

# THE ALKAN SOCIETY

Reg. Charity No.276199

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## **BULLETIN No. 57: SEPTEMBER 2001**

The Secretary apologises to members for the long time elapsing since the last Bulletin. The UK members have received a "mini-bulletin" containing some reviews of Ronald Smith's CD releases for APR, and associated articles, and these are summarised for overseas members here. I am having to hold the promised translation of the chapter from "Pianistes célèbres" until the next bulletin, and hope you can be patient until I have produced something reasonably accurate and literate.

### **RECORDINGS**

As previously mentioned, the recording of the chamber music, together with a selection of solo piano pieces, has been released on APR 7032 (2 CDs). The first disc contains the *Grand Duo Concertant* for violin and piano, op. 21, the *Marche funèbre* for piano, Op. 26, and the *Trio* for piano, violin and cello, Op. 30. The second contains the *Sonate de concert* for cello and piano, Op. 47, as well as three major-key *Etudes*, op. 35 nos. 10-12, the first *Chant* in E major from op. 38/1, and the *Capriccio alla soldatesca*, Op. 50 no.1. The musicians are Ronald Smith (piano), James Clark (violin) and Moray Welsh (cello). The cover correctly states that it is the first release of the premiere recordings of the chamber music. As all long-standing members will know, several recordings of the chamber music have been released since the tapes of these sessions were made in 1992 (the solo piano pieces were taped in 1994). However, these are the most complete performances, containing all repeats, and after the years of anticipation and promises, I can also say that they are the best performances. The editing has been skilfully done and I have yet to spot any joins. Better still, the playing is of a very high standard. The discs were made from long takes of complete movements, with no chance for correction of small details, but the accuracy is remarkable in such technically demanding music.

I will not go into details of the performances, but simply encourage you to obtain these fine discs and hear the music for yourself. I am pleased to say that APR have agreed a generous discount for members of the Alkan Society: the price is £20 including postage and packing for UK members, a substantial saving on their mail-order price, which itself is cheaper than in most shops. Their address is APR (Appian Publications & Recordings), PO Box 1, Wark, Hexham, Northumberland NE48 3EW; telephone 01434-220627, fax 01434-220628, e-mail [orders@aprrecordings.co.uk](mailto:orders@aprrecordings.co.uk). Non-UK members may have to add something extra for postage.

The solo piano pieces are also superbly played. I think they were recorded in a more resonant acoustic, but the difference in sound is not at all disturbing. Altogether this is another "must" for everyone's collection, to be added to Ronald Smith's reissue of the op. 39 *Etudes* on APR 7031. The booklet contains excellent programme notes by Ronald, with translations into French and German, and includes a full page to acknowledge the support of the Alkan Society.

Also available from APR is the new paperback edition of Ronald Smith's book, *Alkan - The Man, The Music*. This is the revised and enlarged edition of his two previous volumes, 432 pages in length, published by Kahn & Averill (the original two hardbacks totalled some 30 pages fewer). The mail-order price is £14.50 including p & p, which is a discount of £1 on the shop price.

This year being the 50th anniversary of Ronald's career as a recording artist, APR has also released a brand-new recording by him of three Beethoven sonatas: No.21 in C major, Op. 53 (*Waldstein*), No.23 in F minor (*Appassionata*), and the final sonata, No.32 in C minor, Op. 111. Again I can thoroughly recommend this disc (APR 5566). The works have been recorded many times before, but these are very satisfying performances, with all the technical command and intellectual rigour that one expects from a lifetime of studying, playing and teaching this music.

A review of the chamber music was included in an article by Rob Cowan in the *Independent* of 21st July 2000. His weekly "Compact Collection" is usually limited to three releases at most, the bulk of the Friday music section even in that "quality" broadsheet being devoted to popular music, so this was particularly welcome. The first part of his article covers another pianist from the (even) older generation, the 84-year-old Earl Wild in some string-orchestra versions of the Schumann and Dohnanyi piano quintets - "for readers who love their piano concertos but find chamber music too effete". He moves on: "A more recherche corrective to that age-old misconception would be the chamber music of Charles-Valentin Alkan. The *Grand duo concertant* for violin and piano rises like a summer dawn, though the "Hell" of the second movement is so dark that even a conciliatory fiddle line can't dispel the gloom. And to think that Mendelssohn played the Piano Trio while working on his own Violin Concerto. The slow movement's opening sounds like one of Mendelssohn's string quartets, but what, I wonder, would [Queen] Victoria's favourite composer have made of the tortured declamations that follow? The same APR collection also features a hyperactive Cello Sonata and a handful of solo works including the caustic *Capriccio alla soldatesca*. Pianist Ronald Smith exhibits an unflinching command of Alkan's often complex idiom and his excellent string collaborators are violinist James Clark and cellist Moray Welsh. The 1992-4 recordings were made by Nimbus but are receiving their first-ever release here."

Rob Cowan also reviews for the BBC "CD Review" on Radio 3: perhaps we can look forward to some coverage of Alkan from him in the new autumn season. Sightings of Alkan in the radio schedules have been limited as usual, although there was a recent repeat (29 July 2000) of Piers Lane's "The Piano" programme on the theme of rarities, mainly from the Husum festival, which included Ronald Smith's live performance of Alkan's *Les regrets de la nonnette* from 1995.

The discs have been favourably reviewed in *International Record Review* by Jeremy Nicholas, who describes them as "a perfect complement to APR's earlier distinguished Alkan/Smith retrospective". So far the widely-sold *Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine* have not carried reviews, but we hope that they might be persuaded at some future date.

The Symposium 1059 recording of Nicholas King's performance of organ pieces, which was advertised in the last Bulletin, sounds very good, with a significant improvement in the sound quality compared with the original cassette. Anyone without access to the scores, or absolute pitch, may be puzzled by the length of a couple of the tracks, and it is worth giving some small corrections. Please note that track 17, length 13.33, contains both Nos. 7 and 9 of the *Pieces dans le style religieux*, Op. 72: no.9 begins at 6.06. The last piece, No. 11, is contained on the last two tracks (19 and 20). These minor errors make no difference if the disc is played through as a whole, but

may cause a little confusion to anyone wishing to programme particular tracks. Symposium do not usually give timings of individual tracks, and that may explain why this small detail was not spotted.

The release was reviewed in *International Record Review* of June 2000 by Francis Knights. He describes the music as "not quite like any other French Romantic organ music, and much of it seems on a par with all but the best of Franck's organ output". He is not too complimentary about the recorded sound and complains about the sound made by changes of stops, which is rather unsympathetic, and mentions the "samizdat feel of the booklet". Surely the excellent content of the notes by Richard Shaw should outweigh any minor considerations of printing quality, which seems fine to me in any case hardly to be compared with underground Russian pamphlets! But he does reluctantly admit that it shows enterprise in being the only available recording of several of the pieces, and one should be pleased at least that *IRR* has covered the release, unlike all other periodicals I have found so far.

The Vox reissue (CDX 5151) of eight minor-key Etudes from Op. 39, played by Michael Ponti, took a long time to arrive at my shop, but were worth the wait: not so much for the Alkan but for some even more rare items. The two-CD set, entitled "Romantic Etudes for Piano", includes pieces by Moscheles (6 of the 24 etudes Op. 70, and 4 from Op.85), two Concert Etudes Op. 1 by Tausig, one by Moszkowski, the 12 Etudes caractéristiques Op. 2 by Henselt and the Great Etude in C by Rubinstein ("Staccato Study") Op. 23 No.2 - all played by Ponti -as well as Hummel's 24 Etudes, Op. 125, played by Mary-Louise Boehm. No-one would claim that all these pieces were great music, but they are well worth hearing, especially when the two-disc set, with over 75 minutes per disc, costs under £10, and the booklet contains 14 pages of detailed programme notes on every piece. Henselt, as described in Harold Schonberg's "The Great Pianists", was an even rarer performer than Alkan, having an almost morbid fear of public appearances, and his piano music requires a particularly large hand. These etudes include one of his best-known pieces, "Si oiseau j'étais, A toi je volerais!" ("If I were a bird, I'd fly to you'). As for the Alkan, the performances (recorded in 1970) are very secure, if lacking in subtlety, and (as I have reported before) containing one very strange misreading in *Le festin d'Esope* (No.12), where the tied notes in Variation 2 are played as fast repeated notes. The other Etudes on the disc are Nos. 1-3 (*Comme le vent, En rythme molossique* and *Scherzo diabolico*) and Nos. 4-7 (the *Symphonie*). The cover gives the title "Symphonies" but the name is correct in the text by William B. Ober - unlike Alkan's own name, which as almost expected was given the extra "Henri". But the rest of the article is well-informed, quirky and quite amusing at times. Several different authors contribute to the text, reflecting the various original LP issues.

Another Vox reissue, "The Romantic Piano Concerto", Volume 7 (Vox CDX 5098), includes Ponti's performance of the *Concerto da camera* No.2 in C sharp minor, its first recording (1979), with the Southwest German Chamber Orchestra, Pforzheim (near the home of one of our members!) conducted by Paul Angerer. Again, with good performances already available by Anthony Goldstone on Symposium 1062 and Marc-Andre Hamelin on Hyperion CDA 66717, the two-disc set is perhaps more interesting for the other works. The first disc has both Weber concertos and his *Konzertstück* in F minor, played by Roland Keller, as well as a *Konzertstück* by Robert Volkmann (1815-83), played by Jerome Rose. The second, besides the Alkan, has Schumann's *Introduction and Allegro appassionato* and Liszt's *Totentanz*, as well as two real rarities, Berwald's *Concerto* No.1 and Joachim Raff's *Ode to Spring*, all played by Ponti with various European orchestras - three German and one from Radio Luxembourg. The recordings are showing their age, as well as having different acoustics, but are clear enough to show details like noisy damper-pedals in some works, and again at a price of under £5 per disc and with 14 pages of programme notes (in English), this issue is good

value for anyone interested in discovering unfamiliar repertoire.

Our member Bard Dahle has discovered a disc entitled "Lost and Found Treasures of the Heifetz Legacy" on a 1997 issue from Kloss Classics. This features the Encore Duo (Sherry Kloss, violin and Mark Westcott, piano) playing twenty transcriptions by Jascha Heifetz, played on his Taroni violin of 1736, including the Alkan *Barcarolle* from the *Chants* Op. 65. The transcription was published by Carl Fischer (New York) in 1968 and a member kindly sent me a copy from the Library of Congress. There is no number for the disc that I can see, but the booklet has the address for Kloss Classics, P.O. Box 3385, Ashland, Oregon 97520 (USA). The booklet notes are extremely brief, even allowing for the need to cover fifteen composers, and I enjoyed the item on Alkan: "Charles Alkan was a mysterious figure of his time. His compositions for piano, largely forgotten, are notoriously among the most difficult ever written.

Some brand-new releases in digital recordings have also appeared. At the "completist" end of the scale is Florian Uhlig's "Venezia" on Black Box BBM 1054. This is a "themed" recording of pieces connected with Venice, the best known being Barcarolles by Chopin and Faure, and two of Mendelssohn's *Venetian Gondola Songs*. There are several rarities of diverse quality (Gibson, Abert, Galuppi, Malipiero, Marcello, Uhlig himself), two late Liszt pieces and Alkan's Barcarolle from the Op. 65 *Chants*. "black box" (the name is in lower-case) is a fairly new company which sometimes seems more concerned with style and presentation than with serious content, to judge from an interview with their representative on "CD Review". All the same, their catalogue is worth investigating, with some stimulating ideas ranging well beyond the usual classical repertoire. Uhlig plays the pieces well in general, though one would not buy the disc if Alkan were one's main interest. The booklet, by the pianist himself, is rather general in tone, with more about concepts and quotations from other writers than hard information about the pieces or the composers: Alkan and his piece are not even mentioned!

The major release this autumn is on Hyperion CDA 67218: a recital by Marc-Andre Hamelin containing the *Symphony* for solo piano, the three "Biblical" pieces (*Salut, cendre du pauvre!*, *Alleluia* and *Super flumina Babylonis*), and the *Trois morceaux dans le genre patétique*. As reported later, Hamelin has been programming the *Symphonie* in his recent concerts, though it has been in his repertoire for many years. He plays it well, of course, although for me the classic accounts by Ronald Smith and Raymond Lewenthal still have pride of place. The real revelation has to be the three Op. 15 pieces. They look so unpromising on paper, and even our President finds it hard to say much of encouragement about them, although he does point out the sheer weirdness of the third piece, *Morte*. But after hearing this performance, I am beginning to see some virtue in them. Not least is a truly excellent booklet-note by François Luguenot, the secretary of the French Alkan Society, which puts a really convincing argument for the pieces. Unlike much of Alkan's music, these pieces carry very little in the way of performing instructions -tempo., dynamics, pedalling etc. - and so it takes a creative artist to make real music out of them. The three shorter pieces are also made to sound like genuinely good music, helped by Hyperion's customary excellent recorded sound. Highly recommended! Needless to say, the reviews seen so far have been uniformly favourable: the September 2001 issues of *Gramophone* (David Fanning), *I.R.R.* (Jeremy Nicholas) and *BBC Music Magazine* (Barry Millington) are full of praise. The last movement of the *Symphony* was played on "CD Review" as a new release in September.

Averil Kovacs spotted a forthcoming release of the Cello Sonata (*Sonate de concert*, op. 47) several months ago, but it has only just appeared on Harmonia Mundi HMC 901758. The work is accompanied by shorter pieces by Liszt, most of which are the composer's arrangements of his own piano

pieces (two *Elegies*, *La lugubre gondola*, *Romance oubliée* and *Die Zelle in Nonnenwerth*), played by a young French team of Emmanuelle Bertrand (cello) and Pascal Amoyel (piano). The cello sonata is very well played. The musicians respect the score, including plenty of quieter passages, their tempi are generally close to the marked ones, and the balance between the instruments is good. I spotted one bar where the pianist played one hand in the wrong octave, but this is a minor slip in a very accurate performance. The APR by Ronald Smith and Moray Welsh remains a good choice, but you should not be disappointed if you fancy an alternative reading.

Naxos has transferred two Marco Polo recordings to its budget-price label. The set of chamber music by the Trio Alkan is not to be recommended as a first choice, but to have all three works for £4.99 is not a major investment. Bernard Ringeissen's disc of the Op. 35 major-key studies and *Scherzo diabolico* and *Le festin d'Esopo* from Op. 39 is also now on Naxos, and can be recommended. Interestingly, it is headed "Vol. I", which suggests that more Alkan from Marco Polo, played by Ringeissen and Laurent Martin, may be appearing on Naxos in due course: welcome news for anyone starting a collection but perhaps less so for those who have paid full-price already. The works with orchestra are also still available on Naxos: not great performances, but interesting for Klindworth's orchestration of the Concerto for solo piano (first movement) and Hugh Macdonald's version of the Andante romantique, here called "Concerto da camera no.3".

Finally, Hamelin's latest release contains no Alkan, but is a stimulating collection of encores entitled "Kaleidoscope" after the Josef Hofmann piece. It is a more serious album than, say Stephen Rough's three "Piano Albums", but has enough fireworks and rarities to interest most Hamelin fans, including two of his own minor-key studies: a stunning reinterpretation of the Paganini-Liszt "La campanella" and an amusing Scarlatti parody. As usual it is on Hyperion (CDA 67275).

The latest CD from the Husum festival (Danacord DACOCD 559) is the usual eclectic mixture, with seven pianists including the Duo Tal & Groethuysen, as well as three songs from Jody Karin Applebaum, a.k.a. Mrs Hamelin; the major-length piece is a real rarity, the three-movement Sonata by Antoine Mariotte (1875-1944), played by Marie-Catherine Girod. As I wrote in the booklet, the entry in the 1984 "Grove" for Mariotte is even shorter than the one for the fictitious Dag Hemik Esum-Hellerup (an editor with no sense of humour deleted him from the paperback edition, though I gather that the new edition does have an entry on spoof entries), so he is certainly at the "hens' teeth" end of the rarity scale. But the sonata is of considerable interest, and this is its only available recording. Hamelin is heard for once in non-virtuoso mode, as accompanist as well as soloist in excerpts from Janacek's "On an overgrown path" and two of his own pieces (see later).

Of somewhat tangential interest is a release in the Hyperion series of Romantic Piano Concertos, in which Artur Pizarro plays works by Jose Vianna da Motta (CDA 67163), described by one writer as "the Portuguese Grieg". Da Motta (1868-1948) was an early exponent of Alkan's music, and he arranged some of his pedal-piano works for two hands. His Concerto in A major is an early work of limited merit, but the *Ballada* for solo piano and *Fantasia Dramática* for piano and orchestra are more distinguished. Pizarro gives excellent performances with the Orquestra Gulbenkian, conducted by Martyn Brabbins: the orchestral works were recorded in Lisbon shortly after what was probably their first ever (Concerto) and second (Fantasia) public performances in July 1999.

## CONCERTS

A small audience was in St John's, Smith Square, on 31st January, for Mark Latimer's unusual recital of Alkan's *Concerto for solo piano* and his own suite for jazz trio, *Exhibitionist at the Pictures*, but it would

have been even smaller without a good number of Alkan Society members, for which Mr Latimer was very grateful. His performance of the Concerto was less controlled than I had heard in Bristol: very fast, with a tendency to get faster where the music allowed, and over-pedalled. It was impressive on a superficial level, and the audience seemed to enjoy it, but we have heard far better from Ronald Smith, Hamelin and Jack Gibbons. All credit to him for programming it, though, and for daring to play such a completely contrasting second half. His jazz suite -preceded by the same two musical jokes as in Bristol ("Moonlight" Sonata becoming *Night and Day*, and Ravel's *Le gibet* transformed into *'Round Midnight*) -was not to everyone's taste, but the fluency of all the players -piano, bass and drums -had to be admired. I notice from his discography on the programme that he has also recorded Reger's Bach and Telemann Variations in a live performance in France (on Cyron Media), as well as his Variations and Fugues as Volume 1 of his complete piano works (UEA Records 1995), and four jazz albums, two on Cyron and two on Spotlight. Obviously this is a highly individual musician who does not go for the easy or popular repertoire. Having heard his Alkan, I cannot say that I shall look too hard for the Reger, whose piano writing can be even denser and needs someone of Hamelin's skill and intellect to make sense of it. (Hamelin has recorded the Bach and Telemann Variations for Hyperion.)

*The Guardian* of February 3rd contained a review of the concert by John Fordham, headed "Firestorm of sound". He rated the concert with four stars ("Recommended" rather than "Unmissable", but better than "Enjoyable", "Mediocre" or "Terrible"). He began "It was a mild disappointment to find that the name of Alkan really does turn up in the tributaries of 19th-century musicology. The little-known French pianist composer's circumstances seem to echo those of his young piano-virtuoso champion in uncanny ways, for a start. There have even been suspicions that Latimer might have invented the mysterious Alkan and his hour-long unaccompanied piano concerto. Yet Alkan is in the reference books, an assumed name for one Charles-Henri-[sic] Valentin Morhange - a French keyboard genius to challenge Liszt and Brahms, whose friends included Chopin and Victor Hugo, yet whose insularity kept him off the Paris recital circuit, locked inside the world of his own obsessively complex compositions. Latimer delivered Alkan's Concerto for Solo Piano as the first half of his St John's show (Exhibitionist at the Pictures) and a somewhat unexpectedly straightforward jazz trio set as the second. The Alkan concerto is in three breathtaking movements, the first alone running to 1400 bars (more than Beethoven's entire Hammerklavier Sonata, as Latimer points out ). [ And Raymond Lewenthal before him -Ed. ] The piano almost sounded like a small orchestra in Latimer's hands, and an orchestra calling on a medley of musical references from the baroque to the modern era Alkan never encountered at that. An opening of jackhammer chords is only fitfully alleviated as a gentler lyrical line develops into a firestorm of sound. A hyperbolic reiteration of thunderous climaxes and brief retreats characterises the entire work, which also suggests everything from battlefields to pealing church-bells, to fairground roundabouts and speeding trains. Its fury and impatience with conventional narrative development makes the concerto's obscurity unsurprising. But Latimer's single-minded inspiration about it may change all that. When the dust had settled after the interval, Latimer's classy jazz trio (Mario Castronari on bass, Harold Fisher on drums) first explored standard songs with a diffident, understated elegance that initially made it hard to believe that the same player was at the keyboard. Monk's Round Midnight and an uptempo bop original were followed by Latimer's Exhibitionist at the Pictures suite, a pleasant blend of soft funky grooves, Latin rhythms, urbane walking-blues and fast postbop, with some very inventive improvisation from Castronari. But the free-jazz finale, a piano/bass duet developing into flying, Cecil Taylor-like percussive chords, both made the connection with the Alkan concerto and seemed closer to Latimer's idiosyncratic soul."

Moving on to Marc-Andre Hamelin's weekend at Blackheath in May 2000, some larger audiences

enjoyed five concerts of stimulating programmes containing both standard and obscure works. Naturally the Alkan Society was well represented, including members from Stockport in N.W. England and Brooklyn, N. Y., particularly at the final recital containing Alkan's Symphony. He had a small lapse of memory in the third movement, but it was a good performance, which further improved when he played it at the Husum piano festival three months later, shortly before taking it into the recording studio. The Independent contained a curious review of the weekend by Keith Potter, describing his "groupies" as "an earnest-looking bunch to whom it is unwise to submit the practice of unreserved seating, as they're likely to squabble for their ringside seats. II Jan Hoare thinks that Mr Potter may have been deprived of his own desired seat by the block reserved for friends of Nikolai Kapustin, whose jazzy 2nd Sonata was given its U.K. premiere in the same recital. Writing of the two-piano recital with Piers Lane, Mr Potter remarked that Hamelin appeared to be "oddly stiff in posture and, while playing, rarely shows any facial expression below a pair of frequently arching eyebrows". Surely Hamelin's stamina in the huge and difficult works has something to do with his economy of movement; and who needs grimaces when his fingers can do the talking? Curiously, of the Alkan work, he described it as a "Hamelin party piece which...he's played with greater insight and accuracy in the past. II He must have been thinking of the Concerto, since I do not recall Hamelin's playing the Symphony in public before this recital. He did not think much of the Kapustin either: "...a work that consists mainly of mainstream jazz gestures spiced with rampant virtuoso figurations" and suggested that he might more profitably explore Conlon Nancarrow's pieces for player-piano, which are mostly unplayable even by Hamelin's two hands. I think that Kapustin's music is well worth further exploration -try Steven Osborne's recital on Hyperion for a start, which contains some delightful Jazz Preludes as well as the first two sonatas. There is also a Toccata by him on Hamelin's new album "Kaleidoscope" (see above). Jan Hoare has started a Kapustin Society which can supply scores: details from him at 9 Burnside Close, Twickenham, TW11ET, +44-(0)20-8287-5518; e-mail KapustinSoc@cs.com

After five concerts in three days, Hamelin looked quite tired and was threatening to change his programme in Munich only a few days later. However, I was pleased to hear that he kept to his original plans in the end and gave a good account of the Schumann C major Fantasy and Alkan's Concerto, as reported by a friend in the area.

## PUBLICATIONS

I am pleased to report that *Les regret, de la nonnette* has been published by Trinity College of Music, London, in an album of pieces for Grade 6 students. The ten pieces -three classical, three romantic, three 20th century and one study -are in the syllabus for 2001, but the album is aimed at any pianist looking for a varied repertoire of moderate difficulty. The piece has been edited by the chief examiner, Nicholas King, who is one of our Vice-Presidents as well as a former pupil of Ronald Smith. Trinity has recently moved its headquarters to Greenwich, so the address and phone numbers given in the score may not be very useful. If you have to use ordinary mail, it should be forwarded even if this is wrong, so for the record the head office is given as Trinity College London, 89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TP, phone +44 (0)2078206100, fax 6161. The e-mail and web site should have remained the same, and these are [info@trinitycollege.co.uk](mailto:info@trinitycollege.co.uk) and [www.trinitycollege.co.uk](http://www.trinitycollege.co.uk) Most music shops should be able to supply the album easily.

The September/October 2001 issue of *Piano Magazine* (Rhinegold Publishing Ltd), contains a review of new publications by John York which includes the *Etude Alla-Barbaro*, published by Billaudot, a piece discovered not long ago by Marc-Andre Hamelin in a printed edition. York writes: "Charles-Valentin Alkan, extreme composer-pianist, contemporary of Chopin, purveyor of

those interminable, transcendently difficult etudes which some people admire greatly, did write a few shorter works that normal pianists can tackle and still live to tell the tale! Gerard Billaudot edition of Paris sent me Etude Alla-Barbaro, a two-minute blast of pyrotechnics to rival any of those noisy, thrilling toccata-style pieces of Bartók, Prokofiev, Debussy, Sancan [who he? Ed.] et al, well worth the effort required to handle all the chords and leaps -and hugely entertaining! It should be available from United Music Publishers in the U.K., although my local shop has had some difficulty in obtaining it so far: UMP first sent the *Allegretto alia barbaresca* from Op. 39, and now having been told not to send the *Allegro barbaro* from Op. 35 either, seem reluctant to send anything at all... So I cannot comment on this piece myself yet. Hamelin had hoped to include it and the Zimmerman etude on his Alkan disc with the Symphony, but was not able to in the end.

#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

It is hard to believe that our President, Ronald Smith, will be celebrating his 80th birthday in January 2002. He will be giving a lunchtime concert in the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, on January 8th, at (I think) 1 pm, to mark the occasion. The official programme is Schubert's *Wanderer* Fantasy and Chopin's Op. 10 Etudes, but Ronald has hinted that there is likely to be a "surprise" item for members of the Alkan Society...

Marc-Andre Hamelin has a recital in the Harrods piano series on the South Bank on Thursday 11 April 2002 in the Queen Elizabeth Hall at 7.45 pm. (Box office 020-7960-4203.) His programme includes the Alkan Symphony, as well as the Bach-Busoni Chaconne, Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* Op. 12 and his own *Con intimissimo sentimento*. The last is a set of easy(ish) pieces which he hopes that other pianists than himself may be able to play! Two of them appear on the latest Husum CD (details above): a Music Box and a slightly zany paraphrase of a Pergolesi song. For German residents, Hamelin has a recital in Bremen, at the Glocke Bremen, on 10 November 2001 at 20.00 - programme not known to me. Details from *Artepiano*, 04 21/23 05 87, e-mail [artepiano@freenet.de](mailto:artepiano@freenet.de) and [www.pianovision.de](http://www.pianovision.de)

Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, is inaugurating an Alkan Society Piano Scholarship, thanks to the enterprise, generosity and hard work of our member Ken Smith. It is open to students by competition, and they must, naturally, include a piece by Alkan in their recital. We have made a modest contribution towards the fund and hope that members may wish to add some support as individuals. Ronald Smith has generously offered to give a recital to give a significant start to the scheme, and this will be on Friday 2nd November 2001 in Fitzwilliam College Chapel at 8.00 p.m. His programme will be the Bach-Busoni Chaconne, Chopin's Op. 25 Studies and a group of Alkan pieces: Chant no. 1 from Op. 38, Song of the Mad Woman, Les regrets de la nonnette, Le tambour bat aux champs and Le festin d'Esopé. The concert will be introduced by the broadcaster and writer Humphrey Burton CBE, and the first winner of the scholarship will be announced at a reception in the Chapel crypt. Tickets are £10 from the Fitzwilliam College Porter's Lodge (01223-332000) and other details may be obtained from the College at Cambridge CB3 0DG, or the college website. I am sorry about the late notice of this concert, but hope that some members may be able to attend.

One other event of interest: Ronald Smith will be giving ~ piano masterclass for Whitstable Music Club at Whitstable Methodist Church, Argyle Road, Whitstable, Kent on Saturday 9th March 2002: class 2-5 p.m., recital by the five participants and Ronald himself at 6 pm. Tickets are £4 at the door or on 01227-262536. Further details from Mrs L. Farrington, 41 Grasmere Road, Chestfield, Kent CT5 3NA, tel. 01227-792497.

**PETER GROVE**