

Swiss Choral Society

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MUSIC IN SWITZERLAND.

(CONTINUED).

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were mainly remarkable for the rise of numerous *collegia musica*, amateur musical societies in Switzerland. These were instrumental or choral and formed for the purpose of performing music. Some of them still exist. As there was very little music then written specially for these choirs, their conductors and others were stimulated to write works for them to perform, and so, that distinctively Swiss musical form, the national cantata, was born and Swiss folk music collected to provide themes for it. L. Steiner (1688-1761), was the first to collect Swiss folk airs and write truly Swiss cantatas for these choirs, and he was followed by Jean Schmidli (1722-1772), J. H. Egli (1742-1810), and many others. It is impossible to dismiss the eighteenth century, however, without mentioning J. J. Rousseau (1712-1788), who attempted to improve Protestant church music by writing a psalter and shocked Lausanne and Neuchâtel (where he was for some time a teacher of music) by compositions which showed more originality than mastery of technique.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Swiss musicians were still training themselves as executants by the formations of choirs and orchestras. Gradually, however, the professional musician was evolved and a very high standard of performance was reached. Nearly all the composers of that period still devoted themselves to the national cantata, a choral work based on Swiss national history and songs. This, in its turn, developed into the *festspiel*, a festival play in which the peasants depict some historic event or national legend by word, dance, or song. The *festspiel* called forth some of the best work of the nineteenth-century composers and has been, and still is, a characteristic Swiss musical form and an important factor in the development of Swiss national music. Instrumental music, however, was not entirely neglected, and several notable composers flourished, including Xaver Schnyder de Wartensee (1786-1868), who wrote a fairy opera, sonatas, symphonies, and lieder, as well as choral works.

One of the first composers to write *festspiele* was Franz Grast (1802-1871), who wrote famous music for the *fête des vigneron*, at Vevey, in the Canton of Vaud. His other works were mainly based on Swiss material. Another notable composer was Charles Bovy-Lysberg (1821-1873), a celebrated pianist, who experimented in various musical forms and was a friend of Liszt and Chopin. Hugo de Senger (1835-1892), though born in Germany, spent his life in Switzerland and wrote notable music for the *Fête des vigneron* in 1889. Karl Attenhofer (1837-1914), wrote a great deal of important choral music, including his well-known *Preneur des rats*.

Coming to the second half of the nineteenth century, we find a new group of enthusiastic musicians resolved to make extensive use of the available Swiss native musical material, to establish the essential unity of the national feeling and put Swiss music on a European basis. The leaders of this movement were Hans Huber and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, whose fame has spread beyond the confines of Switzerland.

Hans Huber (1852-1921), is easily the most important Swiss musician of the second half of the nineteenth century. His musical idiom, though strongly influenced by Brahms, was distinctively Swiss. He made a deep study of Swiss traditional music and used it much in his *festspiele*. The subject of his first symphony was *William Tell*, and his Symphony in D Flat is known as the "Swiss Symphony." He also wrote operas and chamber music. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (born 1865) is best known as the founder of the famous school of eurhythmics which coordinates music and bodily movements, but he is also a composer of no mean order. Many of his works, including such different aspects of his talent as his *Poème alpestre* and *Rondes enfantines* have proved their international appeal. The majority of his operatic and choral works are Swiss in theme and content.

Other notable musicians of the second half of the nineteenth century include Willy Rehberg (born 1863), a pianist of merit, who has written much excellent solo and chamber music, and Joseph Lauber (born 1864), who has written chamber music *Festspiele*, Opera, and symphonies with a Swiss content.

Among modern Swiss composers, Ernest Bloch and Arthur Honegger both stand internationally in the first rank of contemporary composers. Ernest Bloch (born 1880) was born of Jewish parents at Geneva, and was a pupil of Jaques-Dalcroze. He is a strongly original composer who has managed to express himself in a Jewish idiom more distinctively than any other composer of his race. Among his most notable works for the orchestra are *Trois poèmes juifs*, *Schelomo*, and *Israel*. While he does not actually introduce Jewish traditional music into his compositions, he seeks to express the spirit of his race by free rhythmic and harmonic effects.

Arthur Honegger (born 1892), is often numbered among French composers as the result of his membership of "The Six," the famous group of modernists which includes Milhaud and Poulenc. As André Coeuroy says in his *Panorama de la musique contemporaine*: "It is the same to-day with Arthur Honegger as it was formerly with César Franck. Both belong to the history of French music, but he is as distinctively Swiss by nature as César Franck was Belgian. Honegger is one of the most "solid" of contemporary composers, his style is austere and elaborate and inclined to harshness. Among the best-known and most often broadcast of his works are *King David*, incidental music to a play by the Swiss poet, René Morax, *Pacific No. 231*, an orchestral picture of a steam engine, as well as *Rugby* and *Les Cris du Monde*.

This short article may serve to show that there is a real and vital school of Swiss music in existence. One sometimes wishes that the two big Swiss transmitters, two of the most powerful stations on the ether, would devote more space in their programmes to native composers, though one cannot complain that folk music is neglected. *World Radio.* F.W.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

A SWISS PARLOUR FOR THE Y.W.C.A.

On the 29th of last month, the Duchess of York formally opened the Central Club of the Y.W.C.A., Great Russel Street.

Most of our readers are no doubt aware, that the Swiss Colony, through the untiring efforts of Madame Paravicini, subscribed the generous amount of £1,000, towards this undertaking.—

As the daily Press has fully reported about the opening ceremony, we confine ourselves to a few remarks about the "Swiss Parlour" which was built and furnished out of the donation given by the Colony. It contains a characteristic Lutyens fireplace flanked by book shelves. The decorations were chosen by Madame Paravicini; and the shrimp pink walls, and black curtains patterned in shrimp pink, make a most effective background. — The sofas and chairs are covered in soft beige rep, and green glass bowls filled with flowers placed about on the various tables, make a delightful sitting room.

During the Queen's visit, she commented on the fact, that there were no pictures in the parlour, and the next day there arrived at the Club a set of exquisite French prints from Buckingham Palace.

There is also a reproduction of a picture from the brush of our countryman, Mr. J. Wyss, depicting a beautiful scene of the Urner Lake; the atmosphere of the large parlour is very homely, and we feel sure, that those of our countrywomen who make a stay at this hostel will find there a little cosy corner which will remind them of their homeland.

Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, the Swiss Minister, accompanied by Mlle. Paravicini, Monsieur and Madame de Bourq and their daughter, attended the dedication service, which was conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Other members present from the Swiss Colony were: Pasteur R. Hoffmann-de Visme, Pastor C. Th. Hahn and M. A. Stauffer from the Swiss Observer.

The Duchess of York paid a special visit to the Swiss Parlour, and remarked to Lady Selby-Bigge: "I think it is a perfectly marvellous place, and will bring happiness to hundreds."

SWISS CHORAL SOCIETY.

As reported in our last issue, the Annual Concert of the Swiss Choral Society is taking place on Wednesday next, the 11th of May, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.

We learn that the Society has been fortunate in engaging the following eminent artistes:

Mademoiselle Sophie Wyss, Soprano, Mademoiselle Yvonne Morris, Cello, and M. F. Conrad, tenor, which in itself will guarantee an enjoyable evening. The songs chosen also testify

to the high musical standard which the choir has set itself, and we feel sure, that this concert which is held under the conductorship of M. Eric A. Seymour, F.R.C.O., will prove to be a most enjoyable entertainment.

The charge of admittance has been kept very low, and we hope that this will be a further inducement to go to Conway Hall on Wednesday the 11th of May.

SWISS CHORAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL CONCERT

Under the Patronage of the Swiss Minister,
Monsieur C. R. Paravicini.

Wednesday, the 11th May, 1932

at
CONWAY HALL
RED LION SQUARE,
W.C.1

Start of Concert 8.30 p.m. sharp

Tickets at 2/- (incl. tax) can be obtained from Mr. John Gerber, 99, Gresham Street, E.C.2, or Mr. A. Stauffer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2, (Tel. Clerkenwell 9595) or any other Member of the Choir.

SWISS PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE.

We hear that a course of two lectures on "The Autonomic Nervous System" will be given at University College, London, (Gower Street, W.C.1.) by Professor W. R. Hess, Professor of Physiology in the University of Zurich, at 5.30 p.m. on May 12th and 13th.

Syllabus.

Lecture I. — The organisation, co-ordination of its functions and its relationships with the Cerebro-spinal System.

Lecture II. — Sleep is a vegetative process by which the Autonomic Nervous System regulates the activity of the higher brain functions.

At the first Lecture the Chair will be taken by Professor C. A. Lovatt Evans, D.Sc., F.R.C.P., F.R.S. (Jodrell Professor of Physiology in the University).

The Lectures, which will be delivered in English, and illustrated by a cinematograph film, are addressed to students of the University and to others interested in the subject. Admission Free, without ticket.

CERCLE VALAISAN.

When I returned about three weeks ago from the Swiss Rally at Birmingham, I thought that this event would be the last one of the festive season, and I was looking forward to a rest.

There was also now a chance to start my dieting, which I had had to postpone from week to week. I was just comfortably settling down, with joy in my heart, that all was over, and an attack of lumbago in my back, when I received a pressing invitation to attend the Soirée familiale of the Cercle Valaisan. Never before having had the pleasure to be amongst my compatriots from the beautiful canton of Valais, I accepted their kind invitation.

The evening was quite a jolly one, although it was to be regretted that not more members of the Cercle attended this function. I had almost to strain my eyesight to detect them; but the few who were present, made things hum, and about 120 revellers danced to the tune of a very lively band.

M. Sermier, in the absence of the President, combined various offices that evening, he acted as a reception Committee, as M.C. and Announcer,

Les Suisses résidant à l'étranger choisissent de préférence des titres de père de famille. L'éloignement où ils se trouvent les empêche de surveiller leurs titres de façon permanente et de prendre de rapides dispositions. Aussi la sûreté de leur patrimoine est-elle le premier de leurs soucis. Depuis 20 ans, notre Banque est agréée par le Conseil d'Etat du Canton de Zurich pour la conservation de biens de tutelle. Adressez-vous à nous quand vous aurez à faire des placements de tout repos.



SIÈGE PRINCIPAL ZÜRICH • FONDÉE EN 1755