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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER.

Visit of the "Chanson de Lausanne" and the "Musique du Folly".

"La Chanson de Lausanne", accompanied by "La Musique du Folly" were the guests of the Swiss Club Manchester for the two days from the evening of the 27th, to the morning of the 29th April. The programme was as follows:

April 27th, 6.30 p.m. Arrival by Swissair at Ringway Airport. 8 p.m. Dinner at The Midland Hotel with members of the Swiss Colony. April 28th, 9.45 a.m. Excursion by Motor Coach, with a short concert to patients of a hospital. 4. p.m. Reception at the Town Hall by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress. 7 p.m. Public Concert at The Lesser Free Trade Hall. April 29th, 10 a.m. Recording at a B.B.C. studio.

Despite very modest literary or journalistic experiences the reporting of this visit is made easy because, after hearing the lovely singing of this wonderful choir one is in a state of ecstasy, both physical and aesthetic, that just overflows into words of praise.

The welcome at the Airport was attended by our Consul M. Oscar Schneider, our President M. Ermanno Berner, our Vice-President M. Max Lichtensteiger as well as by reporters and photographers from many newspapers. In the great hall the choir gave a few songs for the benefit of the press, and it was shortly after 7 p.m. before they could enter their coach for Manchester.

Arriving at The Midland Hotel at 7.45 p.m. they were entertained to an excellent dinner — the participants numbering 83. An address of welcome by our President was followed by a speech by M. Jaccard of Lausanne. Then the Choir volunteered to render several of their choicest songs, amongst them the always popular "La Jardinière du Roy" with tenor solo by their conductor M. Frank Guibat, a voice never to be forgotten for clarity, sweetness of tone and power.

The accommodation of the whole party was distributed amongst our many Swiss families, and we met again the next morning for an organized visit to parts of Cheshire and Derbyshire.

We left by motor coach, 42 of us with Mr. H. Monney as guide. Passing through Wilmslow, Alderley Edge and Congleton, we soon arrived at the "Biddulph Grange Orthopaedic Hospital" (just into Staffordshire) where the children were gathered in

one ward, some in their beds, others on cushions on the floor, with the staff, Matron, nurses doctors and others. A twenty minutes concert was very much enjoyed by these unfortunate children, judging by their vociferous applause there is no doubt that they would have liked it to last longer.

Proceeding through Buxton and Millers Dale, we soon reached the picturesque Derbyshire village of Castleton, with the ruins of Peveril Castle on the hill dominating the scene. We had a quick lunch — very quick as we were behind with our time table — and then travelled back to Manchester, passing through Chapel-en-le-Frith, Whaley Bridge, Disley and Stockport.

After only a few minutes to change into their gala clothes, our visitors were received at the Town Hall by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Abraham Moss, J.P., M.A. and the Lady Mayoress. The Lord Mayor expressed his pleasure at having been given the opportunity of welcoming the visitors from Lausanne and M. Albas, Syndic of Vevey, replied appropriately. A presentation to the Lord Mayor of a Plated Pewter Wine Jug was made, inscribed as:

To the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Manchester as a token of friendship from the People of the State of Vaud, April, 1954.

The choir gave two songs, one with tenor solo by M. Guibat.

After high tea at the Y.M.C.A. there remained an hour before the concert.

At 7 o'clock the public was still pouring into The Lesser Free Trade Hall and it was not before 7.20 p.m. that the concert could start.

ANNUAL SWISS SPORTS AND GARDEN PARTY

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at

THE POLYTECHNIC STADIUM, CHISWICK
from 2 to 7 p.m.

The programme includes

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BOYS' and GIRLS' RACES
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and musical entertainment by the Swiss Accordion Club.

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Refreshments available.

Programmes with full details will be on sale on the Grounds.

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By Bus No. 71 from Hammersmith to Polytechnic Sports Ground.

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I would not presume to make an expert report on the performance but just try to express my own feelings. The selection of songs was extremely varied, one might say "from the sublime to the profane". A prayer in Valaisian dialect, the solemnity of which could not be surpassed and had, in parts, a style approaching the well known Russian Credo. Without detailing many songs, I will refer also to "Aveva gli Occhi neri" which was typically Italian and with a quick martial tempo, very pleasant. And then some of the comical songs, like "Le Tailleur" with the constantly repeated "Les tailleurs sont des voleurs" as the background, or the song from Brittany of the girl refusing a kiss from a cobbler because he was unshaven. All songs, solemn or humorous, were given with just the right emphasis and in perfect harmonious blending and balance.

In lieu of intervals "La Musique du Folly" gave several items of Dance music which were very much appreciated, as was also their accompaniment to Swiss Popular Dances interspersed between the groups of songs.

For a more expert opinion I will quote "The Manchester Guardian" of April 28th, whose first Music Critic, signing "C.M." (Colin Mason), a man known for very severe constructive criticism, reports as follows:

"A concert was given in the Manchester Lesser Free Trade Hall last night by the Swiss choir the "Chanson de Lausanne". Although the members of this choir are amateurs they are very musical, inspiringly trained by Frank Guibat, a sensitive musician, who conducts them, sings all the male solos, and makes most of their arrangements — all admirable, and some very beautiful, notably a song from

Brittany, "Les Marins de Groix," and a refreshingly unsentimental, uninhibited, and imaginative setting of "Loch Lomond." What little their singing lacks in professional finish is more than compensated for in the singers' affecting spontaneity and enjoyment. The sing for the proper reason — their own pleasure — to which the add by dressing up in traditional Vaudois costumes, which have strictly nothing to do with most of what they sing but contribute to its charm because of the complete lack of commercial intention, of any "tourist" appeal.

Where the costumes have a full right to be is in the Swiss popular dances with which the song groups are interspersed. The instrumental music for these was played by a group from Vevey, "La Musique du Folly," which also provided interludes of outdoor music in place of an interval. All that was missing was a glass of wine and a table to lean one's elbows on. It was a sociable and agreeable evening of musical pleasure at many levels."

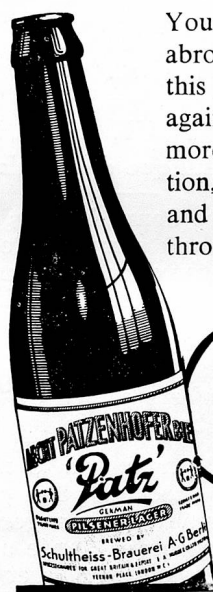
Such a report, from this National Newspaper, is a warm tribute, and the "Chanson de Lausanne" can indeed be very proud.

The next morning, April 29th, a recording was made at a B.B.C. studio for a short broadcast to be given on May 7th, at 6.30 p.m. in the North Regional programme.

And so we saw our visitors off by motor coach to London and were indeed sorry to part. A fine lot of singers as well as a group of charming people.

Thank you "La Chanson de Lausanne" and "La Musique du Folly" and to you Maître Frank Guibat, our most sincere congratulations for a masterly performance. It is an experience that will remain with us for a lifetime.

H.M.



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