



The Alkan Society

Registered Charity no. 276199

www.alkansociety.org

President: Stephanie McCallum

Vice-presidents: Anne Smith, Hugh Macdonald, Nicholas King, Richard Shaw

Honorary Officers: Mark Viner *Chairman*, Nick Hammond *Treasurer*, José López *Secretary*

Bulletin 101: December 2020

Farewell and Welcome: Change of Bulletin Editor



Nick Hammond writes:

This is the 11th issue of the Bulletin under my editorship: my first was issue 91 in 2015. The previous editor, David Conway, was certainly a hard act to follow in terms both of his Alkanian scholarship and his pellucid and succinct style. I must admit I passed several articles in my early issues in front of David for his wise comments.

Over the years, the purpose of the Bulletin has shifted from being the vehicle for news and announcements about the Society towards the go-to journal for publication of articles on Alkan and his music, whether scholarly or in a more light-hearted vein. This change has been enabled by our increasing use of the internet for news and announcements, with both archival information and forthcoming events published on our website, the circulation of the quarterly *News Digest* by our Secretary, and, of course, the opportunities for direct email correspondence with members. The use of social media by the Society, now to be led by Bradley Berg, may again change the balance. Within the Bulletin, however, I have attempted to maintain a stimulating mix of scholarly pieces, longer news items, reviews of Society events and of new recordings, letters from members and, not least, the *Distractions and diversions* section including the prize crossword (though I would be the first to admit that the peculiar British penchant for cryptic crosswords may leave others mystified). I feel the time is now ripe for new ideas, a younger broom to sweep away some of the cobwebs. I wish my successor well.

Miles Thibodeaux writes:

Alkan's music and life have fascinated me for years and I look forward to assisting the effort to make him more well-known through whatever means I can. Classical music and editing are important passions of mine, so I am glad to accept this position and to provide assistance to the wonderful people researching and performing Alkan. I'd like to offer my thanks to Nick for his work on the Bulletin and I will endeavour to match the standard he has set.



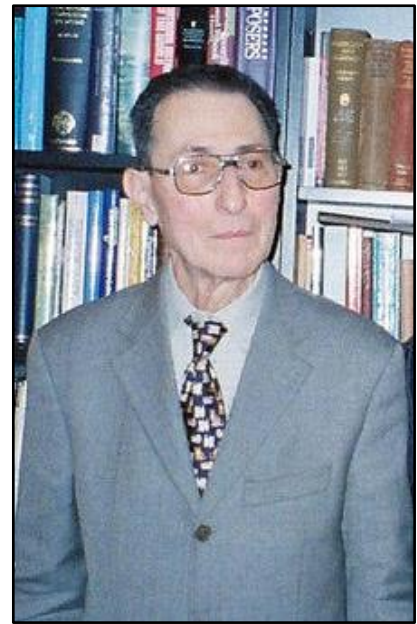
The editor can be contacted at: BulletinEditor@alkansociety.org

Eliot Levin

We are sorry to have to announce the sad news that Eliot Levin, Chairman of the Society from 2002 to 2014, passed away in April this year at the age of 83, having suffered for several years from Parkinson's Disease and resultant complications.

Eliot served on the Committee for very many years before he took on the chairmanship, and was our Membership Secretary as long ago as 1985. He played a seminal part in organising the events associated with the centenary of Alkan's death in 1988 and the bicentenary of Alkan's birth in 2013. His contribution to the Society was immense. It is no exaggeration to say that the Society would not exist today had it not been for his input, especially following troubled times at the turn of the century, when he was largely responsible for bring things back onto a viable footing.

Eliot was a major figure in the technology for recovering old recordings, both video and audio. For example, with his company Symposium Records, he developed ways of recovering recordings from Phonovision discs which were originally developed in the 1920s by John Logie Baird for capturing 30-line television broadcasts. He was Treasurer of the Recorded Vocal Arts Society, and a member of the Historic Masters Committee, for which he resolved many problems in transfers from early 70rpm records. He also became highly expert in pianola and piano roll technologies, and in 1983 transferred (onto cassette) four piano rolls of Alkan performances which were held at the Musical Museum in Brentford. (A description of the process involved and of the details of the rolls is given in *Bulletin 22*, Jan 1984.) Subsequently, Symposium Records issued many recordings of Alkan either on cassette or, later, on CD in the 1980s and 1990s. Visitors to his home at Barnet could not fail to be impressed by the collection of rare, if not unique, materials which dominated his latterly-single abode.



Whilst he did not suffer fools gladly, nor have great tolerance for shortcomings in others, Eliot was always outwardly gracious in his dealings with colleagues, and generous behind the scenes in his financial support of the Society's work. Socially he was an engaging raconteur, especially in recounting his career as a scientist, engineer and examiner over a convivial dinner for two at the Athenæum Club, where he was a member of the Committee for many years. Not least amongst those events was an evening which he organised at the Club to celebrate the 80th birthday of Ronald Smith in 2002, and in arranging for Ronald to share his career memories at a Society meeting there in 2004, which turned out to be the last time that the Society saw Ronald before his sudden passing less than three months later.

This outward benevolence perhaps acted as a counterfoil to the firm privacy which surrounded his personal life, for he was adept at changing the subject whenever any conversational intrusion was attempted on his searing experience as a survivor of the wartime holocaust.

His many other pursuits included membership of the Rolls Royce Club (he was part-owner of a fine vintage specimen, which he was especially mortified to graze against the then-Secretary's gateposts one day), and an avid interest in the decline of Routemasters in the London Transport bus fleet. He always demonstrated a sharp, if dry, sense of humour, and kept his intellectual skills well-honed at the chessboard, the cryptic crossword and other such diversions.

We extend our deepest sympathy to the surviving members of his family. His contribution to the Society over the years can never be overstated.

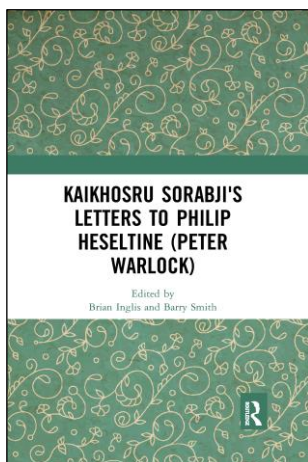
Twenty-five *esquisses* published by the Society: an update

Readers will recall that back in 2018, and in subsequent issues of the Bulletin, members were invited contribute an *Esquisse* to a special edition published by the Society in April this year to coincide with the 100th issue of the Bulletin. Members of the Society were sent a copy of the volume of 25 *Esquisses pour piano*¹. The pieces in the Volume were published anonymously: this was to encourage amateur composers, who might otherwise feel shy about exposing their efforts to the world at large, to contribute to the Volume. Now that the volume has been published, all the composers have agreed for their names to be released, although for one piece the composer preferred the piece to be marked as *Unattributed*. The contents page with names is shown on the right, and a pdf version of this page is available for download so members can print it out to add to their personal copy².

In addition, the editors have prepared a new full edition of the volume for electronic publication only (as a pdf file). There are one or two minor textual changes in this Volume and names are included. The pdf file is available from the Society website.

Finally, several of the composers have provided audio recordings of their *esquisse*, and one of the editors of the Volume (Richard Shaw) has recorded a number of the other *esquisses*. The recordings can be heard on our website, and other recordings will be added in due course.

Contents			
Catching as catch can <i>John White</i>	3	Oiseaux tristes et joyeux <i>Brian Inglis</i>	37
Chevauchez dans l'obscurité <i>Philipp Rhein</i>	5	Prélude XI <i>Brian Arlon Sunday</i>	39
..... du début jusqu'à la fin	10	Prélude XII <i>Brian Arlon Sunday</i>	42
<i>Richard Murphy</i>		Remembering <i>John White</i>	43
Esquisse: Dolce con anima <i>Frederik Keynaert</i>	11	Romancing <i>John White</i>	44
Esquisse mécanique <i>Hugh Shrapnel</i>	12	Tarantellinetta <i>Ryan Layne Whitney</i>	45
Extrait de concerto <i>Brian Inglis</i>	18	The first female referee <i>Dave Smith</i>	47
Figure-skating <i>John White</i>	20	The Lord is my shepherd <i>Alan Mills</i>	49
Fils des cloches <i>Alex Bolton</i>	21	Trotting <i>John White</i>	53
Fragment de quatuor <i>Brian Inglis</i>	23	83 Utan Satir <i>John Goslin</i>	55
Hiding and seeking <i>John White</i>	26	Vent d'Ouest <i>Nigel Hitchman</i>	57
Le festin du Prophète Élie - petites variations sur un thème juif <i>José López</i>	28	Waltzing <i>John White</i>	63
Le manège enchanté <i>Unattributed</i>	33		
Les cloches <i>Brian Inglis</i>	34		



New publication: *Kaikhosru Sorabji's Letters to Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock)*

A new book edited by Society member Brian Inglis and Barry Smith has been selected by *BBC Music Magazine* as one of “the greatest books on the subject of classical and film music published in 2020 so far”. Given the connection between Sorabji and Alkan, some members may be interested in this publication, which is available from the publishers Routledge³ and other good booksellers. The book is available in paperback at a less eye-watering cost than is the hardback edition.

¹ If as a paid-up member of the Society you did not receive your copy, please contact the Treasurer, Nick Hammond, treasurer@alkansociety.org.

² All resources mentioned are available at: www.alkansociety.org/Publications/Music-publications/music-publications.html

³ See: www.routledge.com/Kaikhosru-Sorabjis-Letters-to-Philip-Heseltine-Peter-Warlock/Inglis-Smith/p/book/9780367728243

“Confined” studio recital

Miles Thibodeaux (Vassar College, USA)

On May 28, 2020, in the midst of global lockdowns, Professor Jean-Louis Haguenaier of Indiana University Jacobs School of Music posted a virtual version of a studio recital to YouTube dedicated solely to the works of Alkan¹. I took the opportunity to reach out to Professor Haguenaier and some of his students to discuss what went into the production of this recital. Those interviewed include: Professor Jean-Louis Haguenaier, Bradley Berg (who performed op. 33 no. 1), Fernando Garcia (who performed *Les Diablotins* and the *Etude alla Barbaro*), and Aglaja Petrova (who performed *La Vision* and op. 63 no. 16, *Fantasia*).

How did this recital come about?

Jean-Louis Haguenaier: [Bradley] took me to this path; he spent a lot of time learning Alkan pieces and passionately working towards a lot of his music, both as a pianist and as a musicologist. So I thought at a certain point it would be nice for him to share this interest with my other students, and that’s how we came up with the idea of doing a studio recital totally dedicated to his music.

I’m personally not extremely familiar with Alkan. Even though I’m French, I’m Jewish, both could be good reasons to be very familiar with Alkan, but as a matter of fact, I became more familiar with Alkan when I came to this country because a long time ago one of my students that worked on *Le Festin D’esope*, which is a wonderful piece. I helped him through this fantastic piece, but personally, I have never played it. Back in France Alkan was a familiar name, but not his music. So it’s been wonderful for me to become more familiar with his works.

Were the other students familiar with Alkan before preparing for the recital?

Fernando Garcia: I was familiar with Alkan prior to this project, and it really was through just listening to piano music in general. As a pianist, I feel like I listen to a lot of music, and specifically I try to look for composers who are more obscure than your usual Chopin and Beethoven. And so I found Alkan; I believe the first piece was *Le Chemin de Fer*. The compositional ingenuity was very interesting to me, and that got me down the rabbit hole listening to more. It’s funny because I would watch it on YouTube and I would look down at the comments and they would often say “this just sounds so airy, and technical,” but I really grew to appreciate his music.

Aglaja Petrova: I had personally never heard of him before the project, but I did a lot of listening once we were assigned to pick out which piece we liked and to get the feel of what kind of composer he was.

Did you collaborate amongst yourselves to sort out which pieces would be played by whom?

Bradley Berg: I don’t think that’s always a good idea, especially when you don’t know a composer. I wanted everyone to explore this composer for themselves. Around Thanksgiving break last year, I had a bunch of time, so I put together a list of works that were short enough to be on the recital. I couldn’t include the *Concerto* or the *Symphony* as much as I wanted to, but there are so many pieces that are anywhere from 30 seconds to five or seven minutes that are great concert length pieces for a studio recital. So I sent out a list of good starting places. I even sent out some ideas for friends, for example, some of the duet *Marches* would be fun to play. Then I just let everyone who was not familiar explore, and so they got to pick their own piece.

How involved was the teaching process?

Haguenaier: The fact was that we couldn’t meet right before the recital, so there were no in-person lessons. We had less interaction than we would normally have.

Aglaja [to Professor Haguenaier]: It was for two lessons for sure. The first lesson you showed me how to do the right hand as smoothly as possible, and the second lesson I played for you a little bit, just to compare fingerings and stuff like that. Then, four days before the videos were due, I sent you

¹ A video of the performances can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugWNSZjciUQ>

a video of me playing [the piece] and you gave suggestions for dynamics and final stuff. So it definitely wouldn't have been how I played it if I hadn't talked with you during the lessons.

Fernando [to Professor Haguenaer]: I remember we had gotten a chance to play the esquisse prior to the break, but not really the etude. It took more time to prepare and I just remember for a lot of the technical aspects we would spend the video lessons just talking about how to best facilitate these quick movements, because in this piece, there's a lot of leaps. I was having the most trouble with those sections so I remember just talking about different ways [to handle them]. It was a little bit more difficult because showing something on Zoom is less tangible.

Bradley: I think many of my other studio-mates started later than I did because I was very excited, and I also chose a very ambitious piece. That was basically the only thing I was practicing that whole semester. But I'm glad that people chose some of the lesser recorded repertoire. For instance, Fernando chose the *Etude alla Barbaro*.

Were there any difficulties staying motivated while you were stuck at home?

Bradley: At first I loved it because I didn't have to leave my apartment to practice. I was lucky enough to have a weighted keyboard, which is the one I ended up performing on. It was fine for me at first, but then I had the thought "you're not playing an actual piano." I actually avoided my concert piece for a month. I didn't play it at all because I learned this very technical, difficult, fast piece on real pianos and I didn't think I could actually play it well on a keyboard. There's definitely something psychologically different about playing on a plastic keyboard, but I think you can make it work if you really try and if the piano is not too bad.

Given how unknown and undocumented many of these pieces are, was it difficult to get a sense of the mood of your piece and what you were aiming for?

Fernando: Yeah, especially with the Etude, there are so few recordings so it was hard. There is a melody, but it's hard, that is the 'etude' part about it. I remember really working on trying to find the most flowing line because it's so spaced out between the hands, because it's just chords. With the other piece, there are multiple recordings of the esquisse, so I feel like I was more able to listen and pick up ideas. He's very imaginative, so it was fun to learn how to apply that to the music.

Aglaja: For me, when I listened to the recording [of *Fantasia* from op 63,] it seemed not as musical. I think the hardest part for me was to first make it fast enough. During the last week, I was trying to make it sound as if I wasn't a computer playing it. Professor Haguenaer helped out and he said that the left hand could make it more musical if there's a *staccato* or if there's a *crescendo* or if something's super *legato*, while the right hand just keeps going and going. I really focused on controlling and stabilizing the right hand, but the left hand added that feel that person's playing it.

What are your future plans? Do you want to continue your studies in music, or do you have other projects to work on?

Bradley: I'm applying to doctoral programs this fall, so I'd like to continue my academic studies studying Alkan and his world and playing music. I think that's going to be a project that will continue. For me, that's wonderful.

Aglaja: For me, I want to continue my studies and piano after my bachelors; I definitely want to get my masters. I'm not sure where exactly, but it would either be at Indiana University since I'm an in-state resident or — my family's Russian, so I've always wanted to study somewhere in Russia because I feel like that's a great opportunity. It also depends because moving is a big step, but I definitely want to still do piano study after this.

Fernando: I am in the same boat, I would like to continue studying piano after this. It's kind of hard to go away from it, especially at a school where the musicians are phenomenal. It's a good environment to be around.

Dance in Lockdown

Janet Randell (Cedar Dance Animations, London)

Early in May, the choreographer Janet Randell contacted the Society to ask our advice on using some of Alkan's short pieces for a dance project to be created during lockdown, if possible to be performed in an outdoor space. Janet told us that said she'd been introduced to Alkan's music by Michael Finnissy when she was a dance student over 45 years ago. Our President Stephanie McCallum kindly gave permission for her to make use of her recording of the Chants (on Toccat Classics), and despite the continuing restrictions due to the pandemic, Janet was able to proceed with the project. She has provided us with the following update, in which the project is now being filmed in three scenes using a combination of dance in a confined indoor space contrasted with an outdoor rural location.

Cedar Dance Animations presents **Dance in Lockdown 1**

Director and Choreographer: Janet Randell

Music by Charles-Valentin Alkan

Pianist: Stephanie McCallum

Dancer: Sarah Miller

Cinematographer: Lewis Bayley

About Janet Randell

Amidst the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic this year, choreographer, animator and director of Cedar Dance Animations, Janet Randell, is currently completing a dance film project entitled *Dance in Lockdown 1*, set to three compositions by Alkan. She is also directing a series of films, *A Chronicle of Spring*, released on selected Thursdays on YouTube in aid of the NHS-based charity Horatio's Garden. Despite the pandemic, Janet hopes to publish shortly a major educational dance and animation project *A Tutorial Guide to DanceForms*.¹

Randell writes about *Dance in Lockdown 1*

I discovered the works of Alkan many years ago as a student at the London School of Contemporary Dance and subsequently created an animation to one of his haunting Barcarolle piano compositions.

This year I have been deeply moved by the stories of people whose lives have been profoundly affected by the pandemic, including the many who have suffered the loss of loved ones. In addition to a weekly series of films entitled *A Chronicle of Spring* showing the changes in the seasons and the panacea offered by nature's cycle of rest and regeneration, I have been inspired to choreograph a film in three scenes called *Dance in Lockdown 1*.

The three particular pieces of music I have selected by Alkan, played so movingly by pianist Stephanie McCallum, speak to me of stalwart resilience mingled with the poignant sense of isolation and yearning experienced by so many since the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic around March 2020.



¹ For further details of these projects, see: (1) www.youtube.com/channel/UCorhm3L8u1YH13zYo52iD3Q/videos (2) www.horatiogarden.org.uk/fraisevents/a-chronicle-of-spring/ (3) <https://cedardance.com/chronicle-of-spring/> (4) <https://cedardance.com/about-2/>

Through the music, film and dance in two of the scenes, I am exploring the paradoxical themes of the joy and comfort of the memories of past experiences enjoyed by those living together, alongside the deep searing pain of loss and yearning in sudden illness and bereavement. In the third scene I touch on the aftermath of such tragedies, where memories and the comfort of nature offer some sense of continuity and hope in the face of isolated resignation.

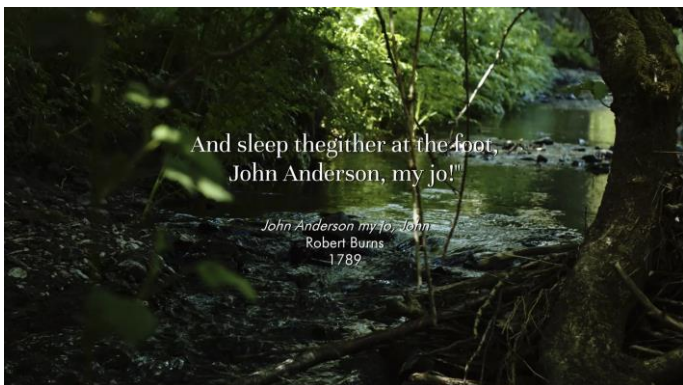
Dance in Lockdown 1 is inspired by the particular story of a lady, wishing to remain anonymous, who spoke openly about the tragic loss of her elderly husband in April 2020. Happily married for years, and looking forward to growing old together with her husband, she recounts in harrowing terms saying goodbye to him as he was taken to hospital, after becoming severely ill with coronavirus, having just nursed her back to health. Her husband then spent a week alone in hospital except for the attending medical staff, and she was unable to see or contact him until just before his death. The lady says in her own words “Nobody can give me a hug ... I want to make it quite clear that I am not lonely, but I am alone.”²



Dance in Lockdown 1: Scene 1

The flowing rhythm of Barcarolle (op.65 no 6), from *Troisième Recueil de Chants*, has inspired Scene 1, set in the woodland where *A Chronicle of Spring* is being filmed weekly over the seasons from the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Set to filmic images of nature, against the backdrop of ‘dancing’ ancient oaks on a hill overlooking an idyllic stream, the music is accompanied by one of the most moving of love poems by Robert Burns, “John Anderson, My Jo.” The

graceful musical melody switching effortlessly from the right to left hand throughout the piece with gentle



lyrical chords played in an arpeggiated pattern, lends itself to the theme of mutual love, youthful experiences and sharing, as an elderly woman speaks of her love for her equally aging ‘Jo’. She does not flinch from the subject of their eventual demise, but speaks of them growing old together in companionship and love: “And hand in hand we’ll go, And sleep thegither at the foot, John Anderson, my jo.”

Dance in Lockdown 1: Scene 2

There is an abrupt change to an enclosed space indoors, where the dancer portrays a lone widow dancing out her grief and pain in abstract dance images. The movement reflects the theme of Alkan’s Allegretto entitled *Fa* (op.38, *Deuxième Recueil de Chants* no 2), which moves relentlessly and purposefully without any sense of respite or peace. There is one brief glimpse in the dance of happier memories reflected in the music before the searing pain of the present reality takes hold, trapping the occupant even tighter in her emotions and the stifling environment.



² BBC Radio 4 *Today*, April 2020

Dance in Lockdown 1: Scene 3

There is a hint of a move towards a calmer resolution with the recollection and memories of happier times. The haunting melody of Barcarolle (op.67, no 6) from Alkan's *Quatrième Recueil de Chants* is set against the lapping rhythm of gently undulating water redolent of Mendelssohn's Venetian Gondola Songs (op.30, no. 6 in F-sharp minor and op.19 no. 6 in G minor).



There is a constant undertow of sadness, isolation and resignation echoed in the music, dance and the return in the film to the wood, where the dancer is still trapped in the raw tragedy of her loneliness indoors.



One glimmer of hope is offered in the final bars of music where the dancer is lifted up towards the hint of the ray of a sunnier major chord.



All Pictures: *Dance in Lockdown 1* - Randell © Cedar Dance Animations Limited
Janet Randell, BA (Hons), AISTD, Cedar Dance Animations © November 2020

Orchestration of Alkan's *Le Chemin de Fer* by Thibault Perrine

*Society member Seth Blacklock heard about an orchestral transcription of *Le Chemin de Fer* (op.27) by the French composer Thibault Perrine, and contacted him to find out more. They had a brief email exchange which is summarised below. The first performance was given in 2017 by the Orchestre National de Bordeaux-Aquitaine conducted by Paul Daniel in Bordeaux, and the recording was made by Radio Classique. We hope that more details about the orchestration can be published in a later issue of the Bulletin, as indicated by the composer in his email reply, perhaps when the score is published.*

SB: Is there (or might there be in the future) a recording available of a performance of the orchestration of *Le Chemin de Fer*?

TP: Yes, I've got the recording of my orchestration¹.

SB: Is the score published or available?

TP: The score will be published by *Editions Billaudot* — but I've to make a few corrections before it will be published.

SB: Might you consider writing a short piece for our Bulletin on what inspired you to orchestrate *Le Chemin de Fer* and your experience in doing so?

TP Why not! It's the first and only piece of Alkan I've orchestrated.

SB: Is there anything the Society might do in promoting your work relating to Alkan?

TP: When the piece will be published, it could be great to announce it!



Lo strano caso di Charles Valentin Alkan by Vincenzo Maltempo



Vincenzo Maltempo's book, *Lo strano caso di Charles Valentin Alkan* ("The strange case of Charles Valentin Alkan") was published in Italian by Florestano Edizioni in February 2020 (ISBN 9788831486033, 464 pages).

The publisher's information tells us that "the intent of this book, the first of its kind in Italy, is to offer, through an exhaustive biography and an analysis of all of Alkan's musical production, the necessary knowledge to start an exciting journey of rediscovery, but above all to open further research and spark a more informed debate."

We hope to be able to provide a review of the book in a future issue of the Bulletin.

¹ Thibault Perrine has kindly permitted us to made the recording available via the Alkan Society website. It can be heard at: www.alkansociety.org/Chemin-de-fer-Perrine.mp3

The complete recording of Akan's solo piano music

Our Chairman Mark Viner answers questions on his epic project

Why you have chosen to embark on the first ever recording of his complete piano music?

Well, this wasn't really something I ever intended to do, but a gradual conviction. I always wanted to eventually record the major works and had at least a third of his music in my repertoire already so after I recorded the *Douze Etudes dans tous les tons majeurs*, op.35, which was actually something my producer persuaded me to do initially, I gradually felt that if anyone were to make a complete recording, I should be the one to do it. I've known and studied this music most of my life and have always had a strong sense of conviction when it came to interpreting it so, ultimately, I feel it my duty to make a reliable, comprehensive recording which fills in the gaps.

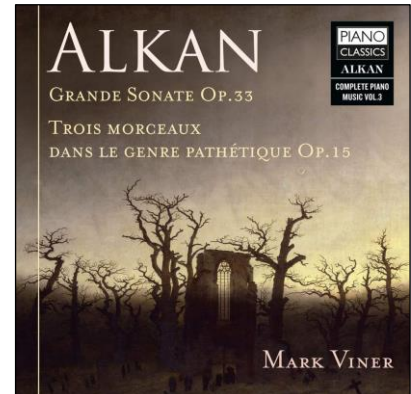
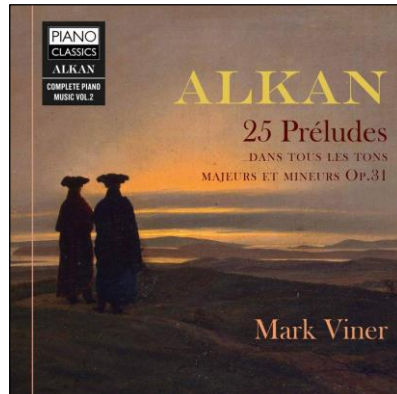
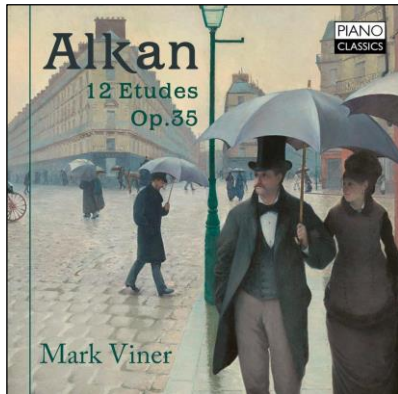
Where are you so far in terms of what is due for release, what is 'in the can' and what is on the next recording schedule?

The next release is due in January 2021 and comprises Vol. IV of the project – Paraphrases, Marches and Symphonie, op.39 for solo piano – and will include the following repertoire: *Salut, cendre du pauvre!*, paraphrase, op.45, *Super flumina Babylonis*, paraphrase, op.52, *Trois Marches quasi da cavalleria*, op.37, *Alleluia*, op.25, *Marche funèbre*, op.26, *Marche triomphale*, op.27 and *Douze Etudes dans tous les tons mineurs*, op.39 nos.4-7 'Symphonie'. Vol. V – *11 Pièces dans le style religieux*, op.72 · *Etude Alla-Barbaro* – should have been finished by now but the COVID-19 pandemic has seen to three attempts to schedule recording sessions being curtailed. The *11 Pièces dans le style religieux et une transcription du Messie de Haendel*, op.72 were recorded at the end of 2018 and I was due to add both the *Etude* [from the *Encyclopédie du pianiste compositeur*] and the *Etude Alla-Barbaro* this year to complete it. The other pieces I'm currently preparing are for Vol. VI – Character pieces & Grotesqueries – which is to include the *Petit Conte*, *Jean qui pleure et Jean qui rit*, *2 fughe da camera*, *Quasi-Caccia*, *caprice*, op.53, *Ma chère liberté et Ma chère servitude*, *deux petites pièces*, op.60, *Fantasticheria*, *Chapeau bas!* *2da Fantasticheria*, *Toccatina*, op.75, *Désir*, *fantaisie*, and the *Trois Petites Fantaisies*, op.41. The two other pieces to join this menagerie which have already been recorded are the *Capriccio alla-soldatesca*, op.50 and *Le Tambour bat aux champs*, op.50bis. I hope to see both Vols.V and VI released next year.

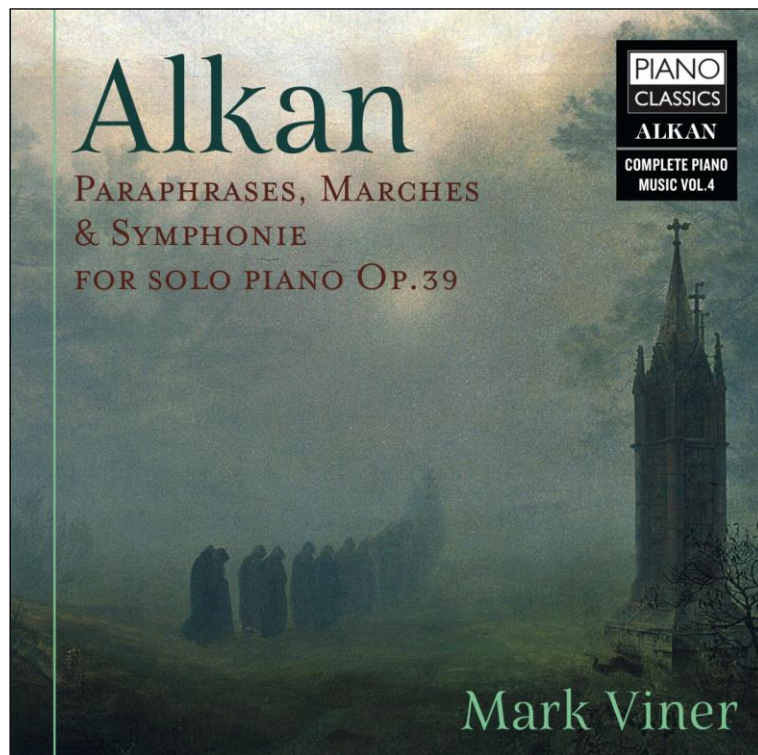
Have there been any particular challenges?

The obvious challenge lies in the fact that much of the music takes little heed of human frailty but I knew this when I committed to the project so shan't complain. The less obvious challenge is an offshoot of the latter in that the real difficulty often lies in presenting much of this repertoire on the modern piano which, with its heavier action and totally different sonority, is a different beast altogether. Much of the especially challenging writing makes full use of the piano of the time, with its lighter action and thinner, more silvery sound, and, where playing some of this repertoire can feel like a stretch on an Erard from 1840, playing it on a Steinway D of today requires an altogether different approach. One's approach to sonority also has to be more considered on a modern instrument (especially where thick bass textures are concerned) and metronome marks sometimes have to be brought down a notch or two for sonic clarity, not to mention the physical demands imposed by the heavier actions of today's instruments. Other less obvious challenges I've encountered are where occasional misjudgements of theatrical timing seem to have crept in, resulting in some of the music remaining stubbornly earthbound and for which I've had to spend more time seeking out a cogent interpretive solution to get it off its feet. In terms of certain works, and their difficulty? Well, needless to say, there are certainly plenty of places which are far from friendly but in terms of things which have proved a real nightmare to learn were the fugue towards the end of *Quasi-Faust* from the *Grande Sonate*, op.33 and *Jean qui rit*, the second of the *2 Fughe da camera*. This latter piece has, as far as I'm aware, never been recorded (neither has its double, *Jean qui pleure*) and learning it I began to see why no one had really bothered! It seems to border on the theoretical and many passages are utterly impossible to play as written, requiring extensive redistribution. The subject is drawn from the *Fin*

ch'ban dal vino aria from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* but the density of the writing, fiddly pianism and sheer awkwardness (viz. double trills abounding hither and thither!) ensures it can only sail at a fraction of the tempo at which we're used to hearing Mozart's original. But, on the other hand, there is no tempo indication, metronome mark, nor, for that matter, dynamics save for the final two pages where it gives up being a fugue and settles, instead, for double octaves. All this seems to point to a theoretical approach where the thing might better be admired on paper rather than in the flesh and puts one in mind of a wry counterpoint teacher, with ever and ace up his sleeve, gleefully snubbing the establishment. Looking at it in this respect, it seems to suddenly make perfect, yet bizarre, sense though I can't see myself programming it any time soon!



The first three volumes of the complete piano music of Alkan are available on the Piano Classics label



Volume IV is due for release in January 2021

Early broadcasts of Alkan performances on BBC radio

Nick Hammond (York, UK)

It is generally accepted that for most of the 20th century Alkan's work was little played and largely ignored. Thus on Wikipedia¹ we read "Following his death, Alkan's music became neglected, supported by only a few musicians including Ferruccio Busoni, Egon Petri and Kaikhosru Sorabji. From the late 1960s onwards, led by Raymond Lewenthal and Ronald Smith, many pianists have recorded his music and brought it back into the repertoire."

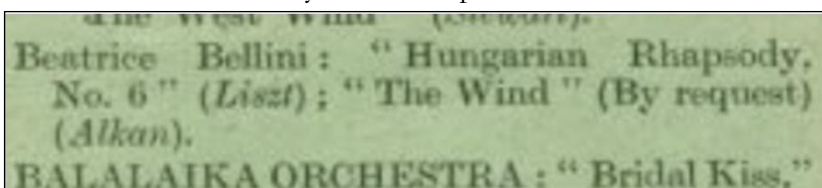
This article explores one significant exception to this neglect, broadcast performances of Alkan in the early days BBC radio in the UK, and considers the significance of these broadcasts.

To some degree, performances of Alkan's music, at least in private, in the early 20th century must have been stimulated by the re-printing by Costallat of many of his important works, edited by Isidor Philipp and Élie-Miriam Delaborde. In the very early years of the century, Ferruccio Busoni championed Alkan through public performances in Berlin – although according to Ronald Smith (1976, p.77) the events were not a critical success. But perhaps these pioneering recitals encouraged one of Busoni's pupils, Egon Petri (1881-1962), to play two of the major key studies, op. 35 no 3 (G major) and no 5 (F major, *Allegro Barbaro*), in 1903 at the Bechstein Hall in London (later to become the Wigmore Hall). Petri was only 21 at the time. Twelve years later, the Australian pianist William Murdoch also braved the *Allegro Barbaro* at the same venue, coupled on this occasion with *Le Festin d'Esopé*: see Hammond (2017) for details.



The BBC's radio services began in 1922. Somewhat surprisingly, there was a broadcast of Alkan as early as 2nd December 1923: Beatrice Bellini² playing *Le Vent* (op.15 no 2) "by request" as part of a two-hour medley including Vladimoff's Russian Balalaika Orchestra and a host of other performers. *Le Vent* was the one piece by which Alkan was still known at that time. It is very likely this was the first ever radio broadcast of Alkan: so to mark this milestone, we should at least honour Ms Bellini by including her picture (from the *Radio Times*, 5th September 1924) and the listing for 2nd December 1923 in the *Radio Times*.

Fifteen years later, Petri's advocacy of Alkan evidently persuaded the BBC to invite him to give a series of broadcast recitals of Alkan's music, coinciding with the 125th anniversary of the composer's birth and the 50th of his death, in 1938. The four broadcasts



took place in less than a week; the first was on 17th January and the last on the 22nd. At that time, the BBC had only two stations: the *Regional Programme* and the *National Programme*. The first and last recitals

were carried on *Regional*, the middle two on *National*. A further recital was broadcast later in the year, on 18th September. It is not clear if this recital was part of the invited sequence; the timing suggests not. Whilst the September programme repeats the Symphony for solo piano, played in the first recital, it will have been a new live performance, since this was well before the era of tape recording. The programmes are summarised in Table 1. Petri's choices make no concessions either to himself as performer or to his

¹ Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles-Valentin_Alkan) accessed 21 Oct 2020

² The *Musical Times* of 1 March 1919 reports that Beatrice Bellini "made a successful debut at Aeolian Hall on January 31, her programme including Schumann's Carnival and pieces by Chopin, Henselt, Ireland, Arthur Sommervell, Tausig, and her teacher, Amina Goodwin, who joined Miss Bellini in Bach's C minor Concerto for two pianofortes". (Goodwin, b.1862, had lessons from Liszt in 1883-4 and later studied with Clara Schumann for four years.) Less flatteringly, the *Musical News and Herald* (July 22, 1922) included a review of Bellini's Wigmore Hall recital entitled "A disappointing pianist: Miss Beatrice Bellini falls away from promise".

listeners for whom these works, and Alkan's style, would have been completely new. This is Alkan full frontal³.

Table 1: Details of Egon Petri's recitals on the BBC

Date	Programme	Duration
17 Jan 1938	Symphony for solo piano (op.39, 4-7)	30 minutes
19 Jan 1938	Preludes (op.31, nos 13, 14, 7, 6, 20) Major key studies (op.35, nos 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)	30 minutes
21 Jan 1938	Concerto for solo piano (op.39, 8-10)	50 minutes
22 Jan 1938	Le tambour bat aux champs (op.50 bis) Le chemin de fer (op.27) Le Festin d'Esopé (op.39, no 12)	25 minutes
18 Sep 1938	Symphony for solo piano (op.39, 4-7)	30 minutes

An article in the *Radio Times* by the musicologist Mosco Carner introduced the series, under the title "Contemporary of the Giants", which perhaps sums up the then view of Alkan. Space does not permit inclusion of the full article⁴, but Carner's thesis is that Alkan is a member of a group of "unfortunate men who can neither live nor die, as it were, whose names crop up in our programmes from time to time to be as soon forgotten again." He continues: "Their misfortune has usually been that they have had other contemporaries who expressed in their music the same thing just a little more individually, a little more brilliantly, and a little more interestingly." Nevertheless, Carner concedes Alkan "had something of Schumann's fantastic and demoniacal vein, of Liszt's *al fresco* manner, and Chopin's intimate delicacy. (...) In certain pieces he seems to have forestalled points in modern music."

A second article to coincide with the September recital, penned by "E.H.", is even less sympathetic. The focus of the article⁵ is on the Symphony: "The interest of his compositions is not always commensurate with their length – with Alkan a sonatina can run to 40 pages. Again, as so frequently happens in the *étude*, the technical use of the music outbalances its aesthetic value and pianistic device seems imposed on material that is too slight – it is overdressed in a style not warranted by its position in life. For instance, one rarely feels this with Chopin."

Notwithstanding E.H.'s comments, we can only suppose that the repeat performance of the Symphony by the BBC reflected either the desire of the audience or of the musical cognoscenti influential at the BBC to hear the work again.

Table 2 summarises further performances of Alkan on the BBC throughout the 1940s and 1950s. The only performance of Alkan during the wartime years was a further rendition of *Le Vent* in a programme of French music. The performer, Lucy Pierce (1886-1968), taught for many years at the Royal Manchester College of Music (now the Royal Northern College of Music), retiring in 1963. She was a pupil of Egon Petri, and has been described as a "doyenne of Manchester pedagogues"⁶.

1946⁷ and 1947 saw two more substantial recitals, by Colin Horsley and Robert Collet, both of whom were to contribute to Alkan broadcasts in later years. Colin Horsley (1920-2012), pictured on the next page, was a New Zealander but based in the UK for his working life. He premiered Humphrey Searle's

³ Smith (in *Alkan Society Bulletin*, 66, 2-10) reports that Anthony Lewis (1915-1983), who was then a producer at the BBC and later Principal of the RAM from 1968 to 1982), told him that the BBC gave Petri three weeks for the four recitals, although the Symphony was already in his repertoire. Smith considers Petri may have made some cuts in the Concerto: "although he was one of the fast boys; he might have done the whole thing in 49 minutes".

⁴ The full article is available at <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/page/b6cc68072d504214bb0481446a33e651?page=14>

⁵ The full article is available at <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/page/9d88edce54b7414bb80e67c7c9017b91?page=15>

⁶ In obituary of John Brennan by Duncan Honeybourne (http://www.duncanhoneybourne.com/articles/john_brennan)

⁷ Also in 1946, Eduard Erdmann gave a series of four recitals in Hannover, which included the *Symphony for solo piano*, *Les Mois* (op.74) and *Le Festin d'Esopé*. The series flier stated that "the collected works of these four piano evenings have not been allowed to be played since 1933" (Pace, 2018). This is of particular interest because Erdmann joined the Nazi party in 1937, although perhaps for reasons of convenience rather than conviction, so maybe performing works by Jewish composers was intended to enable his rehabilitation.



first piano concerto and was particularly associated with Lennox Berkeley. This performance of the Symphony was the first to be broadcast after Petri's, and the BBC broadcast Horsley's Symphony twice more, in 1948 and 1953.

Robert Collet (1905-1993) was at the time working in the BBC Music Department (from 1946 to 1949), and after a period as a visiting piano teacher at Harrow School, was appointed Professor of Piano at Guildhall School of Music and Drama (from 1952)⁸.

Perhaps in his role at the BBC he was influential in facilitating the two later series of broadcast recitals in 1948 and 1953, along with Humphrey Searle⁹. Certainly his 1947 recital cut new ground, not only for broadcasting but perhaps also for first performances in the 20th Century. Later, in 1977, he was instrumental in setting up the Alkan Society, along with Ronald Smith and others.

The four recitals in 1948 were planned as a series. In Ronald Smith's talk to the Alkan Society AGM in 2004¹⁰ (just a few weeks before his death), he spoke about the series as follows:

"I think four people played in that, Colin Horsley played the Symphony. I heard it for the first time on the radio, I heard his broadcast. That would certainly be, after Petri, the first time the Symphony

Table 2: Performances of Alkan broadcast on the BBC in the 1940 and 1950s

Date	Performer	Programme	Duration
19 Nov 41	Lucy Pierce	Le Vent (op.15 no 2) ¹¹	30 mins
19 Nov 46	Colin Horsley	Symphony for solo piano (op.39, 4-7)	35 mins
1 Apr 47	Robert Collet	3 Prières (op.64, tr. da Motta) Le tambour bat aux champs (op.50 bis) Étude (op.35, no 8) En rythme molossique (op.39, no 2) ¹²	1 hour
23 Jul 48	Kyla Greenbaum <i>1st of 4 recitals</i>	Comme le vent (op.39, no 1) Scherzo diabolico (op.39, no 3) Le Festin d'Esopo (op 39, no 12)	30 mins
2 Aug 48	Colin Horsley <i>2nd of 4 recitals</i>	Symphony for solo piano (op.39, 4-7)	35 mins
13 Aug 48	Robert Collet <i>3rd of 4 recitals</i>	Études (op.35, nos 7, 3, 8 & 12)	30 mins
18 Aug 48	Ronald Smith <i>4th of 4 recitals</i>	Concerto for solo piano (op.39, 8-10)	35 mins
28 Apr 50	Robert Collet	Symphony for solo piano (op.39, 4-7)	30 mins
20 Jul 53	Robert Collet	Alkan: Illustrated talk	20 mins
23 Jul 53	Gordon Watson <i>1st of 3 recitals¹³</i>	Ouverture (op.39, no 11) Chants (op.38 1 st bk, nos 1 & 6) Le tambour bat aux champs (op.50 bis) Chapeau bas! (WoO)	40 mins
26 Jul 53	Colin Horsley <i>2nd of 3 recitals</i>	Symphony for solo piano (op.39, 4-7)	35 mins
2 Aug 53	Robert Collet <i>3rd of 3 recitals</i>	Études (op.35, nos 7, 3, 8 & 12)	35 mins

⁸ Information from <http://www.colletfamilyhistory.net/Part-17-The-Maldon-Essex-and-Kent-Line-Rev.13.htm>

⁹ Humphrey Searle (1915-1982), a British composer and musicologist, was a producer at the BBC from 1946 to 1948

¹⁰ The talk is transcribed in *Alkan Society Bulletin*, 66, 2-10

¹¹ Programme also included Franck, Prelude, Aria & Finale; Debussy, Girl with Flaxen Hair

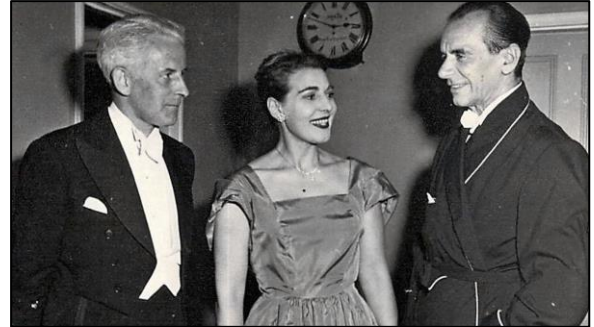
¹² Programme also included Meyerbeer 3 songs, with Norman Walker

¹³ The text in the *Radio Times* (by "D.C.") accompanying the listing starts inaccurately with "*Alkan*" was the pseudonym of the French pianist and composer Charles Henri Valentin Morhange, and continues in much the same vein.

had been played in this country. But Horsley didn't take it up afterwards, I don't know how he played it. It sounded quite a leisurely piece to me so I imagine he didn't play it with quite the fire and sort of single-minded élan that it requires. I don't know. Good pianist. And Kyla Greenbaum, I'm pretty sure they landed her with some of the shorter pieces, and Robert [Collet] had some of the shorter pieces, and by then he was also teaching at Harrow. He had left the BBC – he was a producer, got fed up with it – and he taught at Harrow, why he wanted to do this I don't know."

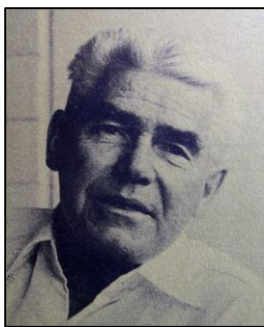
In fact, Horsley had broadcast the Symphony before, in 1946, and would do so again in 1953. And Greenbaum and Collet were hardly "landed with shorter pieces" in their selection of the minor key études and major key études respectively.

Kyla Greenbaum (1922-2017) was a highly respected British pianist and composer, and she was particularly noted for performance of contemporary repertoire. She gave the first UK performances of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto in 1945 and Prokofiev's Second Concerto in 1955. The picture shows her with the conductors Maurice Miles (left) and Sir Malcolm Sargent at the London Proms in 1958. One wonders whether the op.39 studies were in her repertoire or whether she learned them specially for the broadcast.



The series ends with Ronald Smith playing the Concerto for solo piano – but in a 35 minute slot. How was this done? Smith reveals all in his talk to the 2004 Alkan Society AGM:

"Sir Stanley Marchant, the Principal [of the Royal Academy of Music], who'd always been terribly nice to me, came up to me. 'Ah, dear boy,' he said, 'I heard your little broadcast the other night [some Brahms]. Very good, it's quite tricky some of those pieces.' 'Yes,' I replied, 'a little bit tricky' and I continued, 'I have a problem now. Really, I don't know what to do about it. I've had a telegram from him [Humphrey Searle]: would I play a concerto by somebody called Alkan? A concerto without orchestra, and really they've only given me three weeks to learn this, I haven't seen it yet and I wonder whether I really ought to do this. I'm in two minds.' He said 'My dear boy, there's a queue of people who'd give their eyes to get that broadcast; you must do it'. So, I think I rang Humphrey up from a call-box and said 'Yes, I'll do this. Could you not give me more than sort of just under three weeks?' 'Well,' he said, 'I'll have a word with Robert Collet, he's doing one of these things and see if he can perhaps swap dates with you' and he did, very nicely, Robert swapped dates and gave me an extra three or four days, I think. 'Mind you,' Humphrey said, 'You'll have to make some cuts, you know, because you've only got thirty-five minutes'. Of course, the piece takes about fifty-five minutes, but I didn't know this, I didn't know Alkan. This huge volume arrived (...) but I had found the Concerto. 'Ah, this is rather nice music' was my first impression. Well, I got into it and I became quite hooked on it. The last movement was very brilliant, I played the last movement complete. I made a cut in the second movement, and Alkan's prescribed huge cuts in the first movement. I got it down to about thirty-three minutes."



In 1950, Collet keeps the torch burning with a further broadcast of the Symphony. He also seems to have taken a lead in the three-recital series of 1953, as he prefaces the recitals with a 20-minute talk on Alkan. The first recital of the series was given by Gordon Watson (pictured left), and inclusion of the *Overture* (op.39 no 11) meant that all the minor key études had been broadcast since 1947. Watson (1921-1999) was an Australian and taught at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music from 1964 to 1986. His teachers included Egon Petri, and he studied composition with Darius Milhaud – and according to Wikipedia he introduced Humphrey Searle to Petri in 1957. Watson taught the current Alkan Society President, Stephanie McCallum, who reports that he introduced her to Alkan's music, and to Ronald Smith (McCallum, personal communication). She says that Watson thought his performance of the

Overture was a premiere in modern times – and perhaps it was the first public performance since Marie Poitevin's premiere in 1876 (Hammond & Keygnaert, 2019).

The other two recitals in the series saw a further performance of the Symphony by Horsley and from Collet the same set of major key études that he had played in 1948.

This, as far as I can tell, was the last BBC broadcast of Alkan in the 1950s. The next listing in the *Radio Times* (15 July 1961) is a performance by Ronald Smith in a series entitled *The Innocent Ear* in which the composer and title of the work was announced following the performance. Smith played “a piano work in three movements” – which turned out to be the Concerto for solo piano. The broadcast was repeated on 5 September 1961. This takes us firmly into the era of LP records, with recordings by Ronald Smith and Raymond Lewenthal in the second half of the decade ushering in opportunities for repeated listening and study with which we are all familiar.

What purpose did these BBC recitals serve? Was the listening public enthralled? Probably not: we know that appreciation of the longer works of Alkan on a first hearing is a hard ask for any audience. Smith (in the talk cited above) reports that Petri's performance of the Concerto “got a mixed bag of critiques. One man said the end of the first movement was ‘almost shriek worthy, it went on and on.’ Somebody said it was a fraud; somebody else said it was a most interesting and extraordinary composition”. Nor did the recitals appear to fire up professional pianists, at least not to the extent of significantly boosting performances in the concert hall.

However there was one highly significant benefit: a community of influential musicians, whether performers, musicologists or producers, maintained a belief and enthusiasm in the significance and quality of Alkan's music, and indeed enthused others. Two of the great influencers involved in this saga of Alkan broadcasts were Sir Anthony Lewis (who, Smith claims, as a young producer at the BBC was involved in organising the Petri recitals and even turned the pages for him in the Concerto) and Humphrey Searle, who (again according to Smith) remembered and had been inspired by the Petri performances. These, along with the indefatigable Robert Collet, as both a BBC producer and a performer, certainly kept the flame alive. It was Searle who introduced Ronald Smith to Alkan through the need to find a performer for the Concerto – how might things have turned out if that opportunity had not arisen? Gordon Watson's role both as a performer and as a teacher is also highly significant, linking from one of his teachers (Petri) to his pupil Stephanie McCallum, and introducing her to Alkan and to Ronald Smith, with whom she later studied. And finally, would the Alkan Society ever have been constituted without the activities and friendships associated with these broadcasts?

References

- Hammond, N. (2017). A note on performances of Alkan at London's Bechstein Hall. *Alkan Society Bulletin*, 94, 17-18.
- Hammond, N. and Keygnaert, F. (2019). Marie Poitevin and her performance of Alkan in the 1870s. *Alkan Society Bulletin*, 98, 7-12.
- Pace, I. (2018). *The Reconstruction of Post-War West German New Music during the early Allied Occupation (1945-46), and its Roots in the Weimar Republic and Third Reich (1918-45)*. PhD thesis, Cardiff University. (Available at: <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/111692/>)
- Smith, R. (1976). *Alkan Volume One: The Enigma*. Kahn & Averill: London, UK.

Wonderfully bizarre transcriptions and arrangements of Alkan

Miles Thibodeaux (Vassar College, USA)

An eccentric composer such as Alkan is bound to attract eccentric arrangers and transcribers. After years of scouring the Alkan discography, I have compiled here a list of some of the most bizarre transformations of Alkan pieces I have come across. Each recomposition highlights different aspects of its source material, allowing even veteran Alkan listeners to enjoy these oft-performed pieces as though they were new.

Sonate de Concert for Flute and Piano

Many readers may be aware of the arrangement of the Cello Sonata for Viola, but I doubt any are aware of this unexpected arrangement for flute! Alkan's sonata already had a substantial piano part and, with the limitations of a flute, it is even more substantial in this arrangement with the piano taking on some of the lines originally meant for cello. Despite the unusual choice of instrumentation, this arrangement is still riveting and gargantuan with appreciably unique textures not found in the original.

Arranged and performed by flutist Daniel Lappert and pianist Jean-Jacques Schmid

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dUBD4uuFrU>

Opus 65 Barcarolle for Violin and Piano

This transcription is surprising more so for the celebrity of its transcriber than the choice of instrumentation. Heifetz was allegedly inspired to write it after he heard Raymond Lewenthal's recording of the *Barcarolle*. As a prolific transcriber, it is not surprising that Heifetz happened to select this piece, but it is a wonderful coincidence regardless. Given the right performance, the undulating exchange between piano and violin should create a rustic and wistful atmosphere similar to Heifetz's arrangement of Debussy's Waltz, *La plus que lente*.

Arranged by Jascha Heifetz, performed by Sherry Kloss and Mark Westcott

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEBDrRaX-Zc>

Mvt. 2 of the Symphony for Trombone and Organ

I couldn't have imagined a more fitting pair of instruments to perform this lugubrious piece. The mournful trombone cuts through the soft textures of the organ, allowing the individual melodies of this piece to sing wonderfully. These new timbres give volume and grandeur to this arrangement.

Arranged and performed by Mark Springer, trombone; Charles Echols, organ

<https://www.yourclassical.org/programs/pipedreams/episodes/2017/05/22>

[at 1:26:50 of the broadcast]

Opus 31 Preludes for Recorder Ensemble

The naivety and piquancy found in many of the preludes is captured perfectly by this set of arrangements. One also finds a sense of religiosity; the chorus of recorders resembles a *minyán* chant or church choir. These arrangements make perfect background music for a relaxing afternoon of contemplation.

Arranged and performed by Papalin [no last name given]

<http://papalin.yas.mu/W287/M131/#M131> [press "normal" to play each piece]

Opus 32 Air in 7 Time arr. for Wind Ensemble

The weird harmonies of this piece are made comprehensible by this arrangement as each voice is given its own instrument.

Arranged by Trevor Wye, performed by Trevor Wye, Kristin Bateman, Soyun Park, Jhen-Wei Liu, Adrian Failla, and Jennifer Davis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLUDJFLtTMg>

Alkan-Hamelin Saxophone Quartet

This is an arrangement of an arrangement, namely, Marc-Andre Hamelin's *12 Etudes No. 4*. In Hamelin's 4th etude, he pits Alkan's *Perpetuum Mobile* etude against the final movement of the *Symphony*, and the fiery commotion of this combination is captured brilliantly here as the voice of each saxophone weaves between the others. This arrangement requires a high level of virtuosity from every individual performer, and the resulting intensity of the arrangement speaks for itself.

Arranged by Matt Evans, performed by Zzyzx Quartet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLfEgX-1JQY>

Pedal Etude No. 6 for Organ (hands and feet)

There are few recordings of the pedal etudes in the first place, so it is surprising to see a complete recomposition of one of the etudes. Bryan Anderson adds an accompaniment with the manuals as the feet play the original piece to flesh out this lean adagio into a proper organ piece.

Arranged and performed by Bryan Anderson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f11-mfudHX8>

Letter to the editor

Sir,

Can I add something to your records of Alkan performances? Next year will see the centenary of the pianist William Fellowes (1921-1970) – in my opinion the finest pianist in the Midlands at that time but who sadly died of a heart attack in December 1970, aged 49. I attended his last recital that November and he had a fantastic technique, allied to a highly sensitive musical mind. I knew that his repertoire embraced a lot of ‘esoteric’ repertoire in addition to the usual classics, but I have found out that this included Alkan.

The 'Birmingham Post' of 13th March 1970 reviewed a piano recital by him at the Birmingham and Midland Institute given the previous lunchtime:

“An almost mouth-watering group of pieces by Petrucci, Franck, Ravel and Alkan was presented with utmost accomplishment by William Fellowes (...) It is being left to pianists outside France to resurrect the works of Alkan. Mr. Fellowes started some time ago, and yesterday concluded his recital with a stunning performance of the extraordinary *Le Festin D'Esopé*. Birmingham is lucky in having such a pianist on its doorstep, and it is quite incomprehensible that he should be heard almost entirely on the fringe.”

I have published several articles about Fellowes' life in years past (e.g., in *Fanfare III (The Newsletter of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire Association)*, 14, Autumn 2010, pp 14-15). He never made commercial recordings, but a selection of some very fine broadcast performances is being planned for release on a 2-CD set for his centenary next year - alas no Alkan among them! A picture of Fellowes is shown below.

Can I also add, somewhat humbly, that my own choice extended essay for my A-Level Music exam in 1971 was: *The Piano Music of Charles Valentin Alkan*. I believe the title, at least, was mentioned in the Examining Board's Annual Report - according to when I met the external examiner (Barry Draycott) a few years later in 1976!

Yours faithfully,

Michael Jones, Stourbridge, West Midlands, UK



Distractions and diversions

From Morhange to Orange...

Some readers will have heard Mark Viner's excellent lecture on Alkan from St Mary's Perivale on 15th November in which he referred, amongst many other things, to the link from Alkan to Raymond Lewenthal: Lewenthal was taught by Olga Samaroff, who was in turn taught by Élie-Miriam Delaborde, Alkan's illegitimate son. (At the time of writing, the lecture is still available on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xfYcAKFNJM&t=3437s although only for a limited time.)

Society member Richard Murphy reveals a further significant link:

Sir,

Further to Mark Viner's talk from Perivale... Alkan taught Delaborde who taught Olga Samaroff who married Leopold Stokowski who bought me an orange ('orhange) juice in c.1960 in the Royal Festival Hall. True fact.

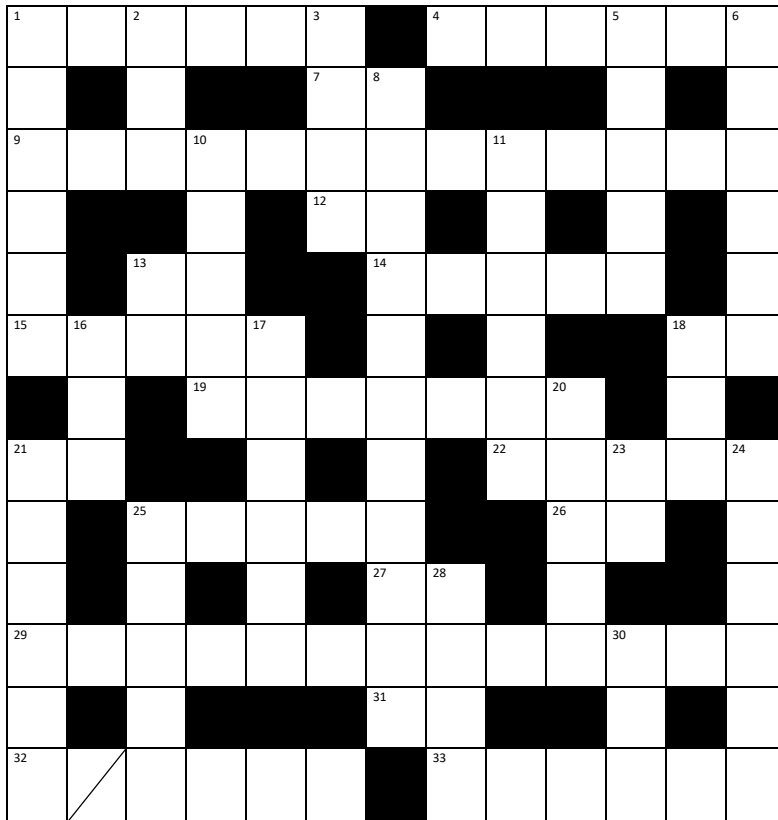
Yours, Richard Murphy



Solution to Prize Crossword number 7

A	L	K	A	N	M	O	R	H	A	N	G	E
		N				R		E		O		R
R	E	E	D		V	A	L	E	N	T	I	N
A		E				N		D		T		I
J	U	L	I	E		G	U	S	T	A	V	E
		I		A		E		W		X		
E	R	N	E	S	T		M	A	X	I	M	E
		G		Y		R		R		D		
C	E	L	E	S	T	E		M	A	R	I	X
A		I		A		C				I		I
N	A	P	O	L	E	O	N		U	V	E	A
O		P		A		I				E		
E	L	I	E	D	E	L	A	B	O	R	D	E

Prize Crossword number 8 (Set by En Songe)



Notes:

- One of Alkan's works is the focus of some, but not all, of the clues.
- Completed grids can be sent to the co-editor* to arrive by 1 March 2021. The first correct solution (drawn randomly from a hat) will win a CD of a rare performance of the *Symphonie* from op. 39.

* treasurer@alkansociety.org, or
Nick Hammond, Woodend House,
High Stittenham, York YO60 7TW, UK

Need a hint? Send an email to *En Songe* at:
EnSonge.Alkan@gmail.com

Across

- 1, 4** Confused tenor's agenda leads to progressively slowing masterwork (6, 6)
7 Back to § (2)
9 1, 4ac's attributed subtitle (3, 6, 4)
12, 13 Double postgraduate degree – or baby's first word perhaps? (4)
14 Eight-parter (or more?) in 10dn 15ac (5)
15 See 10 down
18 One, not both (2)
19 John, an idler, English composer despite name (7)
21, 26 ... qui pleure et ... qui rit (two 14ac's) (4)
22 Found in container upturned: Alkan's music can do this! (5)
25, 2dn One of 9ac for 1, 4ac part 1 (5, 3)
26 See 21ac
27 Docked esquisse for abbreviated Spain (2)
29 Exponent of an artistic or musical style (heralded by CVA?), muddled iron pessimist (13)
31 Brief thanks (2)
32, 33 See 23dn

Down

- 1** Boomtown Rats' leader golfed crazily (6)
2 See 25ac and 17dn
3 Cheese made backwards? (4)
5 Can be acute, obtuse, right? (5)
6 Pianists might wish that 10dn 15ac was this (6)
8 Very loud inside confused late stats, results in teachers' news (5, 6)
10, 15 ac Subtitle of 1, 4ac part 2 (5-5)
11 Power unit driving subject of Op.27 etude? (6)
13 12th Greek letter: moggie of 28dn might be said to vocalise thus (2)
16 Reputed pet of Delaborde—perhaps in a jape? (3)
17, 2 One of 9ac for 1, 4ac part 2 (6, 3)
18 Abbreviated senior citizen? (3)
20 Right in sunrise: sketched, stretched or stressed? (5)
21 CVA's ancestry part of Skopje wishlist? (6)
23, 32ac, 33ac Subtitle of 1, 4ac part 3 (2, 6, 6)
Due to an oversight, 2 letters must be put in the 2nd cell of 32 ac
24 Move stealthily, through the tulips? (6)
25 Treacherous in the nest, initially very important person, extra renowned (6)
28 Historic country name, still used for felines (4)
30 Hoppy ale abbreviated oddly in piano (3)



The Alkan Society

aiming to promote the education of the public in the knowledge,
understanding and appreciation of the life and work of Alkan

Registered Charity
no. 276199



The **Alkan Society**, founded in 1977, is an organization with members from across the globe. It is based in the UK and registered as an official Charity.

The Society promotes the life and work of the French composer and pianist Charles-Vaentin Alkan (1813-1888). It supports regular recitals, produces publications (including a regular Bulletin) and is the definitive source of information on Alkan's life and works.



About Alkan

Alkan was recognised by Liszt and Chopin as one of the outstanding musicians of their day. His music has been championed by such eminent performers as Claudio Arrau, Ferruccio Busoni, Jack Gibbons, Marc-André Hamelin, Raymond Lewenthal, John Ogdon, Egon Petri, Sergei Rachmaninoff and Ronald Smith.

His works cover a vast gamut of forms, moods and techniques, combining rigorous classicism with bold modernity. His individual use of harmony and rhythm, extraordinary imagination, and uncompromising keyboard writing guarantee his music a unique place in the repertoire, making him one of the great figures of the Romantic era.

Join the Alkan Society

Annual membership fee: £20; Students £10

As a member you:

- ✓ Contribute to the aims of the Society
- ✓ Can purchase discounted tickets for our recitals
- ✓ Receive regular bulletins and other news
- ✓ Can contribute announcements and promotions to our website
- ✓ Can benefit from our expert query service on the life and music of Alkan

Join at:

www.alkansociety.org

Or contact: membership@alkansociety.org

Who we are

President: Stephanie McCallum; **Vice-presidents:** Anne Smith, Hugh Macdonald, Nicholas King, Richard Shaw
Chairman: Mark Viner; **Secretary:** José López; **Treasurer:** Nick Hammond

Information: info@alkansociety.org

Web: www.alkansociety.org

Contents of Bulletin 101 (December 2020)

- Page 1 Farewell and welcome: Change of Bulletin Editor
- Page 2 Eliot Levin
- Page 3 Twenty-five *esquisses* published by the Society: an update
- Page 4 “Confined” studio recital (Miles Thibodeaux)
- Page 6 Dance in Lockdown (Janet Randell)
- Page 9 Orchestration of Alkan’s *Le Chemin de Fer* by Thibault Perrine
- Page 10 The complete recording of Alkan’s solo piano music (Mark Viner)
- Page 12 Early broadcasts of Alkan performances on BBC radio (Nick Hammond)
- Page 17 Wonderfully bizarre transcriptions and arrangements of Alkan (Miles Thibodeaux)
- Page 19 Letter to the editor (Michael Jones)
- Page 20 Distractions and diversions (including *From Morhange to Orange...* and *Prize Crossword number 8*)