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CONCERT

STADTMUSIK SOLOTHURN

at the

CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER, on TUESDAY, JUNE 12th, 1951

London has its "Festival of Britain", the London Swiss Colony, not to be outdone, had for almost a week (June 12th—17th) a Festival all of its own, with Concerts, Garden Parties, Luncheons and Dinners, and those who had, by virtue of their office, to attend some, if not all of this veritable orgy of functions were wellnigh exhausted at its conclusion.

On Tuesday, June 12th, the famous "STADTMUSIK — SOLOTHURN" consisting of 80 musicians, all of whom are amateurs, was heard for the first time by an English and Swiss audience who filled the Central Hall, Westminster, to full capacity; even the seats directly behind the band were occupied and many, who had not booked in advance had to be turned away.

It was unfortunate that another function, this time in honour of the no less reputed "Chanson de Lausanne" was fixed, at the last moment by one of our Swiss Societies at the Dorchester Hotel, a clash which should have been avoided. The concert of the "Stadtmusik" had been announced and widely advertised for some considerable time in advance, and our compatriots should not have been faced with the dilemma of which function to attend. Some time ago a body had been instituted, one of its aims being to ensure better co-ordination with regard to the various social arrangements made by the different Swiss Societies, their efforts in this case have lamentably failed.

Clashes in specific cases cannot always be avoided

and the concerts of the "Stadtmusik" — of which the Swiss Benevolent Society was part beneficiary — and the "Fête Suisse" following each other within the span of two days, could not be helped, but surely two major functions in one week would have been ample, and if no other date for the Dorchester reception could have been found, it would have been far better to leave things alone, and give our old friends from Lausanne, who had a very heavy programme for the week, an "evening off" it would have given them and our purses a rest. Having thus relieved my mind and voiced the opinion of a large number of our readers, I will continue to give a description of this most successful evening of the 12th inst.

Punctually at 7.45 p.m. the members of the Solothurn band appeared on the concert platform amidst thunderous applause. To acquaint our readers with the history of one of Switzerland's leading bands, we reproduce herewith some of the notes which appeared on the attractive programme.

"The band was formed in 1845, with a membership of sixteen, and gave its first concert in December of that year at the Solothurn Town Theatre (incidentally, the oldest theatre in Switzerland). Under the able conductorship of Hans Wiedenbauer, the band went from strength to strength, and in 1864 it was responsible, together with its President, Franz de Vigier, for the organisation of the first Musical Festival for Brass Bands which took place, appropri-



ately, in Solothurn. Since that date the Festival has become a regular feature of Swiss musical life and the Stadtmusik has always been very much to the forefront on these occasions. Among recent notable successes may be mentioned the 1931 Festival of Berne where the band qualified for the first rank, and the 1934 Festival at Dornach, where it was awarded first prize.

The services of Stadtmusik Solothurn have been much in demand on many important public occasions, both Cantonal and Federal. During the 106 years of its existence, no major event has taken place in Solothurn without the participation of the Stadtmusik.

The musicians of the Stadtmusik Solothurn — 80 in number — are all amateurs, who have devoted their leisure hours to making their band the finest of its kind in Switzerland. They are brilliantly led by their conductor, Dr. Franz Koenigshofer, whilst among the outstanding personalities to whose active support the band owes so much are the Honorary President, Dr. Wilhelm de Vigier, and the President in office, Mr. Erwin Berger.

Despite its long standing, the Stadtmusik has always remained 'young' in outlook and performance. This vitality is manifest in its many concerts at home and abroad, in broadcasts, and in performances at innumerable social events."

After the two National Anthems had been played, the band started their programme with a breezy March "General Guisan", by Stephan Jaeggi, a former conductor of the "Stadtmusik", this March, played with perfect mastery brought back memories of the visit of General Guisan, who three years ago addressed a "Fête Suisse" gathering in the very same Hall. The "Romantic Ouverture" by the same composer which followed, was played in fine style. This band certainly possesses a very serviceable technical equipment, and a full and rich tone, and its conductor, Dr. Franz Koenigshofer, has them well in hand.

To bring a little diversion into the programme, a song and yodel duo was then introduced, and when Agi Achermann and Ernst Berchtold appeared on the stage, dressed in Swiss national costume, they received a hearty reception. Together, they sang and yodelled simple folklore melodies, such as "s'Schmutzli" by Grolimund, "Am Aetti s'trutz" by Ummel, and Schedler's "Züriseeliedli", Aigi Achermann has not only a pleasing voice, but is also good "to look at", she has a clear and vigorous diction which made listening to her a real pleasure, and by the way, she is also a good actress; her partner, Ernst Berchtold, sang very pleasantly too, and his accordeon accompaniment was efficient and discreet. Their performance was loudly, and let me say, deservedly cheered.

Next appeared an "Alphornbläser" in the person of Joseph Schibler; this 12 ft. long instrument is a most imposing affair, and requires a pair of sound and powerful lungs. The "Alphorn" is one of the oldest of musical instruments and existed in Switzerland as far back as 1280. It was used chiefly in the mountainous districts as a call to battle, a signal for help against marauders, or as a warning of fire. I understand that the sound can be heard as far away as eight miles, and If I would be a little younger, I should certainly acquire this instrument, thus enabling me to announce my departure for home — our house being within the radius of most of my ports of call.— Mr. Schibler blew well and long and his efforts were

much appreciated. These mighty sounds had hardly "evaporated" when four drummers made their appearance, I was told that they won first prize at one of the Federal drummers competition, they played with remarkable skill and an almost uncanny technique. I read in one of our history books, that in olden times, when the warriors lined up for battle, the drummers started to beat their drums, causing such consternation in the enemy's ranks, that many, then and there, ran away. I am not surprised, after having heard our "Solothurner" drummers, one fair lady in my immediate neighbourhood nearly jumped from the gallery down into the stalls from sheer excitement, or was it fear?

When everyone had recovered from the strain, the "Stadtmusik" played a *potpourri* of popular Swiss tunes, amongst them the "Appenzeller" and "Sempacher Lied", "Luegit vo Bärg und Tal", "Addio la Caserma", "O Bluemli mi" and the "Bernermarsch", the latter could not have been played better by the "Berner Stadtmusik". Oh!, how these melodies brought back treasured memories to us Swiss living "loin du pays"; simple tunes which we sang in our youthful days, and which now recall so many happy and carefree times.

After a short interval, during which the Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté greeted the members of the Organising Committee and the various officials of the "Solothurner Stadtmusik" who accompanied them, namely Mr. Erwin Berger, the President and Dr. W. de Vigier, Honorary President, etc., etc., the band started the second part of the programme with a waltz, "Im sonnigen Süden" by



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R. Boggio, here the conductor, Dr. Franz Koenigsberger, who hails from Vienna — where he was conductor of the "Radio Wien Orchestra" and "Gastdirigent" of the Staatsoper" and formerly "Kapellmeister" at the opera house in Breslau — was in his element, and the players readily submitted to his baton.

Again Agi Achermann and Ernst Berchtold, Joseph Schibler, the "Alphornbläser" and the drummers entertained the audience in a delightful manner.

The last item on the programme included two numbers played by the band with vocal solo by M. Charles Fouquier, namely "Le blé qui se lève" by G. Doret, arranged by Franz Koenigshofer, and "Le Ranz des Vaches" arranged by G. Canivez. Our compatriots from the French-speaking part of Switzerland were delighted to hear one of their most popular melodies sung and played so efficiently by M. Fouquier and the band, and so were all those from the "other quarters" of the Confederation.

Never-ending applause induced the band to give an *encore* for which they had chosen Sousa's lively march "El capitano", a befitting *finale* to a fine evening's entertainment.

In summing up, I can say without exaggeration, that the performance throughout reached a high standard and was most enjoyable. The town of Solothurn, this lovely town at the foot of the Jura mountains, is to be heartily congratulated on having in their midst such a fine and efficient fraternity of musicians and an outstanding conductor. If at times the tone of the band was perhaps a little over-resonant for the rela-

tively small Central Hall, no blame can be attached to them, the Albert Hall might have been more suitable for such a big band.

Our sincere thanks go to the organisers of this very successful entertainment, especially to our countrymen Mr. W. A. de Vigier (Chairman) and Mr. E. Wey, who have worked so hard to give us so much pleasure, and also to the "Stadtmusik — Solothurn" and the various artists who have captured our hearts by their munificent performance.

A fine and unforgettable evening which has once again brought us nearer to the land which we call so proudly and affectionately

LA PATRIE.

ST.

STADTMUSIK — SOLOTHURN.

(*The President of the above band has asked us to insert the following message*) :

AN DIE SCHWEIZERKOLONIE LONDON

Herzlichsten Dank für die äusserst liebenswürdige Aufnahme und Gastfreundschaft durch die London Schweizer.

Alle Solothurner sind begeistert und denken noch lange zurück an die Englandreise.

Wir wünschen allen Landsleuten in der Fremde viele sonnige Tage.

Stadtmusik — Solothurn
Der Präsident :

E. BERGER.

London, den 14. Juni, 1951.

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