

Music and musicians in Switzerland

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MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN SWITZERLAND.

The following interesting article is taken from the "Glasgow Evening Times" of August 9th.

At this time of the year many people find themselves in Switzerland. The other day one of these pilgrims, who likes to unite healthful recreation with the acquisition of knowledge, deplored the lack of musical interest in the little country.

"Go to Italy or Germany," he said, "and you will get scenery, but you will find also many musical shrines, houses where the great composers were born or lived, scenes of their triumphs, landscapes which inspired them and streets through which they walked. Switzerland has nothing of this."

For the benefit of those who are labouring under the same misapprehension, I should like to point out that Switzerland has a very definite call upon the musical traveller. Brahms is very much in the air just now. If you share the prevailing enthusiasm, it ought to interest you to know that he composed part of "The German Requiem" while living in a villa on the Zurichberg, which stands above Zurich.

At this time Brahms met Theodore Kirchner, a musician who spent much of his life at Winterthur and Zurich and whose piano pieces are widely known; Gottfried Keller, the poet and novelist, and the Wesendoncks, the friends of Wagner. Brahms saw much of Switzerland, having given concerts at Basel, Zurich, Winterthur, Aarau, and Schaffhausen. In addition, he spent three happy and profitable summers at Thun.

Visitors to Zurich may like to be reminded that they can still see where Wagner lived there from 1853 to 1857—that is after his banishment from Saxony. The address is No. 13 Zeltweg. I had some difficulty in finding this house, which is hidden in a quiet street on the eastern side of the lake. It is one of a row of houses now devoted to flats, and probably had a rustic charm when Wagner dwelt there.

The Villa Wesendonck, which belonged to Wagner's friends of that name, stands near the Belvoir Park on the south-west of the town. It is situated in its own wooded grounds, possesses a courtyard of romantic aspect with green trailers round the gates. The situation must have been particularly delightful seventy-three years ago, when Zurich had not grown to its present size. Some of the windows look out to a panorama of the Alps. Now the house is within sound of the electric tram and touched by modern suburbia.

Tribschen, near Lucerne, has, however, the greatest attraction for the musical pilgrim. One can see the villa standing amid poplars on a small promontory to the right just after the lake steamer leaves Lucerne. In this house Wagner spent some of the happiest years of his life (1866-1872). Here he wrote "Die Meistersinger," "Siegfried," and "Die Gotterdammerung"; here was born his son Siegfried.

Arnold Dolmetsch

HIS LIFE AND WORK.
CONTINUED.

The Royal College of Music having just been founded in London, I continued my studies there. I became a friend of Sir George Grove, who helped me to make a good position as a professional musician, performer, teacher, conductor, and composer.

In 1889, in the British Museum, I found an immense collection of English Instrumental Music of the 16th and 17th centuries. Although well aware of the contempt of Musical authorities for the little of that music they had seen, I was struck by its interest and beauty. I resolved to play these pieces which had so fascinated me. Fortunately I felt from the first that this music would only be effective if played upon the instruments for which it was written.

Viols, Lutes, Virginals, and Clavichords had not yet become the prey of Collectors. I had no great difficulty in procuring some. Having failed to find anybody who could put these instruments in sufficiently good playing order to satisfy my requirements, I remembered that I was a craftsman. I soon rigged up a workshop in the attic of my house and began to work.

The problem was difficult. I could not tell how far an instrument was out of order when I could not play upon it, neither could I learn to play until the instrument was in good order. However, patiently, gradually, my craftsmanship and my musicianship reacting one upon the other, one day I found the instruments playable and my skill as a player well advanced.

Soon I had trained pupils to join me in concerted pieces, conspicuous among them being my eldest daughter, Hélène Dolmetsch. The individual parts of most of this music present no technical difficulties. Its composers knew how to obtain profound and beautiful effects by a

Associations with Liszt are just as strong. It was to Geneva that he fled with Marie d'Agoult, and when there composed the first of his "Années de Pèlerinage," inspired by the sights and sounds of the Swiss landscapes which surrounded him. A little later he was playing the organ in Fribourg Cathedral with immense zest.

In 1853 he visited the lonely Wagner at Zurich. They played and sang "Lohengrin" together and made a journey to Brunnen by way of the Lake of Lucerne. On October 6 of the same year Wagner turned up at the "Three Kings" Hotel, Basel, and sat watching the Rhine flow past below his windows. Liszt soon followed, accompanied by Von Bülow, Joachim, Cornelius, and others. To the company Wagner read a portion of his Nibelungen poem.

And I must not forget to mention that other October day in 1687, when Liszt arrived at Tribschen. The two men had been estranged, and feelings ran high. They occupied Wagner's study for some hours. Late in the day came the sound of "Die Meistersinger," as yet hardly dry upon the page, played by Liszt in his incomparable way. Wagner, apparently unable to withstand Liszt's argument, melted the heart of his visitor by his music.

Of musicians born in Switzerland I shall mention only a few whose names are familiar abroad. Every pianist knows something of Thalberg, born at Geneva in 1812. Hegar, Huber, and Andrea need no introduction. Ansermet, the conductor, was born at Vevey in 1883. And Ernest Bloch, whose "Schelemo" impressed some of us when given at our orchestral concerts, was born of Jewish parents at Geneva in 1880.

Last winter Glasgow heard Honegger's "King David." This composer, though born at Le Havre, comes of a Zurich family. Then there is Jacques-Daleroze, renowned all over the world for his system of eurythmics. Born in Vienna, his musical life has been chiefly identified with Geneva, where he resides.

It has been facetiously observed that the only Swiss music is "William Tell," a patriotic opera written by an Italian for the French stage. But it may be recalled that Delius's "Village Romeo and Juliet" plays itself out in a Swiss hamlet and is based on a tale by Gottfried Keller, a friend of both Wagner and Brahms; that Strauss's "Alpensinfonie" seeks to depict in graphic manner the grandeur of the Alps, a cascade, a sun-rise, and so forth; that some years ago amateur pianists showed a partiality for a series of tuneful pieces by Franz Bendel called "Am Genfer See"; and that the plot of Kienzl's popular opera, "Der Kuhreigen," issues from the singing of the "Ranz des Vaches" by some Swiss soldiers serving in France, the song being forbidden as it caused a longing for home.

It remains to add that Nietzsche, who played so conspicuous a part in the Wagner story, was for a time Professor of Classical Philology at Basel. Säckingen, near Basel, is known far and wide through Nessler's popular and vulgar "Trumpeter of Säckingen." In the Convent

skilled combination of simple parts. William Morris was much interested by our performances. He had for long deplored the fact that, amongst all the Arts, Music alone had no attraction for him. He could find no pleasure in Piano recitals or big Orchestras; but, when he heard the kind of music whose ideals and purposes corresponded with the arts he loved, he was profoundly moved. He was ever grateful to me for having filled in his all-embracing mind the place that music alone could fill. Amongst other great men who appreciated my early efforts and encouraged me to persevere I remember Herbert Horne, Burne-Jones, Selwyn Image, W. B. Yeats, Arthur Symons, Robert Hichens, Fuller Maitland, G. B. Shaw, Sir George Grove, J. Joachim, A. Piatti, and others.

The dawn of a great revival was now visible; but I realized that no serious progress could be made with the scanty stock of old instruments available.

In 1894 I began making clavichords, copies of a fine large instrument in my possession. The first went to Mr. Fuller Maitland; Sir George Grove secured the second for the Royal College of Music; Herbert Horne decorated the third with inscriptions and paintings; it is now in a museum in Italy. The fourth is in my possession.

These instruments succeeded well, but I understood that copying other people's work, the best training for a beginner, should only be a step to higher achievements. The masters did not copy one another. Feeling that I had imagination and skill, I endeavoured henceforth to realize my own ideals.

In 1896 I planned a Harpsichord on new lines. It was intended to play the Thorough Bass in Bach's St. Matthew Passion and to accompany the Recitatives of Mozart's Operas at Covent Garden. Selwyn Image composed an eloquent Latin inscription which Herbert Horne painted in beautiful letters on the lid. Helen Coombe (afterwards Mrs. Roger Fry) decorated the inside with exquisite figures and flowers. We had

Library at St. Gall Wagner enthusiasts may see a manuscript of the Nibelunglied dating from the 13th century. And at Rapperswil, on the Lake of Zurich, there is a Polish National Museum which contains some souvenirs of Chopin.

If the musical traveller in Switzerland keeps his eyes wide open he will not, I think, come to the conclusion that the progressive Republic has nothing of interest to offer him.

THE NEW EDUCATION IN SWITZERLAND.

For Switzerland to be able to hold its own among the great Nations surrounding it and competing fiercely in the World's Markets, it has always been a recognised axiom that our young people must have a really excellent education. "Just a shade better than any other" was the idea, that "shade better" just enabling us to compete successfully. Other peoples, of course, have experimented with a view to perfecting the education of their children and most of us have followed with more or less keen interest the various controversies which have sprung up in England during the last 25 years or so and which might be summed up as "For or Against Public Schools." Some of my older readers will no doubt remember the very interesting discussions which took place, during the war years, on the question of a Swiss School in London and they will remember the excellent and painstaking work put in then by our old friend Meier-Mattes, who went to endless trouble and great pains to probe the feasibility of such a scheme to the bottom. The *Journal of Education*, August 1930, publishes the following account of a new experiment being made in Switzerland:

"In common with most other pre-War systems, public-school education has been subjected to a criticism, both from within and without, which has increased in intensity during the past ten years. In his recently-published defence of public schools, 'Eleutheros' (or the Future of the Public Schools), the Headmaster of Stowe has stated and attempted to answer the more important of these criticisms. 'It is more important,' he says in the character of Dr. Archdale, 'than ever it was before to have a large class in the community capable of seeing the events of to-day against the background of all the yesterdays; capable of taking up new knowledge and making it part of the general consciousness, of resisting superstition, mass suggestion and stamped opinion; of taking a wide international point of view on public questions.' That the public schools fail to produce such a type is a common and increasing criticism of them, and the opinion of the public school product which is constantly voiced to-day is expressed by 'Mr. Burgess' in the same dialogue. He says that the type is to be known by 'good clothes, good manners and a totally empty head,' and that the 'typical public school boy is acceptable at a dance and invaluable in a shipwreck, but he is no earthly good as an ordinary citizen on ordinary occasions.'

That there is much truth in this criticism is now generally acknowledged even among public-school masters. Whether the traditional public-school machinery can be adapted to meet the needs

planned to ornament the outside also, but, time pressing, it was lacquered a fine green.

William Morris, then sickening for death, took a lively interest in this Harpsichord and would be informed of my plans and progress. His hope of seeing it finished was, alas! frustrated. Feeling the end approaching, he sent for me and a virginal, desiring to hear once more the Old English tunes he loved so well. He died before the opening of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1896. My Harpsichord was well received there, but, how I wished Morris had seen it! How I missed the appreciation and criticisms of this great master and inspirer!

After an adventurous absence of some thirty years, the "Green Harpsichord" came back to me, thanks to the kindness of its latest owner, Mr. Gerald Cooper. Fitted with my new action it sounded exceedingly well and looked like a jewel at the last Haslemere Festival.

Amongst the instruments I made at this period were some small clavichords of original and graceful proportions. One of these was bought by Mr. A. H. Fox-Strangways. Burne-Jones was tempted to decorate another for his daughter, Mrs. Margaret Mackail. A third was charmingly decorated by Helen Fry and given as a wedding present to Mrs. Robert Trevelyan.

I also made a Lute in these early days. It is now played upon by a gifted pupil of mine. Amongst my most interesting enterprises were several pianos, on principles which, if followed, might have prevented the disgrace into which the piano is rapidly falling. Selwyn Image decorated one of my pianos for the Rev. Stewart Headlam; another, in a most beautiful case, went to Cecil Rhodes' music room in South Africa. Mrs. Gordon Woodhouse had the third. I cannot relate the story of all the instruments I made, nor of my numerous restorations of old instruments in those days. My studies of the Old music, and a mass of Lectures and Concerts filled my time to overflowing.

TO BE CONTINUED.