

Gottfried Keller

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A MUSIC-HISTORICAL EVENT

The Liszt Recital at the Wigmore Hall on 13th May was a musical and historical event. The concert was given under the patronage of the Liszt Society. Its President, Mr. Louis Kentner, was amongst the large audience which, we understand, included H.E. the Swiss Ambassador, the Consul of Switzerland and the Swedish and Swiss Cultural Attachés. We were given the opportunity of listening to works being rarely performed; indeed, two of the three melodramas ("Lenore" and "Des Toten Dichter's Liebe") had never before been performed in this country.

The melodrama is an ancient art, combining speech with music. Its main representatives are G. Benda, Schumann, Liszt. But composers like R. Strauss ("Enoch Arden") Prokofiev ("Peter and the Wolf"), Schoenberg ("Kol Nidrei", "Ode to Napoleon", "A Survivor from Warsaw") use the melodrama as a possibility for intensifying dramatic expression. Liszt's melodramas are in fact highly dramatic; the music illustrates and increases the tension; it also paints the picture of a particular mood. Wilhelm Kienzl, composer of the opera "Evangeliman", writes in his book "Musical Declamation":

"Our hope lies in musically trained narrators. If these are available, then we shall no longer neglect one of the most effective and sensitive forms of art."

Indeed, in **Mariann Meier** we found a superb performer; she is musical, her pronunciation was understood in the remotest part of the hall, her dramatic insight made a deep impression on the audience.

As a composer of *Lieder*, Liszt is rather neglected; yet his songs may be ranked with the finest of the 19th-century romantic *Lieder*. The "Tell-Lieder" are very rarely performed, as are his French songs. **Lili Habegger** gave a refined interpretation of these. Her light and lovely soprano voice seems to be ideally suited to *Lieder*. There is no doubt that she may look forward to a successful career.

In **Lennart Rabes**, Mariann Meier and Lili Habegger had a skilled accompanist of rare understanding. Narrator and singer could not have wished for a more sensitive and responsive partner.

It was as soloist, however, that Lennart Rabes excelled. His well-balanced technique was given full scope in the performance of the fine Hungarian Rhapsody No. V "Héroïde-Elégiaque" and even more so in the "Vallé d'Obermann". Producing delicate nuances, he yet gave a forcefully effective rendering of the "Elégie II" and the Etudes Concertantes" (Un Sospiro, La Leggerezza). The impressive performance showed clearly the profound musicality and even technique of this gifted young artist.

The unusual 20-page programme, with the exquisite drawing of Liszt by Ilona von Huels, gave important information and historical data about the works and is well worth keeping for future reference. Incidentally, even the advertisements were charmingly "in tune" with the concert.

It definitely was a most unusual and interesting evening. The works chosen not only showed the virtuoso Liszt, but also the Franz Liszt as musician of deep feelings. His personality shone through some of his quotations used in the programme to testify to the great artist that he was.

H.P.

The above concert was of special interest to the Swiss Colony in London. The artists have been heard before both in concerts and at the Swiss Churches. The pianist, Lennart Rabes, though Swedish, has had long-standing connections with Switzerland and the Swiss community in this country. Lili Habegger is well-known amongst the Swiss, and she is the wife of Mr. Marcel Bucherer, prominent member of the Swiss Rifle Association. Mariann Meier is no stranger either; she has a good many years of activities in the Colony behind her.

The three artists will have given a repeat performance in Bournemouth by the time these lines appear, and they are booked for further recitals in London and elsewhere.

After the concert at the Wigmore Hall, the Swedish and Swiss Cultural Attachés gave a reception to supporters and friends specially connected with the concert.

Sir Adrian Boult, eminent conductor, who was to have attended the recital, but was prevented through illness, sent a personal telegram.

GOTTFRIED KELLER

Commemoration of his 150th Birthday

One of the news sheets sent to us by the Swiss Telegraphic Agency carried an item of about a dozen lines which read as follows (translated):

"On the occasion of his 150th birthday, the Zurich poet Gottfried Keller was celebrated in his home place Glattfelden by a commemorative *Feier* and a pageant. The main speaker *Regierungsrat* E. Brugger described Keller's life and work. He ended the comparison between the stark contrasts in the style of life then and now with the assumption that Gottfried Keller would say today: "Don't forget man".

"Amongst the numerous guests of honour were Federal Councillor Celio,

the Zurich Regierungsräte Bachmann, Mossdorf and Meier, as well as the district authorities of Buelach.

"The Glattfelden Post Office (to the end of the year) will be using a special cancelling stamp in honour of the meritorious poet."

What a sober statement, lacking all colour and failing to give any idea at all of a most picturesque and happy event in which not only the whole village on the Glatt, but many visitors took part! It tells nothing of the comprehensive exhibition at the "Hof" School, called "Documents of Gottfried Keller's Life and Work". Dr. Paul Scherrer, President of the Gottfried Keller Society and Director of the Central Library in Zurich, opened it on 7th May. Miniatures, Keller's engraved gold pocket watch, his beer mug, interesting manuscripts, a French edition of his "Leute von Seldwyla" and many other exhibits make a visit well worth while.

Ascension Day was one of the fine early summer days, warm and cloudless. On the eve of the great day, the Male Choir of the Commune had its *Fahnenweihe*, and in the morning of 15th May, flags were out and banners "Willkommen Herr Bundesrat". Federal Councillor Celio and his wife and a large number of guests were driven from Buelach to Glattfelden in seven open landaus and three floats, led by mounted members of the Cavalry Society of the Unterland. The first carriage with the Federal Councillor was drawn by four splendid white horses. The drive went through the Buelacher Hard Forest and ended at the Eichhölzli School where there was an open-air Church service.

In their shirt sleeves were the main speakers, Mr. Brugger and the Federal Councillor whose eloquent words caused storms of applause. Musical numbers formed part of the celebrations, and there were singers from Zurich and guild members of Hottingen in historical costumes.

The main item was the pageant based on Gottfried Keller's "Fähnlein der sieben Aufrechten". The tale had been dramatized by Fritz Schmid of Bachenbuelach and produced by a Glattfelden teacher Miss Beatrice Sprecher. It was extremely well done on an open stage which made the audience part of the whole performance, and humorous texts by Miss Sprecher in between changes of scenery added to the enjoyment of all.

A *Romand* firmly denied the idea prevailing in many parts that the German Swiss were incapable of celebrating in a happy and light-hearted mood and said that the Gottfried Keller *Fest* was one of the gayest and most successful popular events he has ever witnessed.

The Glattfelden people remembered *Man!*

MM