

Anglo-Swiss

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listened to Janet Baker's Dido at Glyndebourne from the wings every night, before going off to make up for his part in the second half of the programme, Ravel's "L'heure Espagnole." This very season Janet Baker has even managed to expand her dramatic range in the comic Cavalli opera "La Calisto", doubling the rôles of Diana and (riding crop in hand) the lascivious Jove dressed as Diana. Cuenod in the same production, as a bad-tempered nymph, finally ravished by one of Pan's satyrs, has a memorable triumph.

The part of the nymph in "La Calisto" was devised by the editor and conductor, Raymond Leppard, as a vehicle specially for Cuenod (the sort of adaptation dear to seventeenth-century hearts) yet Cuenod almost missed the chance of appearing. Some government official asked Moran Caplat why so small a part could not be taken by an English instead of a Swiss singer. Caplat had the complete answer. M. Cuenod, he explained, was unique in such "drag" parts. He was "an operatic Danny La Rue".

That link with cabaret did not insult Cuenod in the way it would have done many other singers. His first appearance in England—as far back as 1928—was not in opera at all, but in Noël Coward's "Bitter Sweet" as one of the Green Carnations. The singer Mary Garden recommended him, and Coward "out of respect" engaged him. "I may have lost a lot a year in not singing Bach and things, but I learnt a lot about another side of my work".

Cuenod, unlike so many singers, has a wide range of interests. In praising Vittorio Gui, great Glyndebourne figure for many years after the war, Cuenod at once mentions the conductor's literary taste. "You could talk Proust with him." He himself came to know Aldous Huxley through Stravinsky and before the war as one of Nadia Boulangers' group (he was one of the soloists in her famous pre-war records of Monteverdi) he was at the centre of the Parisian world of music and the arts.

He remembers that for one of Nadia Boulanger's concerts he was preparing excerpts from Debussy's "Pelléas et Mélisande", and (again with the good offices of Mary Garden) he went to see Maeterlinck's widow, Georgette Leblanc. Her home was almost a caricature of 1890 taste—"orange cushions, black velvet Pierrots, spooky in a Charles Adams way"—and she told Cuenod of the time when, still married to her first husband, she was meeting Maeterlinck secretly. She remembered one meeting on a park bench in a Belgian provincial town, prosaic with its bandstand and lamp standards. "Don't look now, but I think my husband is behind us", she had said to Maeterlinck. Then a

moment later: "I can see his shadow. It is my husband". The husband then stepped forward, brandishing not a spear as Golaud does in "Pelléas et Mélisande" but a pistol. Maeterlinck was so frightened he jumped straight up a tree, and so impressed he transformed a sordid scene into the magical experience of "Pelléas".

Cuenod's background is Swiss. He has lived in and around Vevey on Lake Geneva almost all his life, and still keeps a fine old house there. Curiously he was living there at exactly the time when within a mile or so Stravinsky was busy writing "The Rite of Spring" but Cuenod, 20 years younger than the great man, was too young to know him.

He had family connections with England on both sides. His father had two English grandmothers (producing colonel cousins who, as Cuenod says, were "the backbone of empire") and on his mother's side he has Spencer-Churchill ancestors. His first visit to England came through the family, when he tutored two distant cousins in French in their Gloucestershire home. That was in the early twenties. He remembers that "they drank barley-water y'know, and made me look at cricket for a long time, which bored me to death". As long as he doesn't have to look at cricket (which he still doesn't understand) Cuenod loves being in England. For as long as he can sing, I predict that he will be here every season, for he, like cricket and Glyndebourne, has become an English institution.

(Guardian)

ANGLO-SWISS

ACROW JUST SHORT OF FORECAST

Acrow (Engineers), William de Vigiers structural metalwork group, reports profits for the year of £2,079,000 before tax. This is within £1,000 of the forecast made last September, at the time of Acrow's unsuccessful takeover bid for Allied Ironfounders, and is exactly 10 per cent better than the previous year.

At the trading level, profits were 16 per cent higher at £2,585,000, but depreciation rose £68,000 to £377,000, and instead of receiving net "other" income of £39,000, Acrow paid net interest of £44,000. After a lower proportionate tax charge, however, earnings are over 19 per cent better at £1,223,000, or 1s. 10.2d. a share. The total dividend is increased by a final of 5.4d. to 10.8d. a share, compared with the equivalent of 9.5d.

For the first four months of the current year, sales are reported to be at an all-time record.

(Times)

SWISS DRUG FIRMS IN UK PROFITS CLASH

The British Government has clashed head on with major Swiss drug companies over a demand by the Department of Health that the firms provide complete sets of accounts—something which not even the Swiss Government can demand.

This follows arrangements agreed in Britain in April to ensure that the price of prescription drugs is fair and there is no excessive profiteering.



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