

Ronald Smith's long-awaited recording of Russian keyboard works is released this month on Nimbus NJ-5187 (CD only). He plays Mussorgski's Pictures at an Exhibition, Balakirev's Sonata in B flat Mi and Scriabin's Sonata No. 9 Op.68 (The Black Mass). This recording will revive memories for many members of our President's superb recital in the Wigmore Hall in 1981 when he played these works and also Prokofiev's Sonata No.7.

OBITUARIES

Following the death of Sorabji, Alkan has lost another prominent and doughty champion by the passing of RAYMOND LEWENTHAL. He died of a heart attack at the age of 62 in Hudson N.Y.. He was a fine pianist in the grand manner. He came of Russian-French parentage and grew up in Hollywood where he was a child actor. Later he had various piano teachers including Alfred Cortot. In 1953 he was the victim of a serious assault in Central Park suffering broken arms and hands. It seemed that his musical career was at an end but he overcame all difficulties and was able to resume his career in 1964. His last public appearances were with the National Symphony at the Kennedy Centre in 1982. He worked for many years on a biography of Alkan but it never saw the light of day. (Information derived from the New York Times issue of 24th November 1988.)

The first recording that I heard of Alkan's music was one of Raymond Lewenthal's and I have made much use of his 'Piano Music of Alkan', so sprightly and informative, published by Schirmer in 1964. I was also much intrigued by his recording, with friends, of the Funeral March on the death of a parrot. He will be sadly missed by all Alkan devotees.

GAWLIK, Doreen Rosemary. James Gawlik became a member of the Alkan Society as soon as it was formed and he and his wife were then living in London. On their removal to Scotland, attendance at meetings became well-nigh impossible but they have always been most interested, generous and generally supportive. James writes - "Neither of us have a professional musical claim to make; we are in fact mathematicians but, like me, she was an admirer of Alkan's workand I am lost without her." How well I know the feeling! In the last two years we have lost three ladies from our early membership - Mrs. White, Mrs. Tompkins and now Mrs. Gawlik. Our sympathy goes out to James in his bereavement.

NEW MEMBERS

D.R. BEASLEY, Horsham, Sussex
 CHARLES HOLMES, Wetherby, Yorks.
 MARIAN KLOVNING, Norway
 WILFRID MELLERS, York
 ROBERT MOORE, Wilmington, U.S.A.
 ELIZABETH UPCHURCH, Hitchin, Herts.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The pianist William Fong, who was joint 2nd prize winner in the 1988 Alkan Piano Competition, will give a recital at 7 pm on Wednesday, 17th May at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Silk Street, Barbican, EC2.

William was born in Iowa, U.S.A. in 1964 and studied at the R.N.C.W.. His teachers have included Ryzard Bakst, George Hadjinkos and Ronald Smith. He has participated in master classes with Denis Matthews, Vlado Perlmutter, Paul Badwa-Skoda, Ronald Smith and Georgy Sebok. He has been a major prize-winner in 5 international competitions and has given many recitals and concerto performances throughout the U.K., has appeared on BBC TV and has made a successful tour of Spain.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

£6 for London members.
 £4 for members out of London and students.
 £7 (payable in sterling) for overseas members.
 All rates cover husband and wife membership.

THE ALKAN SOCIETY



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ALKAN WORLDWIDE

It is not possible to give even a brief account of all the exciting things that have been happening during the Centenary Year; but there will be enough to show how interest has increased all over the world during the last 20 years or so. Much more attention is now being paid to the shorter pieces - particularly the 'Trente Chants' and the 'Esquisses'.

FRANCE. Most of the information given here has been culled from the Bulletin of the 'Société Alkan' for September and November 1988 written with the enthusiasm of their efficient and energetic secretary, François Luge-not.

Robert Guilloux in the framework of a concert gave a talk on 'Un musicien inspiré par Horace', speaking about pieces such as 'Horace et Lydie'. Georges Guillard gave an organ recital at the church of Notre-Dame de la Rochelle which included some Alkan pieces. In a series 'Salon Romantique' on Radio France, Olivier Gardon played Barcarolle 4; Le tambour bat aux champs; Le Festin d'Esopo; Gigue; and the Duo Concertant (piano & violin) was played by Olivier Gardon and Régis Pasquier. About 30 people gathered at the hotel 'Bedford' in December to hear an account of Alkan's life and work and to hear his music.

On the 12th October '88 at the Centre Communautaire Juif Rachi, Paris Laurent Martin gave a concert organised by the Society and L'association Yuval which included pieces by Alkan, Chopin, Liszt and Prokofiev. As a special surprise, M. Luge-not organised a performance of 'Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un papagallo'.

Then on December 13th came a recital in Paris by 'The Amazing' Ronald Smith. This was noted in an article in the Culture section of 'Le Monde' entitled 'Un centenaire oublié'.

BELGIUM. Alan Weiss, an American pianist living in Belgium, was invited to give the closing recital of the 38th season of Nijmegen's chamber series. His programme, given at the Chateau d'Ucles on 8th March '88, included the Grande Sonate Op.33 and several short pieces - Nocturne Op.22; Le tambour bat aux champs; Fa; Barcarolle in G Minor; Le Legatissimo; Les Cloches; Heraclite et Democrite; Les Enharmoniques; Le premier billet doux; morituri salutant; Incepatio; Les Soupis; Scherzetto; and also Le Festin d'Esopo. The programme was later transmitted on Radio Television Belge.

NETHERLANDS. Frank Lioni reports:- "This year the Dutch radio gave somewhat more Alkan music; also live concerts and a small talk on his life. I have found another article on Alkan in a musical magazine called 'Adem' (Breath):- K. Vansevanant. C.V. Alkan, unique, original, and yet forgotten. (Adem 1983 March/April pp.89/93 with short English summary)."

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Hugh Macdonald. It ends: "The Talmud legend is gone, but a misanthropic composer who could write funeral music for a parrot deserves a cult following, at least, and a funeral march of his own in his centennial season." Later in the year, on 24th November, the New York Times published the obituary notice of Raymond Lewenthal and this must have aroused more interest in Alkan.

HAWAII. The American pianist, Warren Cohen, played the Grande Sonate and Symphony Op.39 last April in Honolulu to great acclaim.

UNITED KINGDOM. Beside the great events of 1988 at the Wigmore Hall and the South Bank Halls, there have been other lesser events all over the country. Our indefatigable President has been here, there and everywhere pressing the Alkan cause as, for example, in Bromley, Salisbury and Hove. The splendid reviews of his book "Alkan. Vol. II" have also focussed attention, in the Centenary Year, on Alkan's remarkable work. Other pianist members of our Society have been spreading the word in their own localities. It is an encouraging sign that other pianists, not connected with the Society, have included pieces by Alkan in their programmes as, for example, Santiago Mantas at the Purcell Room on 28th March and, broadcast on Radio 3 in November, Ian Lake playing an interesting programme of Alkan miniatures entitled 'Alkan in Context'. The programme also included the Cello Sonata Op.47 played by Rohan and Druvi de Saram. Also, for the week commencing 28th March, Alkan became 'Composer of the Week' on Radio 3 for the first time. Hugh Macdonald gave a talk on Radio 3's 'Music Weekly' programme which surveyed the demands made by Alkan on his performers.

ALKAN CENTENARY FESTIVAL 30th Nov. - 3rd Dec. 1988.

1988 Marks both centenary of the death of Alkan and the 175th anniversary of his birth. Since 1977 a group of enthusiasts - musicians and lay admirers - has, through the Alkan Society, attempted to convince the musical world that he was one of the greatest composers of the 19th century and a supreme master of the piano. Their efforts have borne some fruit; if Alkan's works have not yet taken their natural place alongside those of Chopin, Liszt and Schumann, at least there are reasonably frequent chances to hear complete programmes of his music. A growing caucus of enthusiastic players is following in the path of such standard-bearers as von Bulow, Busoni and Petri, principally figures like Ronald Smith and John Ogdon. There are also increasing opportunities to familiarise oneself with Alkan's works through recordings, especially those made for EMI by Ronald Smith. Yet Professional critics and musicologists, even when they deign to listen to Alkan's compositions, tend to pass harsh judgement or kill with faint praise.

To celebrate the Alkan centenary, with the support of the B'nai B'rith Jewish Music Festival and the patronage of the Ambassadors of both France and Israel, the Alkan Society mounted a 4-day Festival of the composer's works, not only those for piano but vocal, chamber and organ music too. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the first three day's events, missing only an organ recital and - my great regret - Ronald Smith's final programme in the Queen Elizabeth Hall. For a listener familiar only with some of Alkan's central piano compositions and miniatures, the cumulative effect was quite striking, analogous in its way to being exposed to Wagner's 'Ring' cycle. It was clear that a good proportion of the modest-sized audiences at the Purcell Room and St. Giles, Cripplegate, were already converted to the cause, but there must have been others like myself who experienced a twitching of the nerve endings. Perhaps we did not depart with Alkan's themes rotating in the head - he is not that kind of composer - but the logic and the aesthetic were quite firmly implanted.

The festival opened on 30th November with a pre-concert lecture in the Purcell Room given by Wilfred Mellers and illustrated with recorded musical extracts. In an almost ingeniously ebullient address - clearly aimed at the open-minded but unconverted - Professor Mellers stressed Alkan's mastery of the musical tightrope and his highly developed sense of danger

GERMANY. Dr. Britta Schilling's noble efforts on Alkan's behalf have been noted and praised in previous Bulletins; otherwise we have had little fresh news except to record an interesting article by Walter Lehart published in the 'Neue Zürcher Zeitung' on 20th March '88 to mark the Centenary, under the heading 'Ein visionär der Klaviermusik', he takes a variety of Alkan's compositions and compares them with works of other composers, including Mahler, Beethoven, Honegger, Satie and Gounod, bringing out the special characteristics of Alkan's work. There is also a brief account of his life.

NORWAY. We have a programme played to celebrate Alkan's birth-date 'Konsert Ørsta Bedehus', when Roar Lillebø and Band Dahle played a number of Miniatures plus the Benedictus Op.54 and the Adagio from the cello sonata with cellist Marit Klovning.

SWEDEN. Much interest and enthusiasm for Alkan has been shown in Stockholm. An 'Alkan Jubiliüm' was planned for 29th March '88, six pianists taking part. Also on 29th March the pianist Janos Solyon gave a programme entirely devoted to Alkan. He played Le Festin d'Esopé, the Symphony and Concerto from Op.39.

ISRAEL and the Jewish Community in the U.K. There has been a real awakening in Jewish circles with the realisation that one of their greatest musicians has been terribly neglected for more than a century. Dr. W.J. Alkan tells us that on 26th December there was an evening programme on Alkan on the Israeli radio ('Voice of Music') with more or less the same content as the previous broadcast. At home, there have been well-informed articles in the Jewish Chronical. On 2nd December last, under 'Records', David Saul wrote of "Mr. Smith's fine setting of Alkan Gems and, on 16th December, Malcolm Miller reviewed the events of the South Bank under the heading 'Alkan's originality'. David Saul has this pragmatic statement: - "Anniversary articles, events, recitals and recordings celebrate the works of a recluse and eccentric who may yet be acclaimed the greatest of all Jewish composers, even though he earns no more than a few dismissive lines in the 'Encyclopaedia Judaica'.

AUSTRALIA. We have already described the splendid work done on Alkan's behalf by Stephanie McCallum and by Roger Smalley in Sydney. On 24th March 1988 Mark Coughlan gave a concert at the University of Perth which included 'variations à la vielle' on a theme from l'Élision d'Amore and some of the Op.35 Studies in the major keys. The Société Alkan also records that Cyril Ray, descended from Napoléon a brother of Alkan, reports a concert on 29th March '88 which took place in the Nickson Performance Room of Queensland University at Brisbane. About 250 people heard 4 young pupils of Pamela Page. Among the pieces chosen were some of the Esquisses, Funeral March from the Symphony Op.39, Preludes from Op.31, the second Nocturne Op.57 and 'Le tambour'. Then came the Barcarolle Op.65(6), Fa, ending with Les Soupirs and the Scherzo Diabolico Op.39(3). The performances were by no means perfect but it was a noble effort.

NEW ZEALAND. Radio New Zealand broadcast 4 programmes on Alkan in which the organist John Wells spoke about Alkan's life and played a selection of his organ works.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. On 25th October, in the Merkin Concert Hall, New York City, Ruslana Antonowicz included, in a recital debut, Alkan's Grand Sonata Op.33.

In an article labelled 'The Birth and Death of a Legend' published on 12th June 1988 in the New York Times the writer, Donal Henahan, laments that "Alas for a Valentin Alkan cult; the tale of his bizarre demise has succumbed to new scholarship". Henahan begins: "The Centenary of the death of Valentin Alkan passed recently without arousing much interest hereabouts. That struck me as surprising." In the fairly lengthy article that follows we find the statement "Though a minor composer". The tone of the whole review is rather facetious but gives much space to the researches of

(witness the composer's colourful references to such phenomena as 'l'enfer'). Thus the listener should trust the composer and tread the tightrope with him vicariously, holding on to his hand. (One feels that the performer must do so too, saying his prayers even more vehemently!) It is a pity that this excellent introduction should have been marred by such poor reproduction of the taped musical extracts. Incidentally, the acoustics of the Purcell Room might have been improved throughout the Festival if the back curtains had been drawn. With such power and harmonic convolution there was often a harshness in the bass and a glassy resonance in the higher register of the Steinway piano, most noticeable in the chamber works with keyboard, which worked against the string players in particular.

The succeeding concert was one of two events designed to present Alkan in the round including vocal and mixed chamber works, surely to dispel the idea that he only wrote effectively for the piano, and featuring a number of first performances in the U.K.. To open the programme Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow played two-piano arrangements by Roger Smalley of the Benedictus Op.54 and the curiously-titled Impromptu Op.69. The latter is a virtual sonata, incorporating a set of variations on the Lutheran chorale 'Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott'. (Later in the week, Kevin Bowyer played the piece in its organ version.) It is music of imagination and grandeur. In a performance of virtuosity and authority, the pianism of Goldstone and Clemmow verged on the clangorous, the huge dynamics working a little against the music; but it was nevertheless an exciting experience.

There followed two brief settings of Hebrew Songs, performed in superb style (and with linguistic impeccability too) by the Kentish Opera Group, conducted by Mark Fitzgerald. The Group was then joined by three oboes, a bassoon (William Waterhouse) and piano for the 'Funeral March for a Parrot, surely a satirical piece with its snarling oboes juxtaposed against the solemn Berliozian chorus.

For many, the revelation of this first programme must have been the performance of a work which has been played on a number of occasions, the Sonate de Concert for cello and piano Op.47, composed in 1857. The tendency to read more into Alkan's music than it delivers was evident in Wilfrid Meller's programme notes. Although the cellist is matched against some formidable outbursts from the piano, the 'dance of death' promised in the finale delivered less than we were promised. The work could well stand naturally in the royal line of cello sonatas from Beethoven through Brahms and into this century. Alkan succeeds better than many in matching the tone and line of the preponent instruments. He writes thoughtfully and eloquently, but the thematic core is less gripping than one might have hoped. Christopher Bunting and Ronald Smith gave an assured reading, particularly grave and sustained in the middle movement.

For the first of two organ recitals, held at lunchtime on 1st December at St. Giles, Cripplegate, the soloist was Nicholas King, giving public premieres of works which he has included in his recent recording on the Symposium label: three of the Grandes Preludes Op.66, the Petits Preludes sur les huit gammes du plain-chant, and four of the Pieces dans le style religieux Op.72. A small audience was treated to playing of exemplary clarity and commitment. Particularly noteworthy were the Piece in F (from Op.72), a pastorelle with an insidiously attractive theme, and the A minor Piece, revealing Alkan at a peak of spontaneity and cataclysmic grandeur.

The evening saw a second mixed programme at the Purcell Room with the accent very much on works with strings. Again, there were a number of first performances. Admittedly, the Rondo Brilliant Op.4 is only a youthful display piece. Dating from 1827, it is in the mould of Hummel, and in its confident instrumental writing it foreshadows the hair-raising demands which Alkan would be making on performers in his mature works. William Fong, replacing Christine Stevenson at short notice, acquitted himself confidently in the tricky piano part, ably supported by the Artaria String Quartet and Cecilia Bruggemeyer on the double bass. Anthony Goldstone was the pianist in a more substantial work scored for the

same-sized ensemble, the Concerto da Camera Op.10 No.2. This is in three movements but composed to be performed without a break (to avoid the unsettling effect of applause between movements). Here is a slightly later work (1834), both attractive and demanding on the players who on this occasion took it in their stride, Anthony Goldstone in particular revealing in its opportunities for bravura.

More nourishing fare came in the 6 Esquisses, from Op.63, arranged for string quartet by Roger Smalley. The Arteria quartet were at their finest in these most attractive and far from insubstantial fragments. Particularly lulling and tuneful was the second piece labelled 'Pseudo-naivete'. The listener could indeed be fooled into thinking that these were designed for the quartet medium.

Around the filling came the real substance of the programme, two major works, the first of which - the Piano Trio in G minor Op.30, finds the mature Alkan writing with what Mellers suggests is 'Jewish intensity and Gallic skill', characteristics which were not particularly evident to this listener. What is clear is that the 28 year old composer is already stretching his performers, the scoring for the piano - rhythmically and harmonically - putting the players on trust, as it were. A ham-fisted exhibitionist would destroy the balance and abnegate the spirit of a subtle and many-faceted piece. Luckily, Ronald Smith so palpably listens to his fellow players - on this occasion Nona Liddell and Christopher Bunting - that any thunderclaps or harmonic grotesqueries were held in balance. Particularly engaging is the scherzo movement marked 'trés vite' (which in other hands could have served as an invitation to disaster).

The Grande duo concertante Op.21, which concluded the concert, dates from 1840. It is, not unexpectedly, a violin sonata in three movements, the first and second of which are melodically strong, the long-phrased violin part almost a precursor of Faure's sonatas. (The second movement is entitled "L'enfer!") The elaborate and often noisy scoring for the piano brings the expected frissons derived from grim discords and galvanic eruptions. Nona Liddell, veteran of many hair-raising encounters in the modern repertoire, acquitted herself strongly in the meaty violin part, although she had some problems with the intonation.

The third and penultimate day of the festival was given over entirely to piano music. It opened with a lunchtime lecture-recital of what were billed as Alkan Miniatures, given in the Purcell Room by Ronald Smith. With delightful informality, the President of the Alkan Society treated his audience to a study of the composer's psychology, style and technique. His choice of programme was perspicacious in its substance, its sequence and the pointing of contrasts in style and technique. The programme encapsulated samples from the 25 Preludes, the 48 Esquisses and the Trentes Chants in pursuit of Mr. Smith's claim that Alkan was basically a classical composer rather than a romantic. (This is a relief, as I have failed to detect in his music sufficient of the essentially poetic lyricism and fantasy which characterises the finest keyboard music of romanticism such as Chopin and Schumann.) Some unconvincing parallels were drawn - for example with Mahler and Stravinsky. Alkan is constantly presented as both an original voice - which he was - and as a precursor of so many important developments since his day. Here the case seems to me to be more debatable. There are striking harmonic, rhythmic and melodic innovations, but I should have to immerse myself in his music more thoroughly to be convinced that many of these traits were not musical culs-de-sac.

When it came to the execution of Alkan's Miniatures, Ronald Smith demonstrated yet again that he has a magnificent command of his instrument, with technical reserves that allow him constantly to explore and shape the music, revealing its facets to a degree that few can match.

A pianist who may prove to be Smith's equal as an Alkan specialist is John Lenehan, prize-winner at the recent Alkan Piano Competition held at the Fairfield Hall, Croydon. His evening recital in the Purcell Room was a mixed programme with several more first performances. These included the

overtly operatic 'Super Flumina Babylonis Op.52 published in 1859; the second of the four Nocturnes Op.57, a gentle piece perhaps a trifle lengthy for its contents; six of the Trentes Chants Op.38; and the Marche funèbre Op.26 (pace Beethoven's Op.26) recorded some years ago by Ronald Smith and very much in the mould of Berlioz.

John Lenehan's most substantial offering was a brilliant account of the well-known Sonatine Op.61 of 1861, another work with a ridiculously reticent title; it is, of course, a full-blown sonata, very much implied in Lenehan's attack on its opening Allegro Vivace which was taken at a rather furious pace. But here, as elsewhere, this artist invested the music with great character and held its structure together firmly. Yet for me the pick of the evening was the Etude in B major Op.35 No.11. Thematically, harmonically, pianistically, this piece seems the quintessence of the finest that the composer has to give. The published programme concluded with another study, the familiar Allegro barbaro Op.35 No.5. The audience rightly demanding more, Mr. Lenehan signed off with two encores, the calm demeanour was in stark contrast with his power and precision at the keyboard. He has deceptively small hands in contrast to Ronald Smith's long fingers but his appearance belies his command over this music, written so much to test the ultimate potential of the instrument itself, with the player having somehow to match his performance to that of the piano. It is a humbling experience to witness pianists who can so thoroughly meet Alkan's demands.

 The success of an event such as this Festival is not to be measured by the box office. The range of music offered, the excellence of the performances, the quality of the communication - both musical and verbal - between artist and audience, mark this as a very special event. Incidentally, there was a large, comprehensive programme on sale, covering the whole series and containing replicas of all known portraits and photos of Alkan. To conclude, I must admit that Alkan's music still puzzles me. juxtaposed with many magnificent, stirring and highly imaginative ideas, there are naive and commonplace motifs and episodes. The piano writing in particular does seem at times to verge on the perversely difficult - it is sometimes gratuitously noisy. There is a streak of overkill and of hyperbole, too, even extending to the titles given to works and to movements within them. However, we should recall that fifty years ago Mahler was misunderstood and belittled; similar characteristics in his music grated on the new listener. Longer exposure to a genuinely fresh and original voice may often bring enlightenment, maturing into deep satisfaction.

(c) Michael van Blankenstein - December 1988

ALKAN RECORDINGS

A new Alkan recording (CD only) has recently been released in Belgium on the Rene Gailly International Productions label. It is Volume I in a projected series of the complete solo piano works played by Daniel Capelletti. The works on Volume I are Les Mois Op.74 (complete), the Sonatine Op.61 and the Trois Petits Fantaisies Op.41. The recording is not available in the UK but Symposium Records will endeavour to import some copies should demand warrant it. If any members would like to reserve a copy please write to Symposium Records, 110 Derwent Avenue, East Barnet, Hertfordshire, EN4 8LZ before 30th April.

Symposium Records will be releasing later this year on CD 'A Miscellany of works by Alkan' including the Funeral March for a dead parrot, the Symphony for solo piano played by Egon Petri, Alkan's transcription of Beethoven's 3rd Concerto (1st movement with cadenza) and Pas Redouble for wind band.

Kevin Bowyer's recording of Alkan works played on the organ of Salisbury Cathedral was released last November on Nimbus Records (NI 5089) on CD only. On the record he plays the Treize prières Op.64, 8 Petit

preludes and the Improptu Op.69 (total playing time 73.48).

Kevin Bowyers won 1st prize at the 1983 St. Albans International Organ Festival. Whilst still a student he gave public performances of the complete solo organ Symphonies of Widor, Vierne and Dupre. Later this year he will broadcast for Radio 3 three of Alkan's Pedal Studies and the Benedictus Op.54.

NOTES AND NEWS

Members who have consulted the Grove Concise Dictionary of Music must have been appalled by the scant reference to C-V Alkan. The first book of the twenty-volume edition had Hugh Macdonald's scholarly and comprehensive entry with a full list of the known works and also a likeness. Alkan was treated as a Grade 'A' composer. All this has been reduced to a mere 24 lines. Comparisons have been said to be odious but they can be very informative. Let us note the number of lines devoted to each of 8 composers: - C-V Alkan (24); William Billings (24); William Crotch (27); Johann Stamitz (32); John Field (37); Sterndale Bennett (39); Frederick Delius (51); Erik Satie (54).

If there be no justice in the world of music one might at least expect some sense of proportion! There are still a number of musicologists who would like to keep Alkan "down among the dead men".

The chief interest of the Alkan Centenary was mainly centred, in UK, round the Chamber Music Recital at the Wigmore Hall on 29th March (Alkan's death date) and the series of South Bank Concerts running from 30th November (his birth date) through the three following days. It seems strange that the bi-weekly periodical 'Classical Music' ignored it all.

On 13th December at 8.30 at the Centre Musical Bosendorfer in Paris our President played the same programme that he gave at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on 3rd December. The proceeds of the concert were to be devoted to the fund for restoring Alkan's tomb. Ronald Smith's services were given free. The concert was a great success and one review said that it was "terrible", which is the present French manner of saying that it was "terrific".

Our member, Dr. J.R. Salmon, wrote to the BBC to request that Alkan's Allegro barbaro be played in the programme 'Your Concert Choice'. The work was played on Sunday, 5th February.

Also on 5th February our President played two concertos at Brighton (the Saint-Saëns Fourth and the Liszt First) and the following day he gave a lecture on Alkan to the Hove Gramophone Society.

An old friend of the Society, Dr. Britta Schilling of Cologne, has contributed an article to a French periodical 'Romantisme. Revue de la Société des Etudes romantiques'. It is entitled 'Charles Valentin Alkan: un solitaire dans le romantisme français'. Dr. Schilling is not here concerned with the major works of Alkan but compares his special characteristics with those of his contemporaries such as Berlioz, Liszt and Chopin. She illustrates her conclusions by reference to such works as the Preludes Op.31, the Funeral March Op.26 and the Funeral March for the dead of a parrot. She sees a strong streak of satire in some of his works and regards the Op.26 March as a parody of the innumerable funeral marches composed in the romantic era.

Dr. Schilling was hoping to attend the concerts at the South Bank but at that time she was busy reading the proofs of the first volume to be published of the new critical edition of the literary works of Franz Liszt of which she is one of the editors.

The music publishers Bardic Edition have expressed an interest in publishing some of Alkan's works which are out of print. We have submitted the Marche Funèbre Op.26, Marche Triomphale Op.27 and Minuetto alla tedesca Op.46 for consideration. Bardic Edition have recently published a piano work by Sorabji entitled Fantasiatina which dates from the 1960s and a little-known work by Liszt - Piano Piece in A flat.