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HOW TO LAUNCH A MUSICAL FESTIVAL

The International Festival of Youth Orchestras is an original annual event that has taken place only three times. The first two festivals were staged at St. Moritz in 1969 and 1970, and this year's event took place in Lausanne. Despite these Swiss venues and the involvement of the Swiss national Tourist Office, the International Festival of Youth Orchestras originated in the mind of Mr. Lionel Bryer, an English dentist, with a keen interest in music.

With this idea, he approached the conductor of the Midland Youth Orchestra, Mr. Blythe Major, and the Festival soon materialised. St. Moritz was chosen as the venue because its *Kurverein* had been particularly helpful. The Swiss National Tourist Office gave the budding Festival considerable support, as did also a number of Swiss firms.

The first festival, which was reported at the time in these columns, was a great success. Leopold Stokowski conducted youth orchestras from Europe and America. The following year, he accepted to conduct again on the condition that the rather small hall used previously, which had inadequate acoustics, be changed into something better. Eventually a tent was used, but its capacity was insufficient.

The shortcomings of St. Moritz as a venue for an international event of growing reputation prompted the organisers to look for somewhere else to go. After several months of enquiring, they plumped for Lausanne, which had splendid facilities with the Beaulieu centre and which was willing to accommodate the musicians of eight orchestras in local schools.

Who are these organisers? There are only two of them, in fact. Mrs. Bryer, wife of the inspirator of the Festival, and a secretary, Miss Nichola Wallis, from whom we learnt of the workings of the International Festival of Youth Orchestras. Their office is at 24 Cadogan Square, London SW1.

It takes two persons occupied full-time and working a whole year to organise a yearly gathering of eight youth orchestras from three continents. Their work is basically concerned with selecting orchestras, finding a venue and raising funds.

In the three years of its existence, the Annual Festival of Youth Orchestras has made a name for itself and suffers from no shortage of candidates. An orchestra wishing to participate at the Festival is asked to send a tape of its performance and its eligibility will be judged on that basis. The main im-

pediment to making these annual events into a fair representation of the musical life of the young is the cost of the journey. American and European youth orchestras are financially and geographically better placed to join in than Asian youth orchestras. Nevertheless, a youth orchestra from Singapore managed to make the journey to Lausanne this year, together with three American youth orchestras, and orchestras from Switzerland, Norway, Czechoslovakia and Great Britain.

Secondly, the two ladies at "head office" spend much time in finding an adequate venue. The Festival may take place in England next year, as Switzerland is not the cheapest of places.

Fund-raising is obviously a most important preoccupation. It costs about £10,000 a year to keep the Festival going. As most of the box-office receipts are used in renting premises and in organising concerts on the site, much support has to be sought among large companies and foundations.

A circular letter underlining the great cultural and "co-existential" value of the International Festival of Youth Orchestras is thus addressed to dozens of organisations and draws forth a surprising number of replies. In fact, the Festival received about £2,000 in contributions from some 50 donating companies last year.

What is most urgently sought, however, is a firm sponsor. The Festival was sponsored by IOS and Gramco in its second year, but the fate that has befallen these companies prevent them from playing such a role any longer. For 1972, the Festival will receive the gift of 25,000 dollars from the Chase Manhattan Bank. This, with contributions from other American banks, from firms like Migros, Biostrath, ICI and Unilever, will permit the Festival to

expand its activities and award more musical scholarships.

The 1971 Festival at Lausanne was a great success. It lunched off on an uncertain start owing to a lack of publicity. It took three days before the townspeople of Lausanne began to fill the Beaulieu theatre. The youth orchestra also performed in neighbouring towns and resorts. The much acclaimed guest performer was the Chinese pianist Fou Tsong.

The Festival of Youth Orchestras is not a competition. No prize is awarded because this would go against its guiding principle. But the best performer is offered a grant by Biostrath to study for one year under the violinist Max Rorstad in Berne. This year, there were two equally-placed top performers and Mr. Pestalozzi, managing director of Biostrath, awarded two separate grants.

Two years ago, we reported on the efforts of a West End stamp dealer, Mr. Kurt Ketterer, in starting a new kind of musical entertainment. His idea was to bank entirely on the high sound quality currently afforded by modern equipment and to do away with orchestras altogether as they distracted the listener from the music. This is how his "Music without distraction" performances took off. Mr. Ketterer had to abandon his stamps altogether.

Mr. Bryer's case is similar in its originality. An English dentist starts a regular musical event that had never been tried before in a foreign country: the situation does not come about every day.

Next year, the International Festival of Youth Orchestras will include ballet in its programme, and Mr. Edward Heath, who accepted to patron the Festival from the start, has not declined doing so after having become Prime Minister. He cannot be present at the Festival's opening day, but kindly says a word in the Programme. This doubtless adds lustre to this developing annual musical event.

(PMB)



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