



THE ALKAN SOCIETY

(Registered Charity number 276199)

<http://www.alkansociety.org>

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BULLETIN no. 82 March 2010

AGM and Colloquium

NOTICE of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of The Alkan Society

The Annual General Meeting of The Alkan Society will be held on 26 June 2010 at 54, Millfields Road, London E5 0SB starting **punctually** at 2 P.M., prior to the Society's Second Colloquium on Alkan's *Esquisses* (see below). The Agenda will be sent to members in due course with the necessary 28 days' notice.

The Esquisses Opus 63

A Second Alkan Society Colloquium

Following on the very successful Colloquium led by Richard Murphy at Messrs. Schott on November 18th 2008, the composer John White most kindly invited us to his home last year for a second colloquium. The occasion, alas, had to be delayed due to flood damage. This has now been put right and the Colloquium will now be held on June 26th starting at 5 past 2 o'clock (immediately following the Society's AGM)

Members are once more invited to prepare one or more *Esquisse(s)* for presentation and discussion (but of course this is not obligatory!) Numbers: 1, 4, 11, 12, 17, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33, 43 & Laus Deo (unnumbered) were played at the first Colloquium, but this does not preclude further comments being made on them. Richard, who will lead once more, particularly requests anyone who has a score to bring it. Members are equally welcome to prepare other related works.

The address is **54, Millfields Road, London E5 0SB** , which can be reached by buses:

- 38 from Victoria, Tottenham Court Road
- 48 from London Bridge, Liverpool Street
- 55 Oxford Circus, Tottenham Court Road
- 253 Euston
- 254 Euston, Manor House

(from any of these alight at Clapton Pond).

Hackney Central and Hackney Downs stations are nearby.

Please inform the Secretary secretary@alkansociety.org (postal address as at the head of this bulletin) at least 7 days beforehand that you intend to come.

We are Seeking a Treasurer!!

The Society's Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Averil Kovacs, who has so excellently served the Society for some years in these positions, is now retiring from these posts. We seek a volunteer from Members to undertake these important roles. Averil tells us it is basically a matter of accurate record-keeping, requiring simple use of Excel spreadsheet data base to note receipts & payments, banked monies, and the list of members' names, contact details, renewal dates and so on. The Treasurer will need to have e-mail access. There are normally four committee meetings a year in Central London. Would anyone who may be interested please contact the Society's Secretary. Those who require more information on the duties involved may contact Averil at TreasurerAlkSoc@aol.com, or write c/o the Secretary's address.

Alkaniana

The Alkan-Masarnau Correspondence

The correspondence

A remarkable discovery, of a sequence of correspondence from Alkan extending over forty years, from 1834 to 1874, may transform our understanding of Alkan (and also shed light on many aspects of music history and practice in 19th century France).

About a year ago your Editor was contacted by Dr. Gemma Salas Vilar, of the Conservatorio Superior at Ovideo. She is an expert on Spanish music of the early nineteenth century, and was researching the composer and pianist Santiago de Masarnau (1805-1882). (She has edited a modern collection of Masarnau's piano pieces). She sent me a copy of a remarkable unpublished letter, which she had discovered in the Spanish Archives, from Alkan to Masarnau of March 1850, and asked for some background about Alkan himself. With her permission, I shared this letter with François Luguenot of the Société Alkan. We both agreed with Dr. Salas that the letter was extremely important, although from our point of view of course more in terms of Alkan's biography than of Masarnau's.

Until this time Masarnau had figured in Alkan's biography merely as a name, the dedicatee of the 1837 *Trois études de bravoure, dédiés à son ami Santiago de Masarnau*. This letter however indicated a warm friendship (the use of *tu* throughout), contained an acute description of Alkan's feelings of anomie, and also carried fascinating remarks about Chopin and how his death had affected Alkan. It also mentions in passing 'I have been working a little recently on a piano equipped with a pedalboard'

It now transpires that this letter is part of an extensive series from Alkan to Masarnau, which are preserved in the Sanjurjo Collection of the Spanish Archives. It is not at present clear how they entered this collection. The correspondence is not complete: we do not have any of the letters from Masarnau to Alkan, which are often mentioned (they were presumably destroyed in Paris with the rest of Alkan's own papers) and it is clear from internal evidence that some of Alkan's letters to Masarnau are missing. The sequence, which has now been digitised for the internet by PARES (<http://pares.mcu.es> - the portal of the Spanish National Historical Archive, run by the Ministry of Culture), appears to include 38 letters, (some with envelopes and covers), two envelopes detached from their contents, and a poster for one of Alkan's 'Petits Concerts' of 1874 (illustrated below). I write 'appears to' because I have only seen the sequence 'virtually'.

It is perhaps possible from a first overview to propose four 'periods' of this correspondence. Nine letters from 1834-1837 display a passionate friendship in which Alkan discusses his emotions and personality with a frankness unparalleled anywhere else in his correspondence. A group of about 15 letters, most of them undated and many of them only brief notes, can probably be assigned to the period 1838-1843 when Masarnau was mostly in Paris. There are four letters to Masarnau in Madrid in the period 1848-1856. Finally there are 10 letters, and the concert poster, in the period 1868-1874; following which there are no letters, although Masarnau lived until 1882 (and Alkan of course until 1888).

What is clear from a first glance is that the wealth of information and references which the letters contain (not to mention the varying legibility of Alkan's hand) means that serious study needs to be devoted to them before publishing transcriptions or commentaries. Your Society hopes to cooperate with Dr. Vilar and the Société Alkan to enable a full critical edition of these letters to be published. We will keep members informed of progress.

Who was Santiago Masarnau?

Santiago Fernández de Masarnau was born in Madrid 1805 to a family with close connections to the Spanish aristocracy and court. Not surprisingly, the major sources I have found for Masarnau's life are in Spanish; the web site of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a religious organisation of which in 1839 he became a leading member, subsequently leading its Spanish section (as a consequence of which he is presently a candidate for beatification), and a biography, also largely concerned with the Society, published in 1974. Masarnau's life is particularly coloured by the complex political history of his country in the 19th century. Like the life of Alkan, the life of Masarnau seems to have taken many unexpected turnings, and contains many unelucidated mysteries. And, also as with Alkan, the one side we have of their mutual correspondence may raise rather more questions than it solves.....

n° 642 Colec. SANJURJO 25

SALONS ÉRARD; 13, RUE DU MAIL * SANJURJO *

DEUXIÈME ANNÉE.

SIX PETITS CONCERTS DE MUSIQUE CLASSIQUE,

POUR
PIANO SEUL, A 2 & A 4 MAINS;
PIANO CONCERTANT, OU AVEC ACCOMPAGNEMENT,
& PIANO A CLAVIER DE PÉDALES;
DONNÉS PAR M.

CH. VIN ALKAN AÎNÉ,

LES JEUDIS SOIRS : 19 FÉVRIER; 5 ET 19 MARS; 2, (Jendi-Saint), 16 ET 30 AVRIL 1874, A 9 HEURES très-précises.
* Cembalo a Pedale; Pedal-Flügel.

PROGRAMMES : * *

PROGRAMME I.
Première Partie :

I. SICILIENNE, et 1^{er} ALLEGRO, de Deux CONCERTOS pour Clavecin : HANDEL.
II. TROIS PRÉLUDES, de l'œu : 28, de : CHOPIN.
III. DEUX CHORAUX :
« Christ était couché dans les liens de la mort : »
« Ce jour est si fécond en ineffables joies : »
et FUGUE, en Sol, pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales : J : S : BACH.

Intermède :

A. NOCTURNE, en Si maj :
B. 2^e MARCHÉ, à 4 Mains, de l'œu : 40 :
C. N^o 6, du 3^e RECUEIL DE CHANTS, pour Piano ;
D. N^o 7, des 13 PRIÈRES, œu : 64, pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales; et CH : V^o ALKAN.
E. GAVOTTA, du Père MARTINI, transcrite, id. ibid.)

Deuxième Partie :

I. SONATE, op : 109, de : BEETHOVEN.
II. DEUX TRANSCRIPTIONS, pour Piano seul, de l'ALCESTE, et de l'IPHIGÉNIE EN TAURIDE, de : GLUCK.
III. N^{os} 3 et 4, des VEILLÉES, (Nähererübungen), œu : 132; pour Piano, Clarinette et Alto : SCHUMANN.

PROGRAMME II.
Première Partie :

I. SONATE, de l'œu : 2, de : BEETHOVEN.
II. ANDANTE, et ALLEGRETTO, pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales : MENDELSSOHN
III. Le 2^e LIVRE, de l'œu : 94 de : SCHUBERT.

Intermède :

ADAGIO, et SALTARELLE, pour Piano et Violoncelle. CH : V^o ALKAN.

Deuxième Partie :

I. DEUX CHORAUX :
« O chère âme, souviens-toi : »
« Adieu seul soit gloire au plus haut des cieux : »
pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales : J : S : BACH.
II. ARIA, et ALLEGRO, pour Piano : D : SCARLATTI.
III. POLONAISE, et SCHERZO : WEBER.

PROGRAMME III.
Première Partie :

I. PASTORALE, pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales : J : S : BACH.
II. 2^e SÛTE; pour Voix et Piano : SCHUMANN.
III. MAZURKA, et FANTAISIE : CHOPIN.

Intermède :

A. N^o 1, des ÉTUDES, dans tous les Tons majeurs.
B. 1^{er} MORCEAU, du 2^e CONCERTO DA CAMERA.
C. 3 Anciennes MÉLODIES JUIVES, arrangées pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales : CH : V^o ALKAN.
D. N^o 2, du 1^{er} RECUEIL DE CHANTS; œu : 38

Deuxième Partie :

I. a. CANON ; SCHUMANN.
et b. FUGUE, pour Piano à Pédales : J : S : BACH.
II. Sic, pour Voix et Piano : MENDELSSOHN
III. TROIS TRANSCRIPTIONS, pour Piano seul :
I. ANDANTE DU CONCERTO, en Sol, de : BEETHOVEN.
II. ANDANTE, en Ut, de la 36^e SYMPHONIE de : HAYDN.
III. MENUET, de la SYMPHONIE, en Sol min : de : MOZART.

PROGRAMME IV.
(MI-PARTIE SPIRITUELLE)
Première Partie :

I. ROMANZA, (Tutti et Solos), du 8^e CONCERTO; arrangée pour Piano seul : MOZART.
II. DEUX MARCHES, à 4 Mains, de l'œu : 45, de : BEETHOVEN.
III. CAPRICCIO, et ÉTUDE, de : MENDELSSOHN

Intermède :

I. N^o 2, du 4^e RECUEIL, (inédit), DE CHANTS pour Piano : œu :
II. MARCHÉ FUNÈBRE, et MARCHÉ TRIOMPHALE.
III. a. RÉCITATIF, et AIR, du MESSIE de HANDEL; transcrits pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales; et b. Dernier N^o des 13 PRIÈRES; id. CH : V^o ALKAN.
Ibid.

Deuxième Partie :

I. TRIO, pour Piano, Violon et Violoncelle : HAYDN.
II. DEUX CHORAUX :
« Pleure, ô mortel sur tes nombreux péchés : »
« Comme belle luit l'Étoile du matin : »
pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales : J : S : BACH.
III. DEUX PIÈCES, pour Clavecin seul; et Clavecin, Violon et Violoncelle : RAMEAU.

PROGRAMME V.
Première Partie :

I. CONCERTO, en Si min. : avec Accompagnement d'Orchestre (Redemandé) : HUMMEL.
II. PRÉLUDE, et GIGUE, de : J : S : BACH.
III. ANDANTE CON VARIAZIONI, à 4 Mains : MOZART.

Intermède :

I. PRÉLUDE, pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales :
II. a. LA PAQUE, b. SÉRÉNADE, c. NUIT D'ÉTÉ; des MOIS, pour Piano seul : CH : V^o ALKAN.
III. ÉTUDE, en Ut dièse, avec accompagnement d'Orchestre :

Deuxième Partie :

I. FANTAISIE, pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales : J : S : BACH.
II. CAVATINA, du 13^e QUATUOR; arrangée pour Piano seul : BEETHOVEN.
III. SCHERZO, et MAZURKA, de : CHOPIN.

PROGRAMME VI.
Première Partie :

I. QUINTETTE, pour Piano, Hautbois, Clarinette, Cor et Basson : MOZART.
II. a. NOCTURNE, en Ut min : de : J : FIELD.
b. NOCTURNE, en Ut min : également; de : CHOPIN.
III. DEUX PIÈCES, pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales, de : HANDEL & KESSLER.

Intermède :

DUO, pour Piano et Violon : CH : V^o ALKAN.

Deuxième Partie :

I. LARGHETTO, du Premier CONCERTO : CHOPIN.
II. USE PIÈCE, pour Clavecin, de : COUPERIN.
III. a. CHORAL :
« Ma voix vers toi s'élève, ô Seigneur Jésus-Christ : »
b. TOCCATA, en Fa; pour Piano à Clavier de Pédales : J : S : BACH.

** Des Affiches et des Programmes, Ultérieurs et Spéciaux, donneront, pour chacun des Six Petits Concerts, les Indications complémentaires de la plupart des Ouvrages exécutés; ainsi que les Noms des Artistes qui se feront entendre dans les Morceaux Concertants, etc.

On pourra se procurer à l'avance des Billets, Simples ou d'Abonnement, aux Adresses suivantes :
MM. BRANDUS et C^o, Éditeurs de Musique, 97, Rue Richelieu ; MM. DURAND, SCHENEWERK et C^o, Éditeurs, 4, Place de la Madeleine ;
Et Maison ÉRARD, 13, Rue du Mail.

Prix du Billet (numéroté) : 6 francs.
Abonnement, pour les Six Séances : 30 francs.

RUE BERGÈRE, 20 A PARIS. — 1322-3.

Alkan's Petits Concerts at Érard: Programme for February-April 1874 (from the Masarnau papers in the Sanjurjo Collection, Spanish National Historical Archive). The items include, amongst others, previously unrecorded transcriptions for the unpublished '3 Anciennes Mélodies Juives' (for pédalier), and, for piano, of a gavotte by Martini, and of the slow movement of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto. Note Alkan's typical and determinedly Germanic programming, even in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.

Life at Court was highly dependent on royal favour, and Masarnau senior, who held a secretarial post, was obliged for unclear reasons to quit his privileges as a Gentleman of the Household in the 1820s. However, his son Santiago proved to be a musical prodigy and was able in his childhood to participate in the musical life of the Escorial, performing on the organ before King Ferdinand VII (including some of his own compositions) when he was only ten years old. Following the family's eviction from the Court, Santiago abandoned his original intentions of a career in engineering, and went to study music in Paris. He may have been influenced in the decision to leave Spain by political sympathies with the liberal insurgency that sought to depose the King in these years.

For twenty years Masarnau divided his life between Paris, London and Madrid. In both Paris and London he was close to the Spanish composer José Melchor Gomis (1791-1836), himself a Spanish rebel living in exile. Gomis, who wrote some successful operas in Paris and got some respectful reviews from Berlioz, was also active in London, and perhaps introduced Masarnau to London musical life. As a consequence of his studies and work in Paris and London, Masarnau became acquainted with Cramer, Monsigny, Rossini, Paganini, and, it appears, Mendelssohn, who is said to have admired Masarnau's nocturne, *Spleen*. Three *Scherzini* of Masarnau's were published in London in 1828, at a time when Gomis was also publishing Spanish-style keyboard pieces there. Other documents in the Spanish Archives include receipts from Clementi in London for pianos purchased by Masarnau and Gomis. Masarnau also became a friend of the English pianist and teacher Henry Ibbot Field (1797-1848), known as 'Field of Bath' (who interestingly became a Catholic convert in 1835).

And, as is now clear, in Paris around 1834 (the earliest letter is dated September 1834), Masarnau became an intimate friend of Alkan. Indeed it seems very likely he was involved in Alkan's decision to make his sole visit to England, where he played at Bath (in 1834 some of Alkan's piano works were published by Cocks in London, two of them dedicated to members of the Field family). Moreover, Alkan, in one of his letters (August 1835), refers to a letter (now lost, alas) which he wrote to Masarnau from England. While in Paris Masarnau became, at Rossini's recommendation, the music teacher of the daughters of the Infante Prince Francisco de Paula. The correspondence mentions two female pupils 'passed on' to Alkan when Masarnau left Paris – perhaps they were these. Perhaps Masarnau was Alkan's informant on Spanish music, as mentioned in his letter to Fétis (see ASB 76) – perhaps it was through Masarnau that Alan was inspired to write his *Zorzico* – the letters inspire many 'perhapses', which is one reason why some time is necessary to carry out research before jumping to conclusions.

In 1838, whilst in Paris following a stay in London, Masarnau had a profound religious experience which was to transform his life. As a consequence he determined to devote himself to the poor. In 1839 he came into contact with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the Parisian parish of St. Louis d'Antin. The Society had been founded in 1833 by a charismatic 20-year old lawyer, Frédéric Ozanam (who was beatified in 1997), and was conceived as a Christian reaction to Saint-Simonism (which we know was attractive to many musicians including Ferdinand Hiller and Félicien David, although it invoked the disgust of Alkan's hero Mendelssohn). The Society was dedicated to improving the lot of the poor; and although a lay Catholic organisation, it had a strictly male membership. 'The rules adopted were very simple; it was forbidden to discuss politics or personal concerns at the meetings, and it was settled that the work should be the service of God in the persons of the poor, whom the members were to visit at their own dwellings and assist by every means in their power. The service of the members was to embrace, without distinction of creed or race, the poor,

the sick, the infirm, and the unemployed.’¹ Masarnau had found his life’s work; he devoted himself to the Society and became treasurer of the St. Louis d’Antin chapter. Not surprisingly during this period he turned more to the composition of Church music than of salon items.

When Masarnau returned permanently to Spain in 1843 he remained concerned with music, teaching in his brother’s school, and contributing to a number of critical and artistic journals. But his main work was the establishment of the Society in his own country. This proved however not to be straightforward – the Spaniards were suspicious of this ‘foreign’ organisation and of its apparently ‘secular’ nature. Eventually in 1850 the Society in Spain was formally founded with the support of Pope Gregory XVI, after which it grew dramatically. Its success apparently aroused some political opposition - in 1868 the Society was forcibly dissolved by the Spanish state and its property seized. It is interesting that this period seems to coincide with the resumption of the Alkan–Masarnau correspondence. In 1874 – the year of the last letter (as far as we know) from Alkan – the Society in Spain was allowed to re-establish itself, and Masarnau continued to lead it until his death in 1882.

A False Alarm



10 March 1912
Fanelli

Ernest Fanelli in 1912

not a French rendering of Welsh). Although he was claimed by George Antheil (the self-styled ‘bad boy of music’) as an original genius from whom Debussy stole all his good ideas, he seems to have been not much more than a part-time percussionist. In 1912, seeking work as a copyist with Gabriel Pierné, he gave the organist a score which he said he had composed

It was with surprise that your Editor discovered recently on Wikipedia – now of course the ultimate authority on everything – that Alkan had a previously unknown disciple, the eccentric composer (or, according to opinion, utter charlatan), Ernest Fanelli (1860-1917). Further investigation traced this allegation to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, where the article on Fanelli, by W. Rosar, boldly states that he studied at the Paris Conservatoire in the 1870s, where ‘his teachers included [...] Valentin Alkan’. ‘Shurely shome mishtake’, as the editor of *Private Eye* likes to say – members will be aware of C-V Alkan’s painful departure from that institution in 1848 - although Fanelli may perhaps have come into contact at that time with the composer’s brother Napoleon Alkan who held a post there.

C-V Alkan, if he ever did encounter him, would have been unlikely to have been much enamoured of Fanelli (the surname is Italian,

¹ Catholic Encyclopaedia.

30 years earlier, a symphonic poem entitled *Thebes*. Pierné thought it was a masterpiece and had it performed, giving rise to substantial controversy.

Most of Fanelli's other works (or alleged works) appear to be lost, which your Editor ventures to suggest – having now heard the only available recording of *Thebes* – is no bad thing. In the meantime he has corrected the Wikipedia article, adding a description, from a 1912 essay published by M. D. Calvacoressi on the composer, of Fanelli's *L'effroi de la soleil*:

"A severed head bounces from the scaffold, rolls over hills and dales, the executioner vainly pursuing it [...] whilst torrents of blood cover the whole landscape."

Is it entirely irrelevant that the issue of the *Musical Times*, from which this comes, is dated April 1st?

Music and Musicians

Christophe Henry plays Alkan's Pédalier: Paris, 14 November 2009



Christophe Henry at the key (and pedal) board of Alkan's pédalier, and Thierry Maniguet

Members of the Société Alkan celebrated the 25th anniversary of their pioneering organisation in a remarkable manner – a private recital, in the Musée de la musique in Paris, by Christophe Henry on Alkan's own pédalier. This unique event took place at 10.30 in the morning, before the museum opened, and was introduced by Thierry Maniguet of the museum's staff. The restoration was significantly assisted by the Société with the cooperation of M. Maniguet and

others. M. Maniguet introduced us to the instrument (an Erard) and explained its background and history. M. Henry, who played two pieces by Alkan and two by Schumann, had in effect both to reinvent and learn the forgotten technique for handling the pédalier; his efforts were more than vindicated by his spirited and convincing playing.

There can be no doubt on this evidence that the pédalier is an instrument 'in its own right' and that transcriptions for duet or for organ cannot substitute. Let us hope that this wonderful initiative by the Société Alkan – to which, and to whose indefatigable activist François Luguenot we offer our congratulations - will lead, not only to further recitals, but also to recordings. Your Editor was permitted to video the event, although for reasons of intellectual property it is not permitted to release any of this on YouTube or elsewhere – still, at least the event is recorded for posterity.

Leslie Howard Recital: London, 18 November 2009

The Alkan Society's President – who is of course also President of the Liszt Society – gave an inspiring tribute to the eponyms of both at a jointly organised recital at Steinway's London showroom in November.

In the first half we heard nos. 1 to 4 of the third year of Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinage*. (S163). Written in 1877 these pieces are on the border of Liszt's last, enigmatic, piano style. The first piece (*Angéelus*), dedicated to Liszt's grand-daughter, is the most straightforward (indeed to this writer verging on the jejune), but the other three are in a different class. All are inspired by the park of the Villa d'Este, outside Rome, nos. 2 and 3 being meditations on the park's cypresses and the fourth an evocation of its famous fountains.

In all of these Howard's technique was masterly, but he brought a glowing intensity to the two threnodies devoted to the cypresses which was outstanding. These dark pieces are closely related to each other – the second, with its irresistible echo at its opening of the prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* seems in some way a mystic reinvention of the first. Howard contrived to make the music simultaneously massy and liquid – like, indeed, the trees it evokes. The transparencies of the fountains, finely rendered without a trace of preciousness, made a welcome contrast of light.

The second half brought Alkan's *Symphonie* from the op. 39. I had not previously heard Howard playing Alkan, and the first, wonderful, sensation, was that this was an irresistably 'Lisztian' performance in the best sense of the word – rich, colourful and sensitive to the musical ideas, without being distracted by the technical difficulties; understanding, rather, that they were incidental, the necessary underpinning to the musical thought.

These triumphant performances left their audience appreciating both composers more profoundly, as well as admiring the élan of their interpreter.

Tomasz Kamieniak Recital: Kiev, 9 December 2009

With the support of both the Alkan Society and the Polish Institute, the young Polish pianist and composer made his début in Ukraine at the Dom Aktera in Kiev in a concert which included Alkan's *Concerto for solo piano* from the op. 39 *Etudes*, itself a Ukrainian première (following Jonathan Powell's introduction there last year of the *Symphonie*).

In his first half Kamieniak brought us a conspectus of Polish music, with a Ukrainian chaser. Chopin, of course, in his bicentenary year, came first; Godowsky's transcription of left hand of the *Etude* op. 10 no.6, and the op. 20 *Scherzo*. We then heard a rarity, the *Tarantella no.2* of Jozef Wieniawski, brother of the violinist, and a noted performer/composer of his day – Kamieniak has completed the first recording of his oeuvre for solo piano. Kamieniak is himself a composer, and played two pieces from his op. 32, *The Book of Illusions*. His expressive post-romantic style led well to the final piece of the first set, a compelling performance of *Hymn 2001* by the outstanding Ukrainian composer Valentin Silvestrov.

Kamieniak's virtuosity, imagination and interpretation, vigorous and intense by turn, captured the warm appreciation of his audience, and enraptured them during his immense performance of the Concerto. If I do not expand here on Kamieniak's success at this remarkable recital, it is for two reasons: one, that most of his performance can be seen on video at <http://www.youtube.com/smerus>; secondly, that Alkanistes in and around London

will be able to hear his performance of the *Concerto* live at his London public solo debut (for which he has also been assisted by the Society) at Schott's on 30th April (see Forthcoming events, below). They will not be disappointed.

Alkan Society Scholarship Competition: Cambridge, 20 February 2010

The Alkan Society Scholarship Competition was held in the Auditorium of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge on February 20th, 2010. It was open to six Cambridge Colleges: Churchill, Fitzwilliam, Girton, Magdalene, Robinson and Murray Edwards, and the adjudicators were Francis Knights (Director of Music, Fitzwilliam College), Richard Shaw (Vice-President of The Alkan Society) and Thomas Wakefield (pianist). Competitors were asked to perform one or more items from Alkan's *Esquisses* Op.63, and one or more additional work of their own choice. It was disappointing that the Competition attracted just two competitors this year (a third pulled out just before the day) and the Alkan Society Committee will no doubt want to debate the purpose and effectiveness of the Competition when it next meets. In the event, the standard was impressive, and Helena Dukic was unanimously declared the winner, receiving the prize of £100. In addition Liam Paterson was awarded an adjudicators' special prize of £50.

Helena Dukic, from Robinson College, opened with Alkan's '*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo: Favete linguis*' (*Esquisses* Op.63, no. 34) playing with great distinction. Her pacing and attention to sonority was always finely judged, with subtly varied (and imaginative) use of legato. Care over colour was again a strong feature in her performance of the first movement of Beethoven's penultimate Sonata (Op.110 in A flat), with some beautifully sung melodies (the right hand of bar 111 was particularly fine). Occasionally this emphasis on the leading melody underplayed the role of the bass and harmonic elements. The music generally flowed well, and the technical challenges of the light but rapid fingerwork by and large were met. This was a very well prepared programme, given a confident performance.

Liam Paterson, from Fitzwilliam College, picked an enterprising programme, with Alkan's *Fantaisie* (*Esquisses* Op.63 no.16), the *Toccata* from Debussy's *Pour le piano*, Messiaen's *Première communion de la Vierge* (*Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, xi) and the opening movement from the first of Ginastera's three sonatas. Liam clearly relished the many challenges of the repertoire and conveyed his enjoyment to the audience. In many ways a pianist combines the role of conductor and orchestra, and the performance of each piece needed Liam the conductor to take tighter control of his orchestra, developing the level of orchestral playing and aiming for a more ambitious interpretation, one that transcends the printed page (and the limitations of the orchestral players...).

Richard Shaw

Mark Latimer

Mark Latimer, whose extraordinary recording of the Alkan *Concerto* shows just one aspect of his remarkable talents as a concert and jazz pianist, has been seized by a cruel disablement, a form of aggressive arthritis, which has forced him to cancel his concert engagements. These included an appearance at the Hong Kong Festival to mark the birthday of Chopin, at which he would have premiered the Alkan *Concerto* there. He writes on his predicament with a harrowing frankness in his internet blog in an article entitled 'Out of my hands...', which can

be found at his website <http://marklatimerdotcom.wordpress.com/>. It is impossible to read this without feeling the profoundest sympathy for him in this unexpected catastrophe. Society members will I am sure join in wishing that he may recover and that normal service may be soon resumed.

Forthcoming Events

- Friday 30th April 2010 *Schott Music Shop 48 Gt. Marlborough St. London W1 at 19.00*. Piano recital by **Tomasz Kamieniak**: Thalberg: Caprice on Bellini's '*La Sonnambula*', Kamieniak: Piano Sonata (world premiere) and **Alkan: Concerto pour piano seul op. 39, 8-10**. Tickets: £10 (£7 concessions). Tel.: +44 (0)20 7534 0710; fax: +44 (0)20 7534 0719; email: londonshop@schott-music.com.
- Thursday June 24th 2010 *Blüthner Piano Centre, 1 Davies Street, London W1 at 19.00*. Piano recital by **Mark Viner** to include music of Chopin and **Alkan: Marche Funèbre Op.26, Trois Menuets Op.51 and Symphonie Op.39 nos. 4-7**. Tickets free, but pre-booking essential by phone 020 7753 0533, by fax – 020 7753 0535 or by e-mail – info@bluthner.co.uk.
- Saturday June 26th 2010 **Second Alkan Society Colloquium on Alkan's Esquisses op. 63**. To follow the Society's AGM – see above.
- Wednesday 22nd September 2010 *Steinway 44 Marylebone Lane London W1* Piano recital by **Leslie Howard** (Joint concert of Alkan and Liszt Societies - programme to be announced)
- The programme of the 3rd '**Indian Summer in Levoca Festival**' (www.lblfestival.eu) does not, this year, (alas!) feature any Alkan. However, there is plenty of piano virtuosity from Ivo Kahánek, Jonathan Powell and Tomasz Kamieniak, including music by Schumann, Chopin, Suchoň, Liszt, Rachmaninoff and Zarebski. Other highlights include a recital by the cellist Julian Lloyd Webber, and a performance by him and the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra of the Elgar Cello Concerto. More information from info@lblfestival.eu