

Edith et Gilles : Swiss chansonniers' London season

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EDITH ET GILLES.**Swiss Chansonniers' London Season.**

An exceptional treat is in store for the Swiss and the French Colonies in London. Gilles is coming here very shortly with his charming partner Edith to give a week's season of their inimitable art of entertainment as chansonniers. Their visit will be something more than an ordinary artistic event and an occasion for our Colony to enjoy the performances of these famous Swiss cabaretists: it will be a particularly welcome manifestation of the close friendship and sympathies between our country and France, so happily personified in Gilles and Edith. They are as well beloved in Paris, where their art grew to maturity, as in Lausanne or Zurich.

Before the war Gilles and his former partner, Julien, were members of the Compagnie des Quinze together with Edith Bergère, who holds a first prize of the Paris Conservatoire de Musique. In 1940 Julien was mobilised for the war and Gilles and Edith went to Lausanne, where they started a cabaret "Le Coup de Soleil" at the Café de la Paix. "Le Coup de Soleil" became quickly not only *the* great cabaret attraction in Switzerland, but also the focal point of sympathy for suffering France expressed in no uncertain way by Gilles' songs of defiance of all tyrants, named and unnamed, — an official centre of resistance radiating encouragement to all France, to innumerable friends of old and new.

This stalwart champion of the cause of liberty and France, this Vaudois chansonnier whose words and music grip the heart of young and old, will come to London with his indispensable partner Edith at the initiative of the enterprising directors of the Anglo-French Art Centre and through some friendly contact work on behalf of the N.S.H.

Edith et Gilles will give five performances at the Anglo-French Art Centre, 29, Elm Tree Road, St. John's Wood, N.W.8, every evening at 8.30 p.m., from May 20th to 24th.

The opening night on Tuesday 20th is, by arrangement with the N.S.H., regarded as a special Swiss evening, as probably many compatriots would wish to welcome these Swiss artists and give them an encouraging start-off in the British capital. It is hoped, however, that Gilles and Edith may count on a full support from the Swiss Colony on the other evenings as well. No doubt the French Colony will do likewise, so that we may have the pleasure of a closer Franco-Swiss contact established under the good star of Gilles and Edith. The Belgians and French-Canadians will also be especially welcomed — all in the same wide circle of a joint heritage, culture, art and humanity. Rarely before if ever has there been an opportunity in London, and one of such a pleasant character, for us to meet a wider circle sharing the same language and humour. Further details are advertised in another column.

Dr. E.

ACADEMY CINEMA PRESENTS

The first film opera

Rossini's immortal masterpiece

"THE BARBER OF SEVILLE" (u)

and

"THE COOPER" directed by Georges Rouquier.

Made in 1947, "THE BARBER OF SEVILLE" represents a new departure in several respects. For the first time an opera has been transferred in its entirety to the screen, without any extraneous frame around it. Secondly, the film marks the return of Italy to the international screen, a most welcome re-appearance after the long years of fascism and war. It is especially gratifying to see her re-emerge in a field in which she has always been traditionally pre-eminent: that of music in general and operatic music in particular. It is tempting to regard this change from militarist ranting to the music of Rossini as indicative of a corresponding change in the Italian outlook, and to see in it a happy augury for the future.

The cast of the film represents the best that Italy has to offer in the field of opera. Tito Gobbi, who takes the part of Figaro, one of the most coveted baritone parts in the whole repertoire of opera, is regarded by many Italians as their finest living singer. Ferruccio Tagliavini, who sings the tenor part, the Count of Almaviva, recently scored a great success at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, and the bass Italo Tajo, who plays Don Basilio, has been engaged by Glyndebourne for their next season and will, therefore, soon be seen on the English stage. The other singers are of similar stature, and the chorus and orchestra are those of the Royal Opera House, Rome — i.e. the best orchestra and chorus available in Italy.

Yet the film is not simply photographed theatre. The charming period setting is realistic and three-dimensional and the camera-work is free and imaginative. Indeed, several scenes attain a degree of cinematic vividness which is not often encountered among the ordinary run of films and is completely outside the scope of the ordinary operatic production.

This is a film which transcends all barriers of languages and nationality — a film which represents the very essence of pure effortless enjoyment.

"THE COOPER" is a film about the ancient craft of barrel-making, which has been handed down from father to son in Languedoc in an unbroken line since Roman days. Showing two days in the life of a master-cooper, it deals with the "documentary" in a new manner. It was written and directed by Georges Rouquier, one of the most talented of the new generation of French directors, whose work has not, so far, been seen in this country.

In view of the great influence which the British documentary movement has exerted on the whole of British film production, new advances in this field in France should be of special interest to informed cinema-goers in this country.

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