

ALKAN SOCIETY

(Reg Charity No 276199)

BULLETIN - 1 JANUARY 1980

Report of Meeting at the Thomas Coram Foundation, Brunswick Square,
7 November 1979 at 7.30 pm.

Present were Richard Shaw (Vice-President) and fifteen other members.

Jean Bartholomew gave an absorbing account of the Hans von Bulow article (1857) sent to us by Helmut Ganteführer. She first gave an outline of Bulow's qualifications and then translated the first part of the article which assesses Alkan's position in the long line of earlier and contemporary composers who had written specialised technical studies for the pianoforte. After this she dealt with the notes that Bulow had written on each of the twelve studies in major keys - playing relevant examples when necessary. Finally, the whole of studies 10 and 11 were splendidly played.

Alan Cowie warmly thanked Jean for her fascinating and erudite study of this most interesting work.

After the coffee-break, the Hon Secretary played (from behind a screen) extracts from four lesser-known Alkan works and one each from eight other composers - Beethoven, Chopin, Franck, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Saint-Saens, Schumann and Schubert. Members were asked to attribute them correctly. Counting two for each Alkan piece spotted and one for each of the others (total 16), prizes were won by Jean Bartholomew (12), Richard Shaw and Paul Strange (11 each) and Jack Gibbons (10). This light-hearted entertainment seemed also to be enjoyed.

The meeting ended at about 9.50 pm.

Discography

Charles Hailstone recently put a note in "Gramophone" about our Discography, one result of which has been a request for a copy from the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

Danny Hitchcock (Wichita, USA) tells us that Michael Ponti's disc has been released on TURNABOUT TV 34740 and has Alkan's Concerto da Camera No 2 for pf and strings in C-sharp minor (part of Op 10), the Liszt Malediction, the Berwald Concerto and a Czerny Divertissement.

Robert Behra (Austin, Texas) tells us that the Lewenthal recording of Alkan's Toccata was on WESTMINSTER XWN 18362 "Toccatas for Piano", issued around 1955. A little earlier there was an early LP edition of Alkan's Symphonie (from Op 39) by John Paul Bracey (on the VLR label).

Alan Poulton (Kidderminster) has sent a few amendments to our list of Piano Rolls: the catalogue number of Egon Petri's Op 50 No 1 Capriccio alla soldatesca is 519 and he adds "Le Tambour bat aux Champs" by Michael von Zadora (Welte Catalogue (1927) No 3648).

Alkan Reference Library

Sheet Music: Op 60 No 1 "Ma Chère Liberté" and No 2 "Ma Chère Servitude" have been added.

Other Material: Our Vice-President, Richard Shaw, has kindly given a copy of his "Dissertation offered towards the degree of BMus (Hons) at the University

of Edinburgh". It is full of interesting and scholarly information on Alkan's life and early piano works, the latter taking up to Op 27 "Marche Triomphale". We shall look forward to hearing the fruits of Richard Shaw's recent research at the meeting on 25 January 1980.

News Items

Our President's Chopin recital at the Q E Hall is on Thursday 28 February 1980.

Jack Gibbon's Alkan recital at the Guildhall School on 2 November 1979 was a truly remarkable achievement. It was good to see there our President and several other members of the Alkan Society. Offering such a programme at the age of 17 augurs a highly successful career and I am sure that Jack has the good wishes of every member of our Society.

Concerning the Alkan medallion pictured on the front of the Billaudot edition, M Billaudot tells me that he took this over from Costallat et Cie and he does not know the whereabouts of the medallion itself. He thinks it may well have been cast in the late nineteenth century.

I have received Christmas greetings from Frank Lioni (Netherlands) and Dr Alkan (Israel). Frank Lioni was present at our Inaugural Meeting in 1977 and is actively promoting the Alkan cause in the Netherlands. At the last meeting of the Executive Committee it was unanimously agreed that Frank should be offered Honorary Membership. I am glad to say that he has accepted with pleasure.

Now and again I receive kind letters from members who live far from London saying how much they enjoy reading the Bulletins. It is pleasing to feel that we are doing something for those who can never attend a meeting.

I shall be glad to hear from any member who would care to contribute a programme or part of a programme some time during the 1980/81 session.

On 30 November 1979 Martin Ball included two Alkan pieces (Nos 2 and 11 from 13 Prières Op 64) in his lunch-hour organ recital at St Paul's Cathedral - very appropriately as this was the one hundred and sixty-sixth anniversary of Alkan's birth.

Robert Behra (Austin, Texas) hopes to be present at our January meeting.

Programme of Meetings 1980

January Meeting: This will take place at the Guildhall School of Music on Friday 25 January 1980. Richard Shaw (Vice-President) will talk on "The truth about Alkan" dealing particularly with his name and birth, his visit(s) to England, his application for the Conservatoire post in 1848, his pupil and/or son - Delaborde - and, finally, the manner of his death. The talk will last for about an hour, starting at about 7.30 pm.

At 6.30 pm, for those who can manage it, the Senior Librarian - Mr Paul Holden - has very kindly offered to take members on a tour of the School - the Library in particular. So that we may have an idea of the numbers involved, anyone who is likely to attend at 6.30 please let me know by 23 January 1980. There is no cafeteria at the School.

One of our members tells me that he followed my instructions for finding the Guildhall School and ended up in the right spot, so I will again give them here. Emerging from Moorgate Underground Station on the west side of Moorgate, turn right, then right again into a short street - Moor Place - cross the road ahead and go down another side street - New Union Street. At the end of New Union Street turn right, then left into Silk Street. The entrance to the School is at the far end of Silk Street on the left-hand side. If coming by car and proceeding northwards up Moorgate, pass the Underground station and turn left

at traffic lights into Ropemaker Street, then left again down Moor Lane. Silk Street is the first right from Moor Lane; it is a narrow street but there are plenty of parking places near.

March Meeting: This will be at the Coram Foundation, 40 Brunswick Square, on Tuesday 11 March 1980 at 7.30 pm. John Oxlade will talk on Alkan's music in its historical perspective. Please make a careful note of this date as there will not be another Bulletin before the event. John Oxlade, pianist and organist, held one or two important posts in London and, until recently, has been Director of Music at St Aldate's, Oxford. He is a friend of Jack Gibbons.

May Meeting: We welcome our President again at the Coram Foundation, 40 Brunswick Square at 7.30 pm on Thursday 22 May 1980.

July Annual General Meeting: This will be held at the Abbey Community Association on Tuesday 15 July 1980 at 7.30 pm.

J H White
Hon Secretary
January 1980