

# George A. Ronus †

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objekttyp: **Obituary**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1970)**

Heft 1604

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

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evening, pop star Cliff Richard. The first prize was a holiday in Switzerland. When he had given away all the prizes, Cliff performed some of his very old and classical numbers, such as "Living Doll" and "Bachelor Boy" and the attendance accompanied him with rhythmic clapping.

Cliff Richard came out mopping his forehead from this exercise and was immediately surrounded by a swarm of raptured old ladies trying for an autograph. As he was claimed by so many people, it was not possible for me to talk to him. Although I wouldn't think that the majority of the friends who read this report rock and roll anymore, I'm sure that they must of heard of Cliff Richard, a veteran of the pop world. He was already at the top in the heady days of Paul Anka, Ricky Nelson and Tommy Steele and has professionally outlived them all. In fact, the only group with a comparable history would be "The Shadows". They, like Cliff Richard, were active long before the "Beatles" and the "Rolling Stones". Cliff is now 31 or 32 and still a bachelor. This, together with the exceptional length of his career, makes him a rather off-beam pop singer. There is another important element: Cliff is a confessed Christian and has written a sincere and limpid book on his faith. He doesn't seem to have a forcible personality but exudes a gentle simplicity and a genuine kindness which catches anyone who observes him for a little while.

Guests were still pounding the dance floor when we left at 1 a.m., taking a Swiss flag with Cliff Richard's autograph as a souvenir.

(PMB)

## MADELEINE BAER AND LENNART RABES

### A Musical Treat commemorating the World Day for Animals

On Saturday, 3rd October, a concert took place at the Humane Education Centre in London. It was in aid of the Crusade against all Cruelty to Animals, and it was held in association with the European Liszt Centre (ELC). The good cause and the reputation of the artists greatly appealed to members, and a second performance had to be fixed for the late afternoon. This demanded great stamina of the artists, but both rose magnificently to the strenuous demand.

The well-known Swiss soprano, Miss Madeleine Baer (niece of Mr. Frank Conrad), had kindly offered to come all the way from Switzerland to take part in the recital. The Swedish-born pianist, Lennart Rabes, has connections with the Swiss community in London, too; he is the organist of the German-speaking parish of the Swiss Church. This Swiss accent was no doubt the reason why the Swiss Cultural Attaché and Mrs. Birrer, as well as the Swiss Consul and Mrs. Adams attended the concert. There were a number of prominent Swiss in the audience, some of them connected with the

European Liszt Centre. Also among the guests were the Wood Green Deputy Mayor and Lady Mayoress, as well as the Lord Somers who is connected both with the Crusade and the ELC (he is on their Advisory Committee which includes such personalities as Sir Adrian Bold, C.H.). Lord Somers made the introduction and welcomed the guests.

The concert began with a series of piano pieces and songs in which animals figured, whilst the second part was devoted to Liszt. Miss Baer contributed three songs to the animals series, among them Schubert's "Forelle". In the second part, she sang six songs by Liszt, well-known poems by Goethe, Heine and others, which have attracted composers in the past. Liszt's supremacy showed itself in the way he adjusted his music to the mood of the words.

Miss Baer's considerable reputation was made on the continent as a talented operatic singer, and her sense of the dramatic is very marked, rather too much perhaps for a *Lieder* singer. In Moussorgsky's "Käfer" and Pfitzner's "Ich hör ein Vöglein locken", this was an advantage, and her skill manifested itself to the full. In Liszt's beautiful lyrical songs, however, she showed a certain lack of serenity and calm, one of the essential qualities of a *Lieder* singer. But her voice is full and warm, especially in the middle range, and it is here that her musicality shows itself to the greatest advantage. It is hoped that one will have the opportunity of hearing her fine voice in more dramatic works in the future.

Lennart Rabes began his career in Sweden with piano instruction at the age of 4½ and conducting lessons at 9, and although he is now resident in London, his reputation is as yet more established on the continent than in this country. He is the first pianist who was given the honour of playing Liszt's "Totentanz" at the Campo Santo Monumentale in Pisa, below the famous frescos which inspired Liszt to compose that superb work. Mr. Rabes's recital made such an impression that he was called back to Italy to repeat the concert.

In the recital on 3rd October, he was impressive both as a pianist and as a perceptive and responsive accompanist. His strength lies in the interpretation of Liszt, a composer he seems to know intimately, rather than in some of the descriptive "animal" pieces. In spite of his beautifully polished style and fleetness of fingers, it is not in his character to produce the flippancy required for Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumble Bee", nor the light-hearted playfulness for Debussy's "Jimbo Lullaby". He is an artist who puts himself completely into second place and lets the music dominate, a most welcome change from some of the keyboard artists who show an over-endowment of panache. Behind his cool and always collected

appearance lies great sensitivity and a very wide range of accomplished and powerful interpretation from the soft lyrical to the highly spectacular. In "Un Sospiro" and "La Leggerezza", his lightness of touch was as convincing as his brilliance and vigour in the "Csárdás Macabre", a spirited and astonishingly modern work by Liszt, composed in 1881-2, but not published until 1953, and which has only recently been included in pianists' repertoires. Lennart Rabes is undoubtedly a highly gifted and skilful artist. One hopes to hear him more frequently also in this country. (E.F.)

## GEORGE A. RONUS



As we announced in our last issue, Mr. George Ronus died on 8th October after a short but severe illness at the London Clinic. With him, the Swiss community in Great Britain, especially the Swiss in London, have lost not only a prominent member but also a trusted friend. As Managing Director of the Dorchester Hotel he was a much respected representative of what is best in the Swiss tradition of hotel-keeping.



George Ronus was born in Basle and decided very early in his life that he would like to be an *hôtelier*. But he wanted to learn about finances first, so he spent four years in a bank in St. Moritz, followed by a year in the office of a chartered accountant in London. He began his real training at the Suvretta House in St. Moritz, followed by a period at the equally renowned Park Hotel at Vitznau on the Lake of Lucerne.

The late Mr. Anton Bon of the famous Swiss hotel family, Managing Director of the Dorchester Hotel in London until 1946, chose the young man as his assistant in 1936. Shrewdly assessing his abilities, he trained him to be his successor, and he appointed him Manager at the outbreak of the war, when George Ronus was only 31. He could not have made a better choice. Throughout the war, Mr. Ronus remained at his post, taking no holidays and no notice of bombs and rockets.

He looked after Allied war leaders, Cabinet Ministers and Ambassadors, and all came to respect his quiet efficiency and friendly manner.

When he was appointed Managing Director in 1946, it made no difference to his mode of life; he worked long hours and kept a close control of all departments. In 1962, he was appointed to the Board of the new British Transport Hotels Company, a post he held until shortly before his death. As M.D. of the Dorchester, he met many great and famous people, among them the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh and several foreign royal guests. In 1965, he decided to see the world, and he made a tour visiting hotels in U.S.A. and Canada, in the Middle and the Far East.

In February 1943, Mr. Ronus joined the City Swiss Club, and ever since he has had a particularly happy relationship with this, one of the senior Swiss societies in this country. But he also had excellent relations with other Swiss organisations, and he was always ready to help, not least when any of his fellow countrymen were in real need. His friends deeply sympathised with him when he lost his wife Ghita (née Sayer) in 1957.

Now George Ronus has left his post at the early age of 62 after many years of devoted service. His successor will have a hard job living up to this outstanding *hôte*, and the Dorchester will never be quite the same again. We extend our warmest sympathy to Mr. Robert Ronus (son) and the family.

(MM)

## MRS. AUGUSTA VIRGINIA BERTI



The Swiss community in general and the Unione Ticinese in particular mourn the death of Mrs. A. V. Berti, of 49 St. John's Villas, London, N.19. She died early on Sunday morning, 11th October, at the age of 80. Mrs.



Berti was a Ticinese, but like her mother and grandmother before her, she was born in London, where she grew up at her parents' bakery in Edgware Road. When her mother died, she

was only 14. So she was sent to Switzerland where she lived for 9 years in the Ticino. It is there that she met her husband Carlo Berti who had been in Great Britain since 1900. They got married in Switzerland and then returned to London.

The Bertis were and still are a close-knit family. They had four sons and a daughter, but tragically lost the latter in a rocket attack on London during the war, and their son Ernest died suddenly of a heart attack.

Shortly before the war, Mrs. Berti, together with the late Mrs. Lunghi-Rezzonico (mother of Mrs. J. Eusebio), founded the Sezione Femile of the Unione Ticinese. Mr. Lunghai was the first President, and when she retired, Mrs. Berti took over. She did sterling work, just like her husband did as President of the Unione Ticinese. We well remember the 75th Anniversary Banquet and Ball at the Dorchester Hotel, when Mr. Berti was in the chair, and the then Federal Councillor Dr. E. Celio attended the event.

In the mid-fifties, the Sezione Femile merged with the parent society, but Mrs. Berti went on taking an active interest, even after her husband's death in 1961. Up to a couple of years ago, Mrs. Berti was a most prolific and expert knitter; then her health forced her to "retire".

She is mourned by her sons, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild, by a large family circle and many friends. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to them all, especially to Mr. Virgil Berti who carries on the tradition of serving the Swiss community in London.

(MM)

## PETER ODERMATT



It is with deep regret that we announce the sudden death on 12th October, of Mr. Peter Odermatt, of "Vitznau", 37 Reservoir Road, Whitstable, Kent. Mr. Odermatt came to this country from Central Switzerland and is one of the founder members of the Swiss Rifle Association. He was 83. We extend our sincere sympathy to his wife Rose and the family. We have been asked to say that donations, if desired, may be sent to: National Kidney Research Fund, 41 Portland Place, London, W.1.

## FREDERIC RUDOLPHE LIER



It is with deep regret that we announce the sudden death of Mr. Frederic Rudolphe Lier at Brentwood. He died on 26th October at the age of 74. Mr. Lier was very active in the Swiss community in his earlier years, especially as a most regular member of the Swiss Choral Society. We express our deep sympathy to his family.

## MEMORIAL SERVICE TO GEORGE RONUS

A memorial service to Mr. George Ronus will be celebrated at St. George's Church, Hanover Square, on Monday, 23rd November at noon.

## PERSONAL

It is with great pleasure that we announce the marriage of the Rev. Uli Stefan of the Swiss Church in London to Miss Ursula Prato. The wedding took place at the Church in Wabern, Berne, on 17th October. The young couple are spending their honeymoon in the Middle East where they will also be making a study tour. We are looking forward to seeing them back in London and wish them every happiness for the future.

Mr. John Weibel married Mrs. Lorna Jane White at Uplyme Parish Church in Devonshire on 10th October. The ceremony was intimate and friendly and Mr. L. S. R. Asch acted as Mr. Weibel's best man. The newly-weds then left on a honeymoon tour of South Wales and were blessed by the weather and the beauty of the sceneries they saw. We wish them every happiness and send them our warmest congratulations.

Philippe Bonvin, son of Mr. Edgar Bonvin, was appointed Artillery Lieutenant on 6th November. He will now have to "pay for his stripes" by serving four months in a recruit school this winter. Philippe is a law student in Geneva and well on his way to graduation.

He has—and deserves—a proud father!

Mr. J. A. Reiber, whose name was unfortunately misspelt when we announced his birthday on 11th September, has asked us to put right our indication of his age. He was 85, not 84, on October 1st. We would like to extend to him both our admiration and good wishes.

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