

# A bundle of papers from Berne

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## A BUNDLE OF PAPERS FROM BERNE

All Swiss societies and institutions abroad—that is to say those who are known at the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Berne—recently received bundles of printed matter of important contents.

Apart from the message of the President of the Confederation on the occasion of the Swiss National Day (in seven languages; the English version appeared in the "Swiss Observer" of 24th July), there was a leaflet on "*Die Schweiz-heute*", a book which was published by Sauerlaender in Aarau and has been brought up to date, i.e. to 1968. It is an excellent book especially for young people, and as it only costs 10 francs for the Swiss abroad, it is well worth ordering from the Secretariat. A number of competent experts have written articles on the past, on the present life in Switzerland from every aspect and on important problems of the future.

Talking of young people, the consignment of printed matter also contained a small leaflet introducing the "*Weltschweizer*" *Youth Magazine*. It is a highly informative as well as entertaining periodical, small and neat and extremely well edited. Young people who are interested in the German or French/Italian edition, should apply to the Secretariat. It is sent free of charge, but as it is a burden on the funds, the publishers would be glad to have a minimum annual contribution of 7 francs from those able to pay. Apart from giving interesting facts on Switzerland and Swiss life, it also contains information on skiing camps, youth meetings and summer camps, schooling and training facilities in Switzerland and many other matters of interest to young Swiss living abroad. Even if no "*Weltschweizer*" is required, is it a good idea to register with the "*Jugenddienst*", the youth service in Berne.

For young people too, is the *Pestalozzi Almanach* which may be ordered before 10th September from Berne. There are three editions at S. Fr. 4.40, one in German for boys, one in German for girls and a mixed one in French. The Italian edition costs S.Fr. 2.30.

The 51st *Annual Report* of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad which is under the auspices of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, is an illustrated booklet of nearly 50 pages. It tells of all the varied activities of the organisation, the work of the Commission, our "Parliament", the contacts with over 550 individual societies (visits, film service, etc.), information and advice service, press and publicity, social insurance, youth service and its camps, taking care of young Swiss from abroad who do their military service in Switzerland, "*Weltschweizer*" and "*Echo*" (the two publications), education and training, Swiss schools abroad (20 now and all recognised by

the Confederation), Solidarity Fund, etc. The report tells about last year's assembly at Montreux, and it carries the accounts. It gives a list of all members of the Commission and the staff, members of various committees, and a list of Swiss papers published abroad. The "Swiss Observer" is one of only seven (one in Buenos Aires, three in USA, one in Paris and one in Rome). The report ends with a three page map showing where the Swiss communities abroad are. Anyone interested in receiving a free copy should apply to the Secretariat.

Finally, the packet included several sheets and brochures with regard to the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Berne in 1972 when the 50th *Assembly* will be celebrated for a full week. More about this event will be published in the S.O. at a later date.

And please, don't forget to call at the Secretariat if you happen to pass through Berne or any time. They will be happy to receive you.

(complement sent in independently  
by MM)

## HUGUES CUENOD, GLYNDEBOURNE'S LONGEST-SERVING TENOR

At 68, Hugues Cuenod, tenor extraordinary, inspirer of Stravinsky, most cherished of Glyndebourne ornaments, must be the older opera-singer in the world in regular solo harness. He looks and behaves at least 15 years younger than he is and I asked him what the secret was. How could he preserve his voice exactly as it was nearly half a century ago? The answer was simple, he said. "I didn't really have a voice to start with. It was built up on nothing."

You can see what he means. His high tenor, clear and trumpet-toned, is not a voice of body. In a sense it is fabricated, yet it is such a true instrument and the artistry behind it is so intense, that Stravinsky chose Cuenod to create the part of the auctioneer Sellem in "*The Rake's Progress*," a comedy rôle which drew him to Glyndebourne in the first place. Within a couple of years Stravinsky told him—very casually during a not very good Swiss performance of "*Rake's Progress*"—that he'd written a work specially for him.

The Cantata of 1952, settings of medieval English verse, has a tenor part so painfully high in tessitura that Cuenod is one of the few who can cope with it. Even he had to complain to the composer that at one point 13 minutes of singing in one taxing register was too much. Stravinsky had the answer. He had heard a record of Cuenod—in fact it had directly inspired him—in one of Couperin's "*Tenebrae*" Masses, and there he sang in that register for 22 minutes. "But on a record I was able to pause between 'takes'," Cuenod pointed out. "I hadn't thought of that", said Stravinsky gruffly.

Cuenod's first appearance at Glyndebourne came in 1954 when he was already over 50, yet since then he has appeared there in some 350 performances. Proudly he points out that this season he has topped the record for Glyndebourne appearances previously held by another tenor, Richard Lewis. When he first arrived he pointed out to Moran Caplat that he had very nearly been engaged some 18 years

earlier for one of the pre-war seasons. John Christie had read about him, and Cuenod, having given a preliminary audition in Paris, was due to come over for a final audition when a cable arrived asking with Christie-like directness: "How tall are you?" No, they said promptly in their next cable, he was far too tall for Monastatos or Pedrillo.

That failure to appear at Glyndebourne before the war had been a disappointment to him, but when he did arrive in 1954 he had his consolation. Since then he has appeared in every Glyndebourne season except one, creating dozens of comedy rôles, providing Glyndebourne sparkle more predictably than any other singer. The one exception was the 1961 season, but Cuenod told Caplat frankly that he wouldn't get rid of him that easily. He came for a holiday instead, staying where he always stays at Mrs. Almond's in Ringmer, a marvellous haven where generations of Glyndebourne singers find a home from home.

Not surprisingly life at Glyndebourne during the season isn't just a question of going on stage, and Cuenod's rôle over the years has been almost as much social as theatrical. He is a star, but he is also one of the team. Now that he has been there so long, he finds that he has to act as father confessor in the sort of emotional problems you get when any temperamental artistes are working together. Not that he minds temperament. He prefers that to the plodding inability to enjoy working at Glyndebourne which afflicts some of the teutonic newcomers. "A singing pudding" he says, of one rising star.

Significantly the colleagues he singles out for highest praise are those who remain themselves, unspoiled, "simple" in the best sense, who have worked at Glyndebourne as though born there. Joan Sutherland he mentions particularly (Mme. Silberklang in Glyndebourne's "*Impresario*" was a landmark when she was on her way up) and also Janet Baker "one of the greatest artistes I've ever heard." He