



THE ALKAN SOCIETY

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Wilfrid Mellers

Wilfrid Mellers OBE, who was for many years a Vice-President of the Alkan Society, died on May 17th this year at the age of 94. Mellers, who began teaching English and music at Downing College, Cambridge in 1945 and was a notable force in establishing the thriving music department at York University from 1964 onwards, played an important role in English musical life, writing many books, championing neglected composers (he was an early advocate of Mahler in this country), and also composing. Mellers was an early associate of F.R. Leavis (he was on the editorial board of the magazine *Scrutiny*), and his obituary in the *Guardian* notes that 'like Leavis, Mellers wanted to praise and celebrate the "felt life" in art, and he abhorred anything that smacked of narrowness, system or cant'. The Alkan Society was honoured to have him as a Vice-President and we send our commiserations to his family.

William Waterhouse

We noted in Bulletin 77 the death of William (Bill) Waterhouse, who was an active member of the Society. Bill, who was born in 1931, began studying at the Royal College of Music in 1948 – only shortly before his death he was awarded a Fellowship of the College. He was a bassoon-player in many British orchestras, and was a founder, with Gervase de Peyer, of the Melos Ensemble.

Your Editor spent a memorable afternoon with Bill last July at his wonderful music studio outside Cheltenham. Bill's amazing knowledge of music (which he was always willing to share) was reflected in his superb library and his extraordinary collection of instruments, including what is surely one of the few pedaliers extant in this country. He also whipped your Editor at sight and full-speed through some of Alkan's marches for piano duet, an exhilarating if exacting experience. He was a great character, and a great musician.

Alkaniana

Music in early 19th-century Paris and the Paris Jewish Community

Your Editor has now been awarded a PhD at University College London for his dissertation, 'Jewry in Music: The Entry of Jews to the Musical Professions, 1780-1850'. The major part of the thesis is a review of how political and economic changes, as well as technical developments in music, affected the development of Jews in musical professions in each of the main centres of Western Europe. Of course, one of the 'heroes' of the French section is Charles-Valentin Alkan! The thesis is presently being reworked for publication as a book, which I hope will appear in 2009. The following article is adapted from the introductory section on France, and is an attempt to squeeze, into a pint-pot, quarts of the background to Alkan's early career.

The history of music in France for most of the 19th century is essentially that of Paris, the only substantial conurbation in the country, and in Europe second in size only to London. Musical opportunities were enhanced by the rapid growth of Paris as a musical centre, and by its effective European dominance during the coincident heydays of virtuosity and grand opera in the 1830s, in both of which Jewish figures played leading parts. Supporting roles in this development were played by some of the leading Jewish banking and political circles in Paris; for Paris, formerly technically empty of Jews, had also become a centre of France's Jewish community. Reform of the liturgy in the Parisian synagogues under the leadership of musicians such as Lovy and Naumbourg was also able to tap into the talents which emerged during this period.

The growth of Paris was at least in part a consequence of the strong centralizing policies of French government following the Revolution, especially those of the Napoleonic period. The corollary location, in Paris, of the country's most significant musical institutions, and of its most influential Jewish population and Consistory, are both important factors in the progress of Jewish musicians in France.

1 The Jews of Paris

We know relatively little about the Jewish community of Paris before the revolution, apart from a few high-flying outlyers. In theory at this time Jews were not allowed to live in France, save for the Rhineland provinces, so the Parisian Jews were illegal residents. However, this community, although largely poor and maintaining a low profile, contained members of the professional classes as well as artisans, and the community had its own teachers and learned members, some of whom originated from the Rhineland provinces.

Amongst these was Marix, or Mardochee, Morhange, who had worked as a printer in Metz for Moses May's edition of the *Talmud*, and descended from a long line of Jews in the Metz region going back to at least 1500. From the birth registration of his grandson Gustave in 1827, we learn that he was an *instituteur* (tutor/teacher), and was born around 1748. In Paris he may well have been a *melamed*, teaching Hebrew and religion to the local community. Marix's son, Alkan Morhange, born in Paris in 1786, married Julie Abraham in 1810. Now that Jews were Frenchmen, their children could be given truly French names, Céleste, Charles-Valentin, Ernest, Maxime, Napoléon and Gustave. All of them were to become professional musicians. In the cases of Charles-Valentin and Napoléon, at least, these names

appear to have been in fact chosen by using the names of neighbours who witnessed the birth, as recorded in their *actes de naissance*.

Following the Revolution, Paris's Jewish population grew rapidly. At the turn of the century there were fewer than 3,000 Jews in Paris; by 1815, there were about 6,000, by 1831 the figure was 8,000 and by 1841 11,000. These growth rates exceeded that of the overall population of the capital. Many gravitated to the city from the Rhineland provinces to avail themselves of the business and political opportunities naturally open in the capital. For the same reason many of the Bordeaux Sephardic families also established themselves in Paris, often taking the opportunity to readopt their ancient faith. The early years of this process were characterised by a number of serious adjustments; amongst the French Jews themselves, as the élite but less numerous Sephardim of the West struggled for the ear of the French government and control of the *consistoires* (Jewish administrations) against the *nouveaux* Ashkenazi Jews of the Rhineland; and between government – notably Napoleon – and the Jews as they struggled through the obstacles of the 'infamous decree' of 1808 specifically targeting Jewish lenders, and the Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon in 1807 to establish the loyalty of the French Jewish communities. The outcome of these adjustments was, however, a certain stability, both internal and as regards relations with the state, of the French Jewish communities. And in parallel with other Napoleonic institutions, the Paris Consistory took on a pre-eminence which reinforced the city as the new centre of French Jewry.

Many Jews, fired perhaps by enthusiasm for the new social order which the Revolution promised, came to Paris from neighbouring parts of Europe. One such was Elyahu Halfon Halevi (b.1760). His father Jacob was a rabbi, who shortly after Elyahu's birth moved to Würzburg. Before the French Revolution, Elyahu moved with his brother to Metz, from where, in the 1790s, he decided to try his luck in Paris. Following the 1807 decree requiring Jews to adopt surnames, he took the name Élie Halévy, and commenced a variety of unsuccessful projects, but also became a *chazan*. Eventually he rose to become secretary of the Paris Consistory. His eldest son, Jacque-François-Fromental, was born in 1799, and his other son Léon in 1802. Fromental's unusual name comes from the official name of his birthday, 7th *prairal* in the year VII, in the French revolutionary calendar, and testifies to Elie's identification with revolutionary ideals. Both of the Halévy sons were to play prominent roles in Parisian mid-century cultural life, Fromental as a composer, Léon as a writer and historian.

Paris also became of course a magnet for wealthy Jews who could benefit from its influential political, cultural and social circles. In 1812 James de Rothschild (1792-1868), youngest son of Nathan Mayer Rothschild, settled in Paris and founded the firm of *Rothschild Frères*. He and his family became notable patrons of both Jewish and cultural (including musical) objects; they were swift, for example, to acquire the services of Chopin as piano-teacher to the family. Other Parisian Jewish banking families included d'Eichtal (originally Seligmann), Léo and Fould. These also established themselves, especially during the period of the July monarchy, as cultural patrons.

Many of the wealthy Bordeaux Jews also chose to relocate to Paris, including the families of Pereire and Rodrigues. The ambitious lawyer Isaac Adolphe Crémieux moved to Paris from Bordeaux in 1830 and became a leading member of the Central Consistory; in 1842 he was elected to the July Monarchy's Chamber of Deputies and became a leader of the liberal opposition.

Not all of these chose to adhere to their ancestral religion, although, as with German *Neuchristen* (converts to Christianity), their tendency was to stay within their own circles; Benoît Fould, who in his writings frequently regretted his Jewish origins and opposed Jewish

religious traditions, nevertheless ended up marrying the Cologne banker's daughter Helena Oppenheim. A number also sought a 'third way' and were to become associated with the eccentric Saint-Simonian movement, with which musicians such as Berlioz and Alkan's friend Hiller also flirted.

The growth of Paris made it a Mecca for artists of all nationalities, not only French but also from abroad. For musicians it was a leading venue on the continental concert circuit; many of its musical visitors and virtuosi were Jewish, and supported by (and sometimes related to) the local Jewish banking families. Heine was in residence from 1830 until his death in 1854. The works of Meyerbeer and Halévy made the *Opéra* the sensation of Europe. From 1838 the actress Rachel (Elizabeth Félix), born in Switzerland, was the darling of the *Comédie Française*.

From being theoretically non-existent in 1790, the Parisian Jews therefore became over the next sixty years a significant and accepted element of the capital's population, commerce and society.

2 The Consistorial Synagogue and its Music

Paris needed a synagogue compatible with its importance. The Paris, or Central, Consistory was established by Imperial decree on 17 March 1808 under the leadership of Joseph David Sintzheim, who had presided over the Sanhedrin. The consistories– the central one in Paris and one in each *département* with over 2,000 Jews – had as their purpose to regulate congregations and religious services, to ensure that the principles adopted by the Sanhedrin were promoted, 'to encourage the Jews in the exercise of useful professions' and to inform the authorities on the numbers of Jewish conscripts. Anyone wishing to be recognised or practise as a Jew had to register with the consistory, and had to contribute to its funding (and could also vote for the consistorial board). This placed the synagogue more or less on the same footing in France as the Catholic and Protestant Churches under the Concordat and articles of 1801 and 1802; in doing so it created for the first time in Europe a monolithic national Jewish creed, and organisation to go with it. Perhaps partly because the consistories were state-sanctioned organisations and gave according social status to those who participated, and perhaps (of course) because of the religion's social traditions, places on the consistorial boards were sought after. In 1830, when the State took on the funding of the churches, it also undertook the financing of the *consistoires*.

Initially the Paris '*synagogue consistoriale*' was located in a hall in the Rue Sainte-Avoye in the Marais. It is clear that the consistory recognised at an early stage the importance of music in the synagogue, not only in terms of aesthetics, but also in terms of politics. Its minutes for 16 August 1809 reveal that 'M. Dacosta composed music for some hymns sung in the Ste.-Avoye synagogue for the Emperor's birthday, and was proposed as a consequence to be Music Director of the Consistoire'. This was by no means a musical first for the Parisian community; in 1802 it had presented a hymn in the form of a *Te Deum*, a musical setting of a poem by Elie Halévy, to a mixed audience of Jews and gentiles, to celebrate the Peace of Amiens.

The growing Paris community wished to create a more imposing edifice to symbolise its status. To this end permission was obtained in 1819 for the construction of a new Consistorial Synagogue in the rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth, completed in 1822 (and rebuilt in 1853).

To go with the prestigious synagogue, the community acquired a prestigious *chazan*, Israel Lovy. Born in Danzig in 1773, his great talents brought him a corresponding reputation amongst Jewish communities, enabling him to become *chazan* at the important community of Fürth in 1798. At Fürth Lovy seems to have taken to the study of secular music, learning the

piano and stringed instruments and playing Mozart and Haydn. At the request of the Duke of Bavaria, Lovy sang the tenor part in a performance of Haydn's *Creation* and was allowed to give public concerts in Nuremberg, which at the time was officially off-limits to Jews. Via positions in Mainz and Strasbourg, he made his way to Paris, en route for a job offered in London; however, his appearance in Paris in 1818 'coincided with the double desire [of the Consistory] for a house of prayer worthy of the new community, and a service worthy of the new synagogue'. The opportunity was taken to appoint Lovy as *chazan* for Paris in 1818 (after he had apparently resisted offers to appear on the stage there).

Lovy made some attempt to improve the music of the synagogue, notably by the establishment of a four-part choir, but his skills at composition and harmony seem not to have matched his enthusiasm. But he did 'raise the profile' of the Jewish community, attracting interest from the aristocracy and musical connoisseurs, for example, in his performance of Halévy's cantata on the death of the Duc de Berry in 1820. (Lovy's son became, with M. Heugel, one of the founders and editors of the Parisian musical magazine *Le Ménestrel*). After Lovy père's death, in 1832, the music of the synagogue languished for over a decade until its rejuvenation following the appointment of Samuel Naumbourg (which also led to the well-known fiasco of the invitation to Alkan to become the synagogue's organist).

3 The Conservatoire

The immediate ancestor of the Paris Conservatoire was the *Ecole Royale de Chant*, established in 1784 and re-founded by the National Convention in 1795 as the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique*. After the Restoration it was given the name *Ecole Royale de Musique*.

The Conservatoire was able to recruit some first-class pedagogues. One early catch was the Czech Antonin Rejcha (gallicized as Anton Reicha, 1770-1836), a friend of Beethoven who settled in Paris during the Empire, and wrote some notable books on musical theory expounding his own (often extremely original) ideas. Reicha was also a fluent composer, and a master of counterpoint and fugue, on which subjects he was appointed professor at the Conservatoire in 1818. His influence may be traced in the works of Berlioz, Alkan and many of the most innovative composers of the next generation who had been his pupils. A significant boost was given to the reputation of the Conservatoire by the appointment of the composer Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842) as director in 1821, a post he held for the next 20 years, in which he proved his skills for institutional politics as well as music. Other notable teachers during the first 30 years of the Conservatoire included the opera composer Jean-François Le Sueur (1760-1837), the keyboard professor Pierre Zimmerman (1785-1853) and the violinist and conductor François Habeneck (1781-1849). These teachers formed (or at the very least profoundly influenced) the musical taste of a brilliant generation of French composers that included Halévy (1799-1862), Berlioz (1803-1869), Ambroise Thomas (1811-1896), Alkan (1813-1888), Gounod (1818-1893) and Franck (1822-1890).

The Conservatoire's influence on musical life extended beyond its teaching. Conservatoire musicians were also involved in the *Concerts spirituels* given from 1816-1830, successors to the concert season arranged from 1725-1790 during Lent, (when staged performances were forbidden), by the *Académie Royale*. Habeneck developed an orchestra, under his direction, which gave regular concerts, including the Parisian premieres of many of Beethoven's greatest works. In 1828 he began a concert series, the *Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, heavily featuring Beethoven, whose music he effectively introduced to France, and other contemporary composers. His success spurred other concert series in Paris and reinforced the capital as a European musical centre.

The Conservatoire was the first music academy in Europe financed by a state for its citizens, and open to all on the basis of merit and ability alone, irrespective of the candidate's religion. Thus, like all other French nationals, *les français juifs* now also had access to the study of *musique savante* if they were good enough; and many of the leading and lesser-known French Jewish musicians of the next generations were able to take advantage of this. Early records of the Conservatoire show amongst those enrolled a M. Dacosta in year VI (1798), and a M. Phillipe who studied there in 1803, both of whom seem to be identifiable with musicians recruited by the Consistoire in 1820 to play in Halévy's cantata. I believe that this Dacosta, whom the Consistory minutes identify as a clarinetist, must be the same who arranged the 1802 concert already mentioned, and is also the Dacosta mentioned as clarinetist in the orchestra of the Opéra in 1830.

Unfortunately not all the records of inscription at the Conservatoire have been preserved; but in the earliest surviving register, of 1818-1822, many Jewish names start to appear. In the composition class of Cherubini appear Fromental Halévy and the pianist Herz *aîné* (i.e. Henri Herz); the latter is also in Reicha's counterpoint class. Herz's brother Joseph also appears, as do a M. Adolphe Elie and a Mlle. Jonas. In 1818 another Dacosta (Charles, perhaps the son of the Consistory's Dacosta) is rejected as 'de la voix, mais nullement musicien' (has a voice but is no musician). We see in this and later registers the various Morhange offspring being taken on (the sons, all of whom took on their father's first name as surname, being given sequential numbers from Alkan II to Alkan IV), and amongst other names note Nathan Bloc, M. Lowy, Caroline Seligmann, Abraham Meyer, Aline Silva, and so on. As Ganvert points out, virtually all the professional Jewish musicians working with the Consistory in the period to 1850 were graduates of the Conservatoire, and a number of them had won the prestigious *Prix de Rome* award for composition, which gained the winner four years living in Rome at the Villa Medici, sending back their compositions to Paris; these included including Halévy, Ernest Cahen (graduated 1837), Emile Jonas (1841) and Jules Cohen (1846). Alkan's failure in 1848 to obtain the piano professorship at the Conservatoire, when he was outflanked by Marmontel, perhaps marks the end of a phase of achievement of Parisian Jews at the Conservatoire.

Alkan to Fétis (Letter VI)

We continue our series of translations of the letters of Alkan to the critic Fétis, of which the originals are held in the Fryklund collection at Stockholm. As previously, the letter is translated by the Editor, who has once again been greatly assisted in his notes and comments by those of François Luguénot. All lapses of accuracy or tone are your Editor's alone of course, but I have tried to capture something of Alkan's free-flowing phraseology. The present letter refers to Fétis's reaction (alas lost) to the Alkan's remarkable explosion of spleen against Marmontel, translated in the last edition of this Bulletin.

[Paris 6/7 November 1852]

How grateful I am to you, dear M. Fétis, that you found the time to read my interminable letter of last week, and how I thank you for your reply, so full of warmth and sympathy! It seems as if I have just made a new acquaintance with you, and I can't wait to see you in Paris, to talk with you face-to-face and once more to hear your voice. I must also thank you for your benevolent comments in last week's *Gazette de Dimanche*; for the more I make unnecessary efforts to feel affected by the compliment of the common critic-entrepreneur, the more, I confess, my amour-propre is agreeably gratified when I see my name inscribed by your elegant pen, and mentioned in one of your so important works.

I did not mention in my last that all the sympathies of M. Auber were for M. Marmontel, and all the efforts of M. Zimmermann were to prevent me succeeding him. I have never been able to understand how a man of the worth and spirit of M. Auber allowed himself to be captive to the intrigues of the lower tiers, like some of those which surround him at the Conservatoire. As for Zimmerman, I have only too well understood, and will convey to you as soon as we can speak together, his infamous treason to my situation: I think however that if he could have set his sights for a successor a little lower, without running the risk of me being on the scene, he would not perhaps have helped M. Marmontel; who presently begins to regenerate the class which was starting to collapse [commençait à périlcliter] in the hands of his learned predecessor.¹ Ah! dear M. Fétis, why was it not given to me to live under the rule of a man of your calibre! I think I would have become an active force under its influence; but I consume myself without giving any light, unable even to console myself with the concept that I have placed beyond myself what nature had perhaps hidden within me, so that I am abandoned to chance....² But I don't want to start my last letter over again. I would do better, in this latest response, convinced of the pleasure which I will have reading the article which you have announced for tomorrow, congratulate you in advance; although it seems to me it would not be possible to summarise and conclude with more lucidity and interest than you showed last Sunday. But I don't wish to take up my position in advance, and before sending you the above, I wish to have read you anew.

Saturday morning 6/11/[18]52

I have seen the Launer-Czerny-Scarlattti prospectus, and I assure you I am entirely against this style of publicity. But I scarcely retain a shred of antipathy to Czerny since I dream of M. Marmontel.

Sunday evening

As you did not appear this morning, I adjourn for the present the moment when I will send you my compliments on the new and excellent things which you will be telling us.³

Thanks again for your fine letters, and in hope that you will enable me to see you shortly – accept, dear maître, my very best wishes –

IC: V: Alkan ainél [signature]

Reviews

Our Chairman has recently attended two concerts which, whilst not containing music by Alkan, are for different reasons of interest to the Society.

Concert at St. John's, Smith Square, 13th April 2008

As part of a celebratory weekend to mark Ronald Stevenson's 80th birthday Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow gave a lunchtime recital for four hands on one piano and on two pianos. The fare was of shorter pieces relevant to Ronald Stevenson's life and interests. Although nothing by Alkan was included, one feels that he would, albeit shyly,

¹ This seems to imply that Zimmerman himself had launched the campaign against Alkan, but for a reason which remains obscure. [FL] (It also shows that Alkan himself had deep concern about the decline of the class under his former benefactor Zimmerman, so there may have been mutual disquiet – DC).

² Alkan is one of those artists who need a 'midwife' (editor, director, etc.). [FL]

³ The article did not in fact appear until 28th November (Issue no 48, pp. 401-404), [FL]

have supported the event, for over the years Ronald Stevenson and the Goldstone-Clemmow Duo have both shown considerable interest in his music.

The programme included:

For two pianos:

- Mozart arr. Busoni: Overture: "The Magic Flute", K. 620

Piano Duet:

- Busoni: No. 1 from Finnländische Volksweisen, Op. 27
- Stevenson: Two Chinese Folk-songs (1966)
- Grieg: Norwegian Dance, Op. 35, No. 1
- Paderewski: No. 2 from Tatra-Album, Op. 12

Two Pianos:

- Britten: Mazurka Elegiaca (In Memoriam I.J. Paderewski), Op. 23, No. 2
- Mozart, realised Goldstone: Sonata in B flat major for two pianos (first London performance)

The pianos were full grands by Favioli, a relatively new Italian manufacturer. After the concert your reviewer was astonished to learn that the artists had walked straight on to the platform and played with their usual great élan and technical assurance having never before seen one of these instruments.

Does London deserve its rich musical life? It is most regrettable that so few people troubled to turn out for a fine performance of an unusual and interesting programme.

Choir Concert at St. John's Church, Boxmoor, 10th May 2008

Our Secretary has conducted the choir of St. John's Church, Boxmoor, for two and a half years and the results of his stewardship were very clear on this Saturday evening.

The choir of about twenty five members was put through a varied and testing programme, some pieces being sung by the complete choir, others by sections of it. The programme ranged over four centuries, from Thomas Weelkes, born circa 1575 to Andrew Parnell, born 1954.

The English contingent included, predictably and rightly, Parry and Stanford, but there was also the opportunity to hear a fine setting from 1 Corinthians by Edward Bairstow (1874-1946).

Anything from Haydn's *Creation* is always welcome. "And God said, let there be lights" is a tough assignment through which the choir came well. The pieces were introduced by Nicholas King, always instructively and amusingly, and, as he put it himself, to give the choir a chance to get its breath back. At this point he explained that *The Creation* was originally in English, was translated into German and from German back into English.

Mendelssohn's "Hear my prayer . . . O for the wings of a dove" was notable particularly for the first solo sung by Katherine Boyce.

The "Adult choir" sang excellently two short pieces in Latin: "Oculi omnium" by Andrew Parnell and "Ubi caritas" from the very limited of Maurice Duruflé's works which he allowed to survive. However, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" in an arrangement by Nicholas King, described by him with current political correctness as an "American folk hymn", seemed rather pallid.

The “Treble choir” sang John Gardner's “When Christ was born to Mary free” well, but what clearly appealed to them, and over which great pains in rehearsal had clearly been lavished, was “Bless the Lord” from Andrew Carter's *Benedicite*. This was conducted from the keyboard of an electronic instrument, by Nicholas King. Otherwise there were organ accompaniments by Christopher Muhley. Well played though these were, one missed the delightful orchestration of Haydn's *Creation*.

Earlier in the evening there had been a couple of momentary and slight roughnesses in ensemble, but in an age of clinically perfect recordings from pre-edited tapes it would be easy and cheap to make anything of these. Thus, we left St John's Boxmoor with, sung by the full choir in every way superbly, Haydn's *Insanae et vanae curae* resounding in our ears.

Eliot Levin

Website

Bulletins de la Société Alkan

Thanks to François Luguenot who has made available the complete bulletins of the Société Alkan in electronic format, we are now able to offer on the Alkan Society website the complete bulletins of our sister society in Paris. The very valuable bulletins of the Société Alkan contain a wealth of information and opinion, much of it nowhere else available, and are a tribute to the research and tenacity of François and his colleagues. The Society's website at www.alkansociety.org, which now makes available the complete bulletins of both English and French societies, can now claim to be the leading ‘one-stop’ resource for Alkan studies.

Festival News

Indian Summer in Levoča, Slovakia – 27.9.2008-5.10.2008

The ‘**Indian Summer in Levoča**’ Festival, of which the Alkan Society is a Founder Sponsor as reported in Bulletin 77, has been receiving excellent attention in Slovak media – including an hour-long (!) live interview on Radio Devín, the country's equivalent of Radio 3. As my Slovak is negligible, it was my wife Nadia, chairman of the Festival committee, who undertook this gruelling task, which included, with the assistance of some interjections by myself, a brief outline of the career of Alkan. We are also discussing the possibility of some radio and television broadcasts of concerts and events at the Festival.

Apart from Alkan's ‘Concerto’ (performed by Thomas Kamieniak), we will be hearing some of his organ preludes played on the organ of St. Jakob's by Nicholas King and his transcription of the slow movement of Mozart's A major quartet, played by Petronel Malan. Other keyboard rarities include music by Thalberg and Valery Zhelobinsky (a protégé of Shostakovich who died at the early age of 33). There will also be a performance of Liszt's seldom heard ‘mini-concerto’ *Malédiction* played by Petronel Malan with the Slovak Chamber Orchestra.

The full programme of events can be found at its website, www.lblfestival.eu, together with information about the festival, its artists and the town and region. Alkan Society members are welcome for a few days or for the whole week, and I will be glad to advise on how to get there and on accommodation – travel and hotels are inexpensive, the townsfolk are friendly and the beer is excellent! You can contact me at my e-mail address, info@alkansociety.org.

David Conway