



THE ALKAN SOCIETY

Reg. Charity No. 276199

President: Ronald Smith
Vice-Presidents: Robert Collet Hugh Macdonald
Richard Shaw John White

Hon. Secretary: PETER GROVE
21 Heronswood, SALISBURY, Wilts. SP2 8DH
Tel. 0722-325771

BULLETIN NO. 44 JUNE 1991

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: The AGM will take place on **Wednesday 17th July, 1991** at 7.00 p.m. at the **Cristofori Studios, 29 Marylebone Lane, London W.1.** This is a new venue for the AGM, but the location will be familiar to members who came to our last meeting. Marylebone Lane is on the north side of Oxford Street (nearest Underground station is Bond Street), and the entrance to the Studios is a very short distance down a side-alley on the left side as you walk from Oxford Street.

I do hope that members will support this meeting, so that we can hear your views on the running of the Society and your suggestions for future activities. The agenda will have to include the question of new subscription rates. It soon became clear to me in my first year as Secretary that the costs of printing and postage are high, and we will have to cover these if we are to continue to keep you fully informed. (Perhaps I should assure you that the typing costs are zero, since I am my own secretary.) The rates have not changed for several years, and are well below those of comparable societies.

Because of the sad death of Charles Hailstone, whose obituary appears later in this Bulletin, there will be at least one vacancy on the Committee and we would welcome any nominations or offers to help with our work and offer some fresh ideas. The meetings are not frequent because the members do not all live in London, but we keep in touch and I have found my colleagues a great help this year in maintaining the flow of information.

In the nature of an editorial: I adopt this heading from a Bulletin of our French counterpart. The end of my first year as Secretary naturally makes me think about what has been achieved and about some of the less satisfactory things too. It was some considerable time before I came to terms with the daunting array of files and thorough records which Brian Doyle passed on to me, and my first two Bulletins appeared much later than they should have. However, once I caught up with the correspondence I began to enjoy the work greatly and to appreciate the keen interest shown by so many of our members around the world. News of Alkan performances is always good to hear, as is the knowledge that several members are actively engaged in investigating new aspects of Alkan's life and work.

The appearance of some new recordings has also been an encouraging sign. The most intensive work came with the discovery that an Alkan manuscript had come on to the market, as reported in the last Bulletin. It is good to report that, after some anxious discussions and occasional feelings of despair, an excellent solution was found, as described later.

I am always pleased to hear from members: in particular, I would welcome your views on the Bulletin - the kind of items you would like to see, and whether you like the present format. The small size certainly saves paper, and for our most distant mailings, keeps the postage costs down. Is it legible enough at this size, or would you prefer the full A4 sheets? I recently received an example of the Newsletter of the Havergal Brian Society, a marathon effort which impresses one with its sheer size and the amount of work it must have taken. There are several letters from members engaging in some fairly heated argument. While I would not particularly welcome open conflict in the pages of our Bulletin, it would be good if some people offered the occasional article to add some variety to the style.

One point in the HBS newsletter is concerned with the Data Protection Act. As you will have noticed, your names and addresses are printed by a computer so that they are always correct (or of course incorrect unless you tell me). The file is stored on an extremely primitive system which at present does not even record who has paid the subscription. Occasionally I receive a request from a member who would like to write to another. This is the only time when any of this stored information is divulged. If any member would prefer his or her address to remain confidential, would he/she please inform the Secretary. (Having made that point, the HBS does then publish the full addresses of all its members in the newsletter, which I do not intend to do!)

A recent article by Bayan Northcott in the "Independent" of Saturday 8th June was concerned with the revival of neglected works and composers. Prompted by a new recording of Holst's ode, "The Cloud Messenger", he wondered whether the Darwinian idea that only the truly great - or fittest - works survive needed rethinking. Recording companies in particular have effectively recreated figures such as Zelenka, Martucci, Tubin and Hildegard of Bingen. He wonders whether, to quote Stravinsky, works such as Liszt's tone-poems "survive only through constantly renewed neglect". With the HBS fresh in my mind, I shall wickedly quote one sentence at their expense: "... every so often, fanatics fired by Neglected Composer Syndrome attempt to push some rank outsider into the lead; though it remains doubtful whether they have done Havergal Brian more good in getting his music about or harm by their transcendental claims." I am fairly sure that supporters of Alkan's cause cannot be accused of "protesting too much" in their claims on his behalf. While we have made much progress since the Society was founded in 1977, with a magnificent Centenary Festival of which we are justly proud, it will be a while yet before we risk giving Alkan an excessively "high profile", as the current expression has it.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: It has been good to hear from the Treasurer how many members have renewed their subscriptions this year, in spite of the slow start by your Secretary. Some of you will find a reminder enclosed with this Bulletin, based on the most recent information I have received. If there are any mistakes I hope you will forgive me. I should be grateful if anyone who has received the Bulletins this year, and no longer wishes to continue with his or her membership, would let me know so that I can update my records. The list of members enclosed is based on the same information, and again if any corrections are needed, I would be grateful if you would tell me. If any new member has not received a Discography, I shall be happy to send one. A new edition will be prepared, but it will be some time before that is ready.

OBITUARY

Brian Doyle, the former Secretary of the Society, has supplied the following two notices.

JEAN NEWING

It is with great sadness that we inform members of the death of Jean Newing, after a long illness. Jean and her husband John were members of the Society from its earliest days. They celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary last year. John was a member of the Committee for many years, and several meetings have been held at their house. Those of us who attended these meetings will always remember Jean's hospitality. John remains a keen member of the Society and is kept very busy with his voluntary work for the charitable organisation S.S.A.F.A.

CHARLES HAILSTONE

The sudden death of Charles Hailstone on May 4th at the age of 70 came as a great shock to his many friends in the Society. Charles was one of our most loyal members and rarely missed a meeting. He was a member of the Society from its earliest days and attended the inaugural meeting in the Waterloo Room of the South Bank in May 1977. It was at that meeting that Dr. John White, the Secretary, asked him if he would be the Society's discographer. They had only just met but it proved a wise choice and the Discography is now in its 5th edition. Charles was also a member of the Committee.

He was born in Mortlake and lived there, in the same house, all his life. He was an authority on the area and was a founder member of the Barnes and Mortlake Local History Society. He spent all his adult life collecting and cataloguing information on the borough, and had written books about Hammersmith Bridge, the alleyways of Barnes and local cinemas. At the time of his death he was working on a publication entitled "Alleyways of Mortlake".

He worked for the local newspaper group, owned by the Dimpleby family, from 1936 until his retirement in 1983. He compiled a history of the Dimpleby family and the Richmond and Twickenham Times newspapers. David Dimpleby paid this tribute: "Charles Hailstone was meticulous in his work as a proof reader. Surrounded by books of reference and dictionaries, he sat in a tiny office checking and re-checking editorial copy to ensure that it accorded with the newspaper's house style, that it observed the rules of grammar and that it was clear and accurate. He was also our unofficial historian, knowing better than we did the details of the newspaper's acquisitions and development since 1873 and every change in its style.

There was a large turnout for the funeral, as he was so well known in the area and something of a local character. He was a bachelor and leaves a brother and sister.

REPORT OF LAST MEETING

The meeting on April 22nd was scheduled to take place at Hinde Street Methodist Church. The time and place had been verified by phone a few days earlier with both Trinity College, which owns the Bösendorfer grand piano, and with the church office, allowing rehearsal time for Keith Lewis (piano) and his wife Victoria Stec (flute), both members of the Society. In the event the early arrivers found the church locked. Thanks to some rapid thinking by Richard Shaw, a new venue was found in a room at the nearby Cristofori Studios in Marylebone Lane. We heard from those who arrived just before the scheduled start of the meeting that the church had just been opened. By that time it was too late to move again, and the meeting went ahead in the new venue. I am grateful to the Studios and to Richard Shaw for saving the day, and particularly to Keith and Victoria for going ahead with their programme with such good humour. The piano was a fairly good full-size concert grand, in need of a little adjustment in the tuning, but the room was rather small and warm. Circumstances were therefore not ideal for sensitive accompaniment of a flautist, but the players compensated extremely well. It certainly made for an intense experience in Keith's large-scale solo items!

Eleven members attended the meeting, together with five guests from Worthing who constituted Keith and Victoria's "fan club" and were encountering Alkan's music for the first time. Keith opened the programme with the *Chant* in E major, Op. 38 No. 1, which he played fluently and elegantly. He followed it with the first Op. 76 *Etude* for the left hand. Unless any members are old enough to remember Busoni's performance of that piece, it is doubtful whether they have heard any performances of it other than by Ronald Smith and Stephanie McCallum. We were all very impressed with the way Keith brought off this large and difficult *Etude*, with some fearless and accurate leaps and a good sense of its scale.

Victoria is a flute teacher, and Keith has made several arrangements for flute and piano of smaller pieces by Alkan, intended to be played by young pupils who have reached a level of competence between grades II and VI. We heard three groups of these pieces, comprising ten in all (if my hurried notes are accurate): Preludes Nos. 23 in B, 21 in B flat and 9 in E from Op. 31; then the Trio from the 1st Minuet and two more Preludes, Nos. 12 (*Le temps qui n'est plus*) and 15 (*Dans le genre gothique*); and finally Preludes Nos. 3 (*Dans le genre ancien*) and 19 (*Prière du matin*), and Esquisses Op. 63 Nos. 1 (*La Vision*) and 27 (*Rigaudon*). Most of Keith's arrangements deliberately keep the flute in a fairly low register, and they all worked very well, helped by skilful playing from both musicians. They certainly would make an attractive addition to a young player's repertoire, and none but the most extreme purists could object to the sympathetic, and sometimes witty, manner in which Alkan's solo pieces had been recreated.

Keith ended the programme with the *Allegretto alla barbaresca*, Op. 39 No. 10, the last movement of the Concerto for solo piano. In the confines of the small studio, this certainly lacked nothing in power, and with all due respect to Keith's formidable mastery of this fiendish piece, perhaps it was as well that he spared us the whole work! The Secretary thanked Keith and Victoria for their thorough preparation of their programme, and again for their willingness to perform under conditions less congenial than they had been promised.

Richard Shaw then spoke briefly about the negotiations which were under way to acquire the Alkan manuscript, *Les Regrets de la Nonnette*, which was described in the last Bulletin and in a hurried postscript, as you will remember. A full report of the solution which was eventually found appears in the next section. Brian Doyle brought along some of the new recordings to sell, as promised. Again these are described at greater length later in this Bulletin, and a new order form has been enclosed.

THE ALKAN MANUSCRIPT

The Society is most grateful to those members who did respond to the appeal for funds to purchase the newly discovered manuscript. However, the total reached was insufficient, and the committee felt that the very limited funds of the Society would be too stretched by such a purchase, and in any case could achieve more for Alkan's cause in other ways.

The good news is that the manuscript has remained in Britain, and the music on it should be heard very soon. Symposium Records has purchased the manuscript and our President has accepted an invitation to record the piece for the company. It will be included on a compilation of Alkan rarities, number 1062, which has been in preparation for some time. The other works on the recording will include:

Pas redoublé for large wind band
 Funeral March on the Death of a Parrot
 Two Hebrew Songs for choir
 Alkan's transcription of Beethoven's 3rd Piano Concerto
 (1st movement), with Alkan's cadenza
 An Alkan Bach transcription

These are all new recordings, and apart from the "Parrot", first ever recordings. It is hoped that the 2nd *Concerto da Camera*, and the *Rondo Brillant*, Op. 4, may also be included. Details of artists are not yet completed because of the need for string players for the accompanied works. For the same reason, an exact date of issue cannot be given, but next spring is probable.

The same disc will also include the historic performance of the *Symphonie* by Egon Petri.

We feel that this is by far the best solution from the musical point of view. It is surely best that the music should be available for all to hear, whereas a manuscript would only ever be seen by a few people. Symposium Records has already helped the Society considerably in the past, bringing out several Alkan recordings. Since any recording of "off-beat" works is such a financial risk, we hope that all members will support this generous gesture by purchasing as many copies of the recording as they can.

The recording will be on Compact Disc. However, it is possible that a small cassette edition may be made for members only, at the same price as the CD. Ordering details will be announced.

RECORDINGS

The latest Symposium Records catalogue of April 1991 still contains the four Alkan recordings nos. 1002 (piano rolls), 1037 (*Virtuoso Variations* for piano duet, including Alkan's *Don Giovanni Fantasy*), 1057 (Robert Rivard plays the three Op. 12 *Etudes*, the *Trois andantes romantiques*, Op. 13, and three of the six *Chants* Op. 38) and 1059 (Nicholas King plays organ music from Op. 66 and Op. 72, and the *Petits préludes*). These are cassette recordings, and no. 1037 is also available on CD. Symposium may also be able to supply Alkan recordings from the EMI catalogue, if in stock. Details from 110 Derwent Avenue, East Barnet, Hertfordshire EN4 8LZ, tel. 081-368 8667. Please note that the details of no. 1002 in the Discography are incomplete: they should include the Prelude Op. 31, No. 6 (*Ancienne mélodie de la synagogue*), played by Egon Petri.

The recording of the *Trois Marches*, Op. 40, by Isabel Beyer and Harvey Dagul is now available on a well-filled CD of French piano duets from Priory Records, CD no. FHMD 9110 and cassette no. FHMC 9110. The 73-minute recording contains mainly rarities of the repertoire: the Suite Op. 19 by Charles Koechlin (1867-1951) and the *Musiques Rustiques* Suite by Paul Ladmirault (1877-1944), as well as Ravel's arrangement for four hands of *La Valse* and Debussy's *Petite Suite*. The French translation of the cassette inlay card which I have received (it is in fact a British recording made in the Hall of Radley College) contains a good section about Alkan, making the point that his three Marches, dedicated to Ferdinand Hiller, are not only the first known French duets, but also the most difficult to play, both because of the notes themselves and because of the awkward crossing of the partners' hands! Koechlin was mentioned by the composer Chris Dench, in a talk he gave at an early meeting of the Alkan Society, as a composer whose miniature pieces suggested a distinct 'Alkanian' influence.

The recording by Beyer and Dagul is available from the Society. Please send orders to Brian Doyle, whose address is given on the new order form enclosed with this Bulletin. Please note that with the increased V.A.T. and general price increase of recordings, we are now asking for prices of £12.00 for a CD and £7.00 for a cassette. These prices apply to all recordings available from Brian, and include postage and packing. We feel that this still offers a good saving to members of the Society. The offer now applies to all European members. If you live outside Europe and have difficulty in finding recordings, Brian will be pleased to help, but we will need to ask for a higher price to cover the greater postage charges. The order form is therefore enclosed for all members, as well as the publicity leaflet for John Wells's recording of organ music for those who did not receive it earlier.

I believe that the recording of the Preludes by Alkan and Shostakovich by Olli Mustonen, which was mentioned in Bulletin 42, has now been issued. I have seen no reviews of it as yet, and am making enquiries to Decca at the time of writing. When we have more information, we shall let you know and add it to the list on the order form if we can. We are also still trying to obtain the discs made by Alan Weiss and Stephanie McCallum which were tantalisingly mentioned in Bulletins 42 and 43 respectively.

DISCOGRAPHY

It is an unfortunate time to include this item, which was sent to Charles Hailstone last November by our member Tim Bainbridge in Belgium, and I apologise for doing so. Mr Bainbridge mentions an Alkan recording which he found in a second-hand record shop. It is on a Polish LP, in a mixed recital of studies: Op. 76 No. 3 (*Etude pour les [deux] mains réunies*), played by Bogdan Czapiewski, issued in 1983 on Gdynia Wifon ST LP 054.

OTHER NEWS

Members will be delighted to know that William Fong, who came second in the Alkan Centenary piano competition and gave a fine recital for the Society in May 1989, recently won a major competition in Brighton. The judges, who included Ronald Smith and Idil Biret, and the conductor Barry Wordsworth, were unanimous in their decision, choosing William from some ten pianists who had been invited to take part. He included Alkan's first *Chant* in E major (Op. 38) and the *Allegro Barbaro* from the Op. 35 major-key *Études* in his programme. Ronald reports that Idil Biret, the celebrated Turkish pianist with a known taste for rare repertoire, was particularly fascinated with the *Allegro Barbaro* and its unusual notation. Winning the Brighton Philharmonic prize obviously leads to concerto engagements with the local orchestra. But such

was the impression that William made with the representatives of Sussex music clubs who heard the competition that he was offered several other recitals even before the final results were known. We warmly congratulate William, both on winning the competition and on continuing to spread knowledge of Alkan's music more widely.

François Luguenot, the Secretary of the French Société Alkan, reports that Alkan's Op. 1, the Variations on a theme from Steibell's *Orange* Concerto, has been discovered in a private collection. Some twenty pages in length, it was to be published last month by Billaudot.

John Fritzell, our keen researcher in Sweden, has sent me a copy of a five-page Etude by Alkan which he discovered in a large volume edited by Alkan's teacher, Zimmerman, *Encyclopédie du Pianiste Compositeur*. The work appeared in 1840 and included pieces by other composers such as Ravina, Prudent, Thalberg and Zimmerman himself. Alkan's is a useful study in staccato chords which contains something approaching a 'rumba' or Bartókian Bulgarian rhythm at times. Its musical value is on a par with, or perhaps above, some of Czerny's studies. However, there are distinctly Alkanian features, in particular the feeling that it only begins to work as music when Alkan's cruelly fast metronome mark is obeyed!

Mr Fritzell has found some letters of Alkan in a private collection which the French society will be able to include in a collection which they are preparing. He also mentions a huge work by Jean-Amédée [Le Froid de] Méreaux (1802-74), entitled *60 Caprices*, which he suspects is evidence that Alkan and Méreaux may have influenced each other. The work includes "impossibly difficult Etudes, some of which are very long, an *Etude Symphonique* for the second finger (!), and a *Barcarolle* and *Marche Funèbre*, both with Alkanish overtones". I investigated the entry in the *New Grove* (no relation), in which Méreaux is somewhat dismissed as a composer of unoriginal salon music influenced by Chopin, though his importance as an editor of early music is stressed. One is tempted to ask how much of the music the writer had heard performed well, before making such a harsh judgement. Mr Fritzell mentions a small point of interest concerning Alkan's *Le tambour bat aux champs*, usually translated as "The drum beats a salute for the dead", or "The drum beats in the fields". In the revolutionary days in Paris, the citizens used to whisper or shout "Le tambour bat aux champs" when "the Terror" was approaching. He feels that this could affect the way one approaches the piece. He is preparing for a performance of the complete *Esquisses* in north Sweden this summer, and we wish him well for this, his Swedish 'début'.

Gisela and Hartmut Schock, two members in Gebhardshain, Germany, reported a performance of Alkan's *Bombardo-Carillon* for four feet in an organ recital given by Martina and Richard Mailänder from Cologne, at the Church of St. Simon and Judas in Hennef/Sieg last November. There were other items in the programme for two players by Thomas Tomkins, Nicolas Carlston and Gustav Merkel. I presume that as husband and wife, the players avoided the problems which Rudolf Ganz allegedly encountered when he abandoned his study of Alkan's piece because, as Lewenthal suggested, he did not know his female partner well enough. Herr Schock told the performers about other, longer, works for organ or pedal piano by Alkan, and they were very interested, promising to perform more of his music. Their printed programme names him as "Charles Henri V. Alkan", but that is a quibble when performances of the piece are so rare.

Anthony Goldstone, who played in the Centenary Festival and recorded the Virtuoso Variations with Caroline Clemmow, played *Le festin d'Esope* on BBC Radio 3 on the 4th February.

Ronald Smith, Moray Welsh and James Clark have been keeping the three Alkan chamber works "on the boil". As well as their performances at Eton and Brighton, which were previewed in the last Bulletin, they had played them at Christ Church College, Canterbury, last December. We hope that their long-awaited recording will go ahead soon. Ronald is adding the last two Op. 35 major-key Etudes to his repertoire as a possible 'filler' for the two-CD set. He will be playing them at Ripley Arts Centre, 24 Sundridge Avenue, Bromley, Kent, on Saturday August 3rd. The concert begins at either 7.30 or 8 p.m. Early arrivers should find an art exhibition to keep them occupied; otherwise you are advised to check with the Arts Centre. Ronald was also heard recently on Radio 3 in a recital broadcast at 10.30 p.m. on 19th June. His programme included a Schubert sonata and Liszt's *La campanella*.

William Waterhouse celebrated his 60th birthday with a concert in the Purcell Room on 24th May entitled "The Proud Bassoon". He was joined by two other bassoonists, a contrabassoonist, a dulcianist (?) the RNCM Wind Ensemble and the Cromwell String Ensemble, conducted by Timothy Reynish. I am sorry that I did not hear about the concert early enough to include it in the April Bulletin. We congratulate him warmly. Bill is a loyal member of the Society and played in the Centenary Festival in the performance of the "Parrot".

Your Secretary will be hearing some more Piano Rarities in Husum this August. There is still no Alkan this time, but several anniversaries are to be featured. As well as the expected Mozart (d. 1791) - some of his lesser-known pieces, of course - there will be music by Czerny (b. 1791), Prokofiev (b. 1891) and Paderewski (d. 1941). The eight recitals contain far too many unusual pieces to mention them all, but a Blues by Eugen d'Albert and a Foxtrot and "Prtipilus - a fugue dedicated to my cat" by Eduard Erdmann (1896-1958) catch the eye. Hamish Milne will be making a welcome return with some more Medtner as well as Weber's 1st Sonata and the Liszt-Busoni Fantasy and Fugue on *Ad nos* (the 'B-side' of his long-deleted LP of the Reubke Sonata, which made such an impression in his 1989 recital). The usual exhibition of recordings and discography by Peter Seidle from *Opus E* in Karlsruhe features Eduard Erdmann.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members this year:

Bruce Adams (Princeton, NJ, USA)

Jun Kinoshita (Tokyo, Japan)

Nicholas Bell (Oxford)

William Wellborn (San Francisco, USA)

James Hey (Mossley, Lancashire)

Stuart Hudson (Corbridge, Northumberland)

We also thank several members who have rejoined. I hope that you will all be able to come to London one day and meet other enthusiasts. A number of recent enquiries have been received and, if all members can spread the word, I hope the numbers will continue to grow. Mr Hudson described himself as an "addict of Alkan" since he first heard Gordon Watson playing his music in the Wigmore Hall in the early fifties. (Do other members remember that performance? The name was new to me.) Mr Wellborn is a concert pianist and teacher at the San Francisco Conservatoire who has performed several of Alkan's works in the USA, to a "quite favorable" reception, and is writing a treatise about the *Symphonie* and *Concerto*.

Just before printing the last few pages of this Bulletin, I read an article in the "Independent" Magazine for Saturday 22nd June, in which Norman Lebrecht tells of the remarkable sponsorship of recent recordings of music by Havergal Brian, Robert Simpson and Bernard Stevens by the Rex Foundation, run by Phil Lesh of the "Grateful Dead" American rock band. Alkan could use a few friends like him!

Peter Grove