

THE ALKAN SOCIETY

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THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This took place at the Abbey Community Centre on Thursday July 20th. 13 members were present. In the previous bulletin it was mentioned that the future of the Society depended on the willingness of members to help in the running of the Society. The meeting was entirely taken up with resolving this situation. The Secretary explained what was involved in running the Society. In order to ensure that no one person was over-burdened, the duties of running the Society were divided up as follows the Secretary, the Treasurer, Meetings Organiser, Bulletin Editor and Bulletin Despatcher.

Elizabeth Upchurch volunteered to take over as Treasurer and all future subscriptions are to be sent to her (address at the end of the bulletin). Richard Shaw and Brian Inglis are to organise the meetings, John White will continue as Editor of the bulletin. This still leaves someone to fill the role of Secretary and someone to despatch the bulletin. The latter duty only involves a few hours three times a year and therefore would not take up too much of one's spare time. By dividing up the duties as mentioned the role of the Secretary is much reduced and therefore will not be too much of a burden on the successor. It is vital that these roles are filled in the near future so as to ensure the continuation of the Society.

The accounts for the year show an increase in subscription income from £432 to £590. The excess of income over expenditure was £92. The Festival Fund (now closed) eventually reached £2,699 £1,699 donated by members and £1000 by the French Embassy. The expenses for the Festival totalled £3,665. The income from ticket sales and advertising in the programme totalled £2,362. This left a balance of £1,396. All of the artistes taking part in the Festival generously gave their services free. The Committee felt that most of the profit should be shared between those taking part and so £1000 has been sent to them. The balance will go towards future projects.

MEETING at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama at 7 pm on Wednesday, 17th May. About a dozen Members enjoyed an informal and homely Recital given by William Fong who had been bracketed second to the winner of the Alkan Festival piano competition. He gave a Recital of general interest which included, in the first half, Prokofiev's Sonata No.3 in A minor Op.28, Rachmaninoff's 'Etude-Tableaux' in E flat minor Op.39 No.5; then, in the second half, Chopin's Sonata in B flat minor Op.35 and Ravel's "Gaspard de la nuit". Alkan was represented, in the first half, by Trente Chants Op.38 No.1 in E major and "Le tambour bat aux cha-mps" Op.50 No.2.

ALKAN RECORDINGS

The catalogue of Alkan recordings continues to grow. Epic/Sony Records of Japan announce a series of Alkan recordings on 10 C.D.s played by the pianist Osamu Nakamura. The first recording has just been released in Japan and most of the works in it have not been recorded before. They are all early

works *Le chemin de fer* Op.27, *Gigue* and *Air de ballet* Op.24, *Rondeau chromatique* Op.12, *Trois andantes romantiques* Op.13, *Le preux* Op.17 and *Alleluia* Op.25.

We are pleased to hear that Stephanie McCallum has recorded the *Concerto for solo piano* Op.39 and the *Chantes* Op.70 for 2MBS FM, an Australian radio station which releases its own CDs.

Marco Polo Records have just released two Alkan CDs. The French pianist and President of the Société Alkan has recorded the *Preludes* Op.31 (complete). The other recording is by Bernard Ringeissen - his second Alkan recording - and he is playing the *Symphony* Op.39, *Ouverture* Op.39 and two *Etudes*. The reference numbers of these recordings are 8.223284 and 8.223285 respectively. Marco Polo Records are distributed in the UK by Target Records and in the U.S.A. by Harmonic Mundi -USA.

John Wells, who is now based in New Zealand, has recorded some of the organ works.

Finally, Ronald Smith's recording of the *Trois Grande Etudes* Op.76 and the *Trois Etudes de bravure* is now available in the U.S.A. on the Arabesque label.

NOTES AND NEWS

Restoration of Alkan's tomb. The money required to restore the Alkan tomb about 22,000 francs has now been raised and it is hoped that the work will soon begin. The work of restoration has been entrusted to the firm who originally provided the tomb in the nineteenth century la maison Cahen. There will be a new monument made of spotted granite from Tarn and polished. The additional lettering will be in glazed black stating "C.V. Alkan: pianiste compositeur". Alkan's sister Celeste (1811-1897) was buried in the same tomb. The French Society is very grateful for the 1000 francs which our Society was able to contribute.

The cellist, Andre Gonnet, has sent us a programme which he and his pianist, American-born John McGrew, gave in a series by candlelight in the chateau of Rochebonne at Theize. They played Schumann's "l'Andante et Variations", seldom heard now, and the Alkan 'cello sonata. They had the 'cello sonata micrographed at the "Bibliotheque Nationale" in 1966 and believe that they were the first to give a public performance of it in France in the twentieth century.

On 18th April at Fairfield Hall, Croydon, John Lenehan winner of the Alkan Piano Competition gave a recital programme that included Alkan's "Sonatine", Ravel's "Valse Nobles et Sentimentals" and Beethoven's Sonata in C minor Op.10 No.2.

On 26th September our President gave a recital at the Steinway Hall to aid the Denis Mat thews Memorial Trust. He played Beethoven's "Appassionata" sonata and the sonata Op.111, Chopin's Op.10 Studies (complete) and Alkan's "Chanson d'Amour -Chant de Mort".

Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow played Alkan's "Don Juan" Fantasy at evening concerts in Guernsey (September 18th), in Sark (19th), in Alderney (20th) and in Jersey (22nd).

Dr. John White contributed an article entitled "The Alkan Centenary (1988): A time for Recognition" to the quarterly journal, "The Music Review". It appeared in Vol.49 No.3 August 1988. Unfortunately the Volume was not published until August 1989 and this caused some problems.

The Society has given copies of Ronald Smith's CDs of the *Grande Sonate/Sonatine* and the *Etudes* Op.76 and 16 to the Guildhall Library and Brian Doyle has given them the CD of Alkan works played by Bernard Ringeissen (*Sonatine* etc.).

Stephen and Gill Hope have been made Honorary Members of the Society in recognition of their splendid work in organising the Alkan Centenary Piano Competition at the Fairfield Halls.

Billaudot are continuing to reissue Alkan works which have long been out of print. The latest to be added to their catalogue is the 11 Pieces dans le style religieux and a transcription from Handel's Messiah Op.72 for organ/harmonium or piano.

Congratulations to Harold Truscott on his recent 75th birthday. The Havergal Brian Society commemorated the event with two concerts of his music on 9th and 24th October at the British Music Information Centre. Three recordings of his piano works are available on the Altarus label and his 10th Piano Sonata will soon be released on a recording by the late John Ogdon on the same label.

We are pleased to hear that a date has now been set for the recording of Alkan's three chamber works the Violin duo Op.21, the Piano trio Op.30 and Sonate de concert Op.47. It will take place next August for EMI Records. The artistes will be those who took part in the Festival Ronald Smith, Nona Liddell and Christopher Bunting.

Review of the Alkan Society: PART III -MEMBERS

The first official list of members appeared in 1978, just a year after the foundation of the Society. The number of members was 62 and this included 8 members from overseas (5 from U.S.A., 2 from Australia and 1 from the Netherlands). About half of the Members lived in or near London and were able to attend meetings held in London. President was, of course, Ronald Smith. Vice-Presidents were Robert Collet and Dr. Hugh Macdonald. There were six Members of Committee Mrs. Jean Bartholomew, Alan Cowie, Chris Dench, Charles Hailstone, Jan Hoare and Patrick Lee. John Snelling was Treasurer and Dr. John White Secretary. I am glad to say that 27 of these Members are still with us.

The most recent list, that of 1989, shows a rather different picture. The total number is 141 and 37 of these come from overseas. The countries represented are Australia (5), Belgium (1), Canada (4), Finland (1), France (4), Japan (1), Netherlands (1), Norway (3), Sweden (1), Thailand (1), U.S.A. (11), West Germany (3) and Zimbabwe (1). Besides these, there are six honorary Members from overseas. Of the 98 Home-members only 40 live in or near London so that, although our numbers have more than doubled since 1978, there are not many more who are able to attend Meetings easily.

Our early members were mostly amateurs who had come to love the music of Alkan from the very infrequent broadcasts and the few recordings available. We now have many more professional people.

Every year a certain number of Members drift away without giving any reason for their defection. The Committee now has only four Members Howard Eldridge, Charles Hailstone (still our worthy discographer), Eliot Levin and John Newing. The Secretary, Brian Doyle, has been manfully coping with the Treasurer's work as well. Fortunately, the influx of new Members each year is usually greater than the losses and the Society continues to grow. We now have four Vice-Presidents Robert Collet, Hugh Macdonald, Richard Shaw and John White.

ALKAN and BALLET

Goodwin Sammel, one of our earliest and most faithful members, has sent us welcome news of a small new Ballet Company "LINES" which has been formed in San Francisco. It consists of about ten dancers who perform at the Theater Artaud. The choreographer is Alonzo King and the pianist David Berryessa who had been a pupil of Goodwin Sammel. In 1988 they performed the Ligetti Variations and in 1989 they gave what must be the first ever Alkan ballet. The performance was in part funded by the California Arts Council.

The music chosen was taken from the Studies in the major keys Op.35 and "Les Mois" Op.74. The programme was :-

Allegro Barbaro Op.35 No.5
Une nuit d'hiver Op.74 Suite 1 No.1
Chant d'amour/Chant de Mort Op.35 No.10
Serenade Op.74 Suite 2 No.2

The company
Solo Ballerina Katherine Warner
Marina Hotchkiss and Richard Redlefsen
Solo Ballerina Laurie Skophammer

La retraite Op.74 Suite 3 No.1
L'opera Op.74 Suite 4 No.3

Solo Ballerina Nora Heiber
Enrico Labayen, Greg Dawson and Danny
Furlong

In the programme David Berryessa writes: "In 19th-century France, Charles V. Alkan (1813- 1888) was considered a composer for connoisseurs. Now increasingly he is considered a composer for everyone. I believe he is the greatest French-born composer for keyboard between Rameau and Debussy."

OBITUARIES

JOHN OGDON. Lovers of the music of Alkan have lost another friend by the death of John Ogdon, at the comparatively early age of 52. As a youth he studied at the Royal Manchester 'College but later he had other tutors, including Egon Petri, and it was doubtless Petri who introduced him to the music of Alkan. A rich talent allied to superb technique and remarkable memory allowed him to tackle the most challenging compositions from the pianoforte repertoire, such as the Busoni Concerto. Some years ago he gave, with an American 'cellist, a performance of the Alkan 'cello sonata at the Concertgebouw at Amsterdam which was very well received and he leaves us a fine recording of the Concerto from Op.39. Only last year critics were acclaiming his performance of Sorabji's recondite and very lengthy composition 'Opus Clavicembalisticum'. All who knew him pay tribute to his great humility.

Radio 3 broadcast a tribute to John Ogdon on September 24th. Excerpts were chosen from his recordings of works by Liszt, Messiaen, Scriabin, Sorabji, Elgar, Chopin, Lutoslawski, Alwyn, Rachmaninoff and Alkan (the last movement of the Op.39 Concerto). This last movement was described as "one of his finest recordings".

FRANK HOLLAND. Members who remember our visit to the Musical Museum at Brentford in 1983 will be saddened to hear of the death of the founder and curator, Frank Holland. The museum housed Mr. Holland's large collection of player-pianos and other automatic musical instruments, a Wurlitzer organ and over 20,000 piano rolls.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

On Thursday 30th November at 7 pm at St. Martins-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square (nearest underground CHARING CROSS or LEICESTER SQUARE}. To commemorate Alkan's birthday anniversary, a Social Evening in which members will introduce their favourite Alkan recordings and will have an opportunity to hear some of the latest Alkan recordings, which will include the first of the Japanese Epic/Sony C.D. recordings released. Refreshments will be available.

Future meetings now being arranged include a talk by Ruth Jordan, the Esquisses played by Society members and, in May 1990, a joint meeting with the Liszt Society at which Ronald Smith and Leslie Howard, President of the Liszt Society, will both be present and will be playing.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The subscription rates remain unchanged:

£6 for London members

£4 for members out of London and Students

£7 for Overseas members (payable in sterling} All rates cover husband and wife membership.

Subscriptions to be sent to the Treasurer:

Elizabeth Upchurch, Wayside,
Chequers Lane, Preston, Hitchin,
Herts., SG47TY