

"Gemütlicher Abend" Swiss Male Choir

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**"GEMUETLICHER ABEND"
SWISS MALE CHOIR.**

"Nightingales are singing in Berkely Square", — so we are told —, starlings chatter in high pitched voices over St. Martin's church, pigeons coo in Trafalgar Square, and the Swiss Male Choir, every fortnight, sings in Charlotte Street.

Whenever their conductor thinks, that they are fit to be heard, a "Gemütlicher Abend" is arranged, which can be translated into English, as meaning "A congenial Evening".

To make an evening congenial, there must be a gathering of congenial people willing to be gay and happy, and make others happy too. The company which assembled on Friday, February 20th, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1. fulfilled all the requirements of the word "gemütlich".

The Assembly, Dancing or Banqueting Hall, or whatever you like to call it, at the "Schweizerbund", was filled to suffocation, over 120 members of both sexes sitting "tightly" and merrily next to each other.

Mr. Finger, the steward of the Club provided a nice little dinner, which showed that things always go right when he has a finger in the pie.

I was still struggling with a chicken bone, when the President, Mr. F. G. Sommer, proposed the customary toasts to H.M. the Queen and to Switzerland, and immediately afterwards welcomed the large gathering and the official guests: Dr. Fothergill, President of the Camp and Tours Union, accompanied by his daughter, and Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer". (Mr. and Mrs. A. Gandon, who were invited as guests, unfortunately, owing to illness, were unable to attend.)

The President especially expressed his pleasure at seeing so many Ladies present, some young, some a little "riper" and "rounder", but all very good looking. He did, of course, not say this, but I take full responsibility for making this statement.

It goes without saying, that at a choral function, music should be predominant, and to set the ball rolling, Miss Fothergill sang very prettily and without accompaniment "There is an old fashioned house, in an old fashioned town", which was acknowledged with applause, and not to be outdone by his daughter, Dr. Fothergill shortly replied on behalf of the guests, thanking the Society for having asked them to come along.

Then followed a "Schnitzelbank", here I am "stumped", looking up in the dictionary for a translation, I found the word "carvers or chopping bench", it is, of course, nothing of the kind, it merely is a sing song dealing with happenings and personalities connected with the respective societies; it could be called "at a stretch" "chopping of characters". This is rather a delicate undertaking as, speaking from experience, our compatriots are somewhat touchy and adverse to criticism, which, however does not prevent them at every conceivable opportunity, and even after a row, from reciting with deep patriotic feelings our national motto: "Un pour tous, tous pour un". Mr. H. Mock, the author of the "Schnitzelbank". accomplished his task with credit, he was witty, not too personal, and nobody could object to his good humoured sallies.

After this happy interlude, Mr. E. P. Dick, announced that he would now bring his choir to the "slaughterbank", he said, that the choir would "try" to sing; well, well, well, I thought that this well seasoned choral Society, in existence for over thirty years, has passed the "trying" stage, perhaps it was a slip of the tongue, anyhow they sang in French "Le printemps" which brought new hope to all the listeners for happier and sunnier days. This hope, however, was somewhat watered down, when, as a second item they sang — this time in German — "Märzsturm". Having had November, December, January and February stormy weather, we could have done with something more cheerful, but as both songs were very well rendered nobody bore them any grudge. To conclude the choir's performance they sang another song in French with great exuberance. I am glad to see that the French language came into its own. Not so long ago at a General Meeting of one of the Swiss Societies in London, one of our French speaking compatriots urged that more French speaking members should be elected to the committee, I agree, because this would prove an enormous blessing and would improve the "Français Fédéral" of our alemanic speaking countrymen.


After a short interval during which the Hall was made ready, Dr. Fothergill showed a number of very beautiful coloured films with a witty running commentary. He took us first to the Bernese Oberland, afterwards to the lovely canton of Valais and lastly to the town of Zug.

These pictures, all taken by himself, were of an outstanding quality and proved, that he is not only a fine photographer but an equally fine artist. Mountain views, village scenes, flower and animal pictures etc. were simply lovely, and I can say without exaggeration, that these films were better than any I have seen in the Colony for a very long time.

These views brought back to many in the audience sweet and treasured memories of happy times spent in our beloved homeland, and many felt a lump coming into their throats when seeing the snow capped alpine giants, the silvery lakes and the quaint little villages.

My good friend Willy Fischer, great singer, great marksman, great talker and a great alpinist, who climbed many a "four thousander", nearly burst into tears, when the picture of the "Matterhorn", which he climbed only recently, was shown, and he only recovered his spirits after a sip of "Neuchâtel".

When the lights were switched on again, Mr. Sommer thanked Dr. Fothergill most heartily for this really enjoyable performance, and the company showed its appreciation by long and hearty applause.



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I was unable to stay for the dancing which followed, under Mr. Jobin's direction, but I was told, that this was also most enjoyable, I left 74, Charlotte Street on "wings of song" and by the No. 14 bus having spent a lovely evening amongst old and well tried friends, who know how to be "gemütlich".

ST.

SWISS VIOLINIST AT THE ARTS COUNCIL.

The Society of Women Musicians presented Thursday February 12th at the Great Drawing Room in No. 4 St. James's Square a concert, by arrangement with the Arts Council of Great Britain and the British Council, of Marie-Madeleine Tschachtli, Swiss violinist, accompanied by the pianist Madame Rose Dobos.

This recital marked the opening of a scheme for the mutual exchange of young artists between Switzerland and Great Britain. The British representative, Beryl Kimber, has already been giving a series of violin recitals in Switzerland during January.

Miss Tschachtli of Fribourg is a brilliant young soloist. She started with a classical programme, including Vivaldi, Bach and Mozart and reached namely in the Sonata in G major by Mozart a outstanding degree of perfection.

The second part was quite an enjoyment for amateurs of modern music. Starting with Bloch's Nigun and showing her great skill in the Three Caprices by Paganini, Marie-Madeleine Tschachtli honoured one of our leading Swiss composers, Willi Burkhard, by reproducing his most original Miniature Suite. After having played four exquisite pieces by M. Thiriet, she agreed generously answering the applause of the attendance to offer some encores, amongst them Stravinsky's Russian Song.

Madame Rose Dobos revealed herself as a very fine accompanist. After the performance a reception was offered in the ground floor of the fine London house. Amongst the guests were Mr. Guido Lepori and Mr. René Keller, both First-Secretaries of the Swiss Legation, with their wives.

H.B.

RUTH HUGGENBERG RECITAL.

It is some years since Miss Ruth Huggenberg presented herself for the first time to the London public as a new Swiss pianist of interest and much promise. She has evidently been hard at work ever since. At every concert of her's, we have been privileged to attend, her playing has become more confident and accomplished, more sensitively varied in the interpretation of the classic compositions through which she expresses herself so intensely and so sincerely. No facile cleverness comes to her aid — at the expense of the composer's intentions. Never does Miss Huggenberg allow passion or sentiment to detract from the utter integrity of her rendering of the great masters. It is a virtue rarely met among soloists on any instrument these days. It is a self-imposed handycap that yields its reward only in the long run.

This our compatriot is beginning to gather more and more richly. Her last concert on February 21st at Wigmore Hall was a delight to the ever growing number of her audiences. In the long sequence of 18 "Davidsbündler Dances" by Schumann as well as in Brahms' majestic Sonata in F minor Miss Huggenberg revealed her growing power and command of all the moods of the human soul — all but that of unreasoned passion, perhaps, which she may yet have to learn to master as well to reach the summit of her accomplishments. Thus the Schubert impromptu she played seemed to suffer from a certain lack of warmth. But on the whole the audience was carried with her to the point of many richly deserved rounds of applause. Miss Huggenberg can confidently look forward to further greater triumphs.

H.E.

The *Daily Telegraph* (23.2.53) writes:

"Ruth Huggenberg, a Swiss pianist, played a programme of German romantic music at Wigmore Hall on Saturday evening. In Schumann's "Davidsbündler" pieces and Brahms's F minor Sonata she proved an efficient though not strikingly poetic player, rather too dependent on the sustaining pedal, but gifted with a good sense of tonal characterisation.

M.C.

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