

JACK GIBBONS plays ALKAN

on ASV

The *complete* Etudes, Op.39

including
Symphony & Concerto
for Solo Piano



CD DCS 227

"...a spectacular triumph. This titanic volume of some of the greatest and most adventurous piano music ever written takes over two hours to play and Gibbons turns it into a thrilling experience"

Classic CD

"I can safely say that this ranks among the most exhilarating feats of pianism I've heard on disc... an Alkan interpreter of exceptional authority... Gibbons's account becomes the top recommendation here"

Gramophone

Jack Gibbons will be appearing at Farringdons Records in the RFH2 foyer after the concert to sign copies of his ASV recordings.

Queen Elizabeth Hall RFH², London
Thursday, 15th February 1996 at 7pm

In association with CLASSIC fm

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plays

ALKAN

(1813-1888)

FIRST LONDON PERFORMANCE OF

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"This ranks among the most exhilarating feats of pianism I've heard... an Alkan interpreter of exceptional authority" Gramophone

Tickets: £14, £12, £10, £8, £6
Available from the Box Office, RFH,
London SE1 8XX. Tel: 0171 960 4242

Groups of 6 or more: £2 off top 3 prices



Royal Festival Hall

on the South Bank



CHARLES-VALENTIN
ALKAN
(1813-1888)

Douze Études dans les Tons Mineurs, Op.39

Twelve Studies in the Minor Keys, Op.39

First London Performance of the Complete Set

Comme le Vent
En Rythme Molossique
Scherzo Diabolico
Symphony for Solo Piano
Concerto for Solo Piano
Overture for Solo Piano
Le Festin d'Esopo

*plus a selection of Alkan's evocative miniatures, including
The Song of the Mad Woman on the Sea Shore*

Live performances of the awe-inspiring and notoriously virtuosic piano music of Charles-Valentin Alkan, Chopin's reclusive contemporary, are rare events. Tonight's historic concert presents in a single evening Alkan's "magnum opus", the legendary Twelve Studies in the Minor Keys, Op.39, a gargantuan set containing some of the most spectacular and haunting piano music of the 19th century. Included within the 275 pages of this unique collection are an impassioned *Symphony for Solo Piano*, a monumental and deeply moving *Concerto for Solo Piano*, a dazzling and humorous set of variations based on Aesop's fables, *Le Festin d'Esopo*, and many other exciting and inspired masterpieces, all of which make extreme demands on the technique and stamina of the performer.

Born in Paris in 1813, Alkan was regarded in his youth as one of the greatest virtuoso pianists of his day, regularly sharing the concert platform with both Chopin and Liszt. But an almost pathological sensitivity drove him into a misanthropic existence, so much so that when he died at the age of 75 one obituary ran: "*Charles-Valentin Alkan has just died. It was necessary for him to die in order to suspect his existence*". Alkan left behind a remarkable legacy of compositions, but it is only recently that such forgotten masterpieces as the *Concerto for Solo Piano* and *Symphony for Solo Piano* have begun to reach a wider public after more than a century of neglect.

N.B. This concert will begin at 7pm and end at approx. 10pm. There will be two intervals



In August 1995 ASV released Jack Gibbons' 2-CD recording of the complete Opus 39 Studies of Alkan, the first digital CD recording of the set, to unanimous critical acclaim: "*a spectacular triumph*" (Classic CD); "*staggering*" (Gramophone); "*the music compels attention, the virtuosity is mind-boggling*" (BBC Music Magazine); "*The Etudes make extraordinary demands on the pianist but Gibbons rises to the challenge triumphantly*" (Classic FM Magazine).

Jack Gibbons is well known for his "*high-spirited and historically informed*" (New Yorker) recreations of the piano music of George Gershwin, for which he has established an international reputation through his award-winning recordings, broadcasts and performances (including a triumphant BBC Proms debut in 1995). His highly popular all-Gershwin concerts here at the Queen Elizabeth Hall have been annual events ever since the "*thunderous standing ovation which greeted his now famous 1990 QEH recital*" (Gramophone); this year's concert will be on Sunday 28th July.

Jack Gibbons' association with the music of Alkan goes back to his early teens, when he regularly featured works such as *Le Festin d'Esopo* and *Allegro Barbaro* in his concerts. In 1978 at the age of 16 he gave the first ever Oxford performance of Alkan's massive *Concerto*, a performance described by the press as "*sensational... this gifted young artist is the possessor of a most prodigious technique, yet his playing had a luminous quality often forfeited by concert pianists today in their search for technical prowess. To play the notes of this formidable and almost unknown work is a major achievement, but to create a musical entity which satisfies the listener approaching the work for the first time is the mark of real artistic stature. Jack Gibbons succeeded on both counts*". At the age of 17 he made his London debut with a gargantuan all-Alkan programme that included both the *Concerto* and *Overture* from the Opus 39 Studies. On this occasion the celebrated Alkan exponent Ronald Smith described him as "*one of the most remarkable pianists of his generation. I think there is no limit to what he might achieve*".

In January 1995 Jack Gibbons gave the first ever performance of the complete Opus 39 Studies in a single 3-hour-long concert. In the words of the press it was "*stunning... I have never known the hall more jam-packed, knowledgeable and fervid... Of Gibbons's towering skill there's no doubt, nor of his generosity in offering three encores (including Allegro Barbaro) after that*".