan: Le Festin d'Esopé, op. 39/12.

Thursday 20 June 2013. Orangerie du Parc de Bagatelle, Paris at 20.45. Piano recital by Pietro de Maria to include Bach, Scarlatti, Chopin, Ravel and Alkan: Esquisses op. 63 nos. 4, 10, 11, 21, 41 and 43.

Saturday 22 June 2013. Orangerie du Parc de Bagatelle, Paris at 11.00. Concert/ conference with Jean-Yves Bras and Pierre Réach (piano): 'Les Quatre Âges de Charles-Valentin Alkan.'

Sunday 23 June 2013. Orangerie du Parc de Bagatelle, Paris at 16.30. Piano recital by Pierre Réach to include Chopin and Alkan: Grande sonate op. 33.

Thursday 27 June 2013. Orangerie du Parc de Bagatelle, Paris at 20.45. Piano recital by Claire Désert to include Heller, Schumann, Chopin, and Alkan: Scherzo-diabolico op. 39/3.

Tuesday 2 July 2013. Orangerie du Parc de Bagatelle, Paris at 20.45. Piano recital by Pascal Amoyel to include Chopin, Liszt and Alkan: Chant op. 67/6, Prélude op. 31/8, Esquisses op. 63 nos. 1, 4 and 11.

Sunday 7 July 2013. Orangerie du Parc de Bagatelle, Paris at 16.30. Piano duet recital by Lidija and Sanja Bisjak to include Chopin, Stravinsky and Alkan: Fantaisie sur Don Juan

Saturday 27 July 2013 Church of Saint-Pierre-de-Cormeilles, Normandy, France
Trio Talweg play T. Gouvy: Piano Trio no. 5 and Alkan: Piano Trio op. 30.

Sunday 18 August 2013 Massif des Bauges, France

Thursday 22 August 2013 Conservatoire à rayonnement régional de Lille, Lille, France

Piano recital by Pascal Amoyel to include Liszt, Grieg and Alkan: Grande Sonate 'Les Quatre Âges' op. 33.

Italy

Saturday 25 May 2013 Palazzetto Bru Zane, Venice, Italy at 20.00

Françoise Gnéri (viola) and Claire Désert (piano) play music by Onslow, Gouvy and Alkan: Sonate de concert (viola transcription).

Sunday 26 May 2013. Teatro La Fenice, Venice at 20.00. Recital by Vincenzo Maltempo to include Pizzetti, Liszt, Dallapiccola, and Alkan: Chant op. 38 no. 1 and Allegretto alla barbaresca op. 39/10.

Sunday 28 July 2013. Festival Pontino, Sermoneta, Italy. Recital by Roberto Prosseda (pedalier) to include Alkan, Préludes op. 66 nos. 2, 3 and 4, and Impromptu op. 69 (modern premiere on pedalier).

Monday 14 October 2013. Pesaro, Italy as part of the Rossini Opera Festival. Recital by Roberto Prosseda (piano and pedalier) to include music of Rossini and Alkan.

Sunday 20 October 2013. Chiesa Grande di San Rocco, Venice, Italy. Recital by Roberto Prosseda (pedalier) of music by Alkan.

Monday 21 October 2013. Ravello Concert Society, Via Raffaello, Ravello, Italy. Piano recital by Mario Angiolelli, to include music by Verdi/Liszt, Wagner, and Alkan: Rondo Chromatique op. 12

Tuesday 22 October 2013. Accademia di Musica, Pinerolo, Italy. Recital by Roberto Prosseda (pedalier) of music by Boely, Schumann, and Alkan: Benedictus op. 54, 3 Etudes pour les pieds seulement, Préludes op. 66 nos. 4, 7 and 10

Australia

Saturday June 8th and Sunday June 9th 2013. Woodend Winter Arts Festival, Victoria, Australia. At 20.30. Piano recital by Stephanie McCallum: Alkan – Chants book 5 and Symphonie op. 39 nos. 4-7

Friday 25 October 2013. Sydney Conservatoire, Australia at 16.00. Alfred Hook lecture by Stephanie McCallum: 'Charles Valentin Alkan (1813 – 1888) 200 years on'

Finland

Tuesday 25th June 2013. Mantta Music Festival, Finland at 19.00. Piano recital by Risto-Matti Marin to include Alkan: "Quasi Faust" from Op. 33.

Thursday 1 August 2013. Ahlbeck's Hall, Korsholm Music Festival, Finland at 19.00. Concert of chamber music to include Onslow, Chausson and Alkan: Sonate de concert for cello and piano op. 47.

Belgium

Sunday 11 August 2013 Church of Durbuy, Belgium

Trio Talweg play T. Gouvy: Piano Trio no. 5 and Alkan: Piano Trio op. 30

Switzerland

Tuesday 9 July 2013 Château Mercier, Switzerland

Trio Talweg play T. Gouvy: Piano Trio no. 5 and Alkan: Piano Trio op. 30.

Germany

Saturday 17 August 2013. Husum Festival, Germany, at 19.30. Piano recital by Jean-Frédéric Neuburger to include Bach, Dukas, Sibelius, Dutilleux and Alkan: Capriccio all soldatesca op. 50 no. 1 and Le chemin de fer op. 27.

Poland

Tuesday 24 September 2013. Filharmonia Świętokrzyskiej, Kilece, Poland. Piano recital by Tomasz Kamieniak to include J. Wieniawski 4 pieces op. 51 (dedicated to E. M. Delaborde) and Alkan: Concerto op. 39/ 8-10.

USA

Saturday October 26 2013. Chatham University, Chapel, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. at 14.00. Recital by Eric Dzugan (piano) to include Alkan: Concerto da Camera Op. 10 #2; selections from Esquisses op. 63, Les Mois, Trente Chants, Preludes Op. 25, Allegro Barbaro, Scherzo Diabolico; Trois Morceaux dans le genre pathétique Op. 15, Funeral March Op. 26, Le festin d'Esopé op. 39/12, Grande Sonate Op. 33 ; and Funeral March on the Death of a Parrot.

Saturday 30 November 2013. Bachus Conservatory, Austin, Texas. Charles-Valentin Alkan 200th Birthday Concert .

Japan

Saturday 2 November. Minato Maria Concert Hall, Yokohama, Japan at 18.30. Vincenzo Maltempo plays Alkan: Etudes dans tous les tons mineurs op. 39, (complete) .

Mexico

Sunday 8 December 2013. Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City. Recital by Leslie Howard to include Liszt, Verdi and Alkan: Trois petites fantaisies, op. 41 and Symphonie pour piano seul, op. 39/4-7.

Breaking news.....

As we go to press we learn that an Alkan Society is being formed in **Austria**. The pianist Roberta Pili, who is one of the society's organisers, tells us:

“Taking opportunity of the bicentenary celebration of the French-Jewish composer, the Alkan Society of Vienna will be enthusiastically involved in supporting C.V. Alkan's piano works with its cultural and musical activity. Another crucial objective of this non-profit Society will be the promotion of the polyphonic piano art, which has been one of the fundamental characters of Alkan's pianistic writing and performing virtuosity. Events will cover performances, concerts, recitals, lectures, workshops around Alkan as well as a comparison with his contemporary friends Liszt and Chopin. The events of the bicentenary celebration in Vienna will be starting October ending up on November 30th, Alkan's birthday concert.”

Amongst the performers at the November concert will be Roberta herself and the Israeli violinist Yair Kless. The society will shortly be establishing its own website at www.alkansocietyvienna.org