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produced in his workshop. This bibliography shows that there are hardly any works in English devoted to the Alphorn, or, more generally, Alpine instruments. Available literature is nearly all of Swiss origin. Mr. Woodhouse's brochure also points to Dr. Geiser's eminence in the world of musicology. Little did we know, when we heard this retiring and unassuming woman academic that the Society's guest speaker for the evening was probably the world's greatest authority on the Alphorn!

But in Britain, Mr. Woodhouse must surely be one of the few people with an in-depth knowledge of this instrument. To the best of our knowledge, he is certainly the only one to manufacture any in this country whereas there are still, according to Dr. Geiser, some twenty Alphorn manufacturers in Switzerland.

Mr. Woodhouse's Alphorns are made in fibreglass. He has tried making Alphorns in wood but found that the importation of suitable trees was not a practical proposition and that the labour costs were extremely high. Consequently, he has made a wooden mould of the authentic shape and produced Alphorns from fibreglass and resin.

His standard instrument is in E and suffers the limitations of valveless instruments in that it will only play notes of the harmonic series (bugle call). However, because of the extreme length of this instrument (12ft. 10in. and 10 inches diameter at the bell end) high harmonics and thus diatonic melodies are possible for players with a good ear. Wooden extension pieces may be provided if required to lower the pitch to E flat, D flat or C. Being cylindrical, instead of tapered, these extensions do not improve either the tone or the appearance, however.

Fibreglass and resin have the advantage over wood of their light weight. Mr. Woodhouse's Alphorns weigh only 7lb and are easy to lift by hand. In a short leaflet on his instruments, Mr. Woodhouse recognises that, although they are "unusual and attractive in appearance", playing them in a small room "may give rise to domestic problems".

The Alphorns coming out of Mr. Woodhouse's workshop are not mass-produced. Although he did send two to Australia — to be given to the "Swiss" ski lodges there — production has been dormant because of the long time (16 hours) necessary to produce a fibreglass Alphorn for which Mr. Woodhouse quoted a price of about £45 last May, subject to current prices of resin and glass. However, should readers be interested in a British-made Alphorn, they can contact Cornish Musical Crafts (St. Austell 3608) to obtain an instrument in E. Preferably, Mr. Woodhouse would be pleased to hire out the wooden mould if anyone would like to try his hand!

International Festival of Youth Orchestras

Having been staged in Switzerland for the first four years of its existence, the International Festival of Youth Orchestras, which now takes place in Britain every August, can be considered as an Anglo-Swiss event. The inaugural festival took place in 1969 at St. Moritz. It was staged there again in 1970 and moved to Lausanne for the following two years. The hundreds of young participants who came for each festival from all over the world enjoyed the sleeping facilities of the town's empty schools and gave many of their concerts at Beaulieu Palace. Lausanne was very eager to keep the Festival and Mr. André Chevallaz, its former Mayor and now Head of the Federal Finance Department, was one of its main supporters. But the organisers of the Festival were more or less compelled to find a venue in Britain by the demands of their mainly British sponsors.

Aberdeen was chosen because of the local authorities enthusiasm and its available university premises. The Lausanne town council was upset at the loss of a highly successful musical event that came at the height of the tourist season, but outside the theatre and concert seasons. For a while, a competing festival was envisaged but the idea was abandoned in view of its high cost. Lausanne would still like to become the permanent home of the International Festival of Youth Orchestras. But for the time being the event is centred on Aberdeen and London. Orchestras also tour a number of Scottish towns and resorts such as Inverness, Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline and Aviemore. According to a Swiss music lover who has travelled all the way from Geneva to Aberdeen to hear the performances of children from twelve countries, some of these provincial concerts attracted audiences that were very much smaller than those that came for these concerts in Switzerland up to 1972. The Speyside Theatre at Aviemore, in which the Canberra Youth Orchestra (Australia) were playing works by Elgar, Sitsky, Bloch and Franck, was one-third full with farmers and their wives from this bleak Highland region.

The Festival, whose "Finale" took place at the Royal Albert Hall on Sunday, 18th August, not only featured orchestral performances, but also performances by youth dance companies and choirs. Switzerland was represented by the Orchestra and Choir of Calvin College, Geneva.

by the meetings of the Commission of Swiss abroad, our "Parliament" in Berne, and the Annual Assembly, which last year took place in St. Gall, those activities are grouped under the main traditional headings: Contacts with Swiss societies abroad; information of all kinds to Swiss abroad; film rental service, newspapers (*Echo, die Welt*); book service; social security; youth service (including holiday camps and support to military recruits from abroad); and the Solidarity Fund.

In the Introduction, it is noted that the Swiss population abroad decreased last year for the first time since 1950. There has been a greater number of compatriots returning. The Report puts this down to the unfavourable political and economic conditions prevailing in many countries and expresses surprise that the flow of returning Swiss should not have been much higher and begun earlier.

The Commission for the Swiss abroad was mainly concerned with the draft bill of political rights to Swiss abroad, on the revision of the "Buergerrechtsgesetz" in its application to Swiss abroad, on the 8th Revision of Old Age Insurance and other matters. Several new members from overseas joined the commission. Half came from the United States, others from Senegal, Australia, Thailand, Portugal, Holland and the Philippines.

The Report says that four new societies in Canada, Senegal and France joined the organisation of the Swiss abroad bringing the total to 626. The Secretariat has helped a few societies financially. It gave 5,000 francs to the Swiss of Gex (France) to help them finance their Club Chalet. It paid 1,500 to the Swiss Club in Salisbury (Rhodesia) to help them install a "Boccia-Bahn" and laid out 5,000 francs to the "Sociedade Suica de Beneficencia Helvetia" in Sao Paulo for the purchase of a new home for old people.

In regard to Information, the Report says that *Echo*'s financial situation has stabilised and that the many letters from readers indicates that it is still a highly appreciated instrument of Swiss news. The Report mentions efforts to facelift and boost the circulation of the *Swiss American Review* of which 160,000 issues are distributed every week.

SWISS ABROAD HOLD THEIR 52ND ASSEMBLY IN NEUCHATEL

Some 500 Swiss took part in the 52nd Assembly of the Swiss abroad held on the weekend of 24–25th August in Neuchatel. The theme of this year's Assembly touched on "Old Age Insurance and the Swiss Abroad". The principal guest speaker was Mr. Hans Huerlimann, Head of the Department of the Interior, who warmly invited his audience to subscribe to Voluntary Old Age Insurance as a "protection against rainy days and the deep transformations which can at all times emerge in a constantly moving world". Among the other speakers were

SWISS ABROAD

The Secretariat's Report

The 1973 Annual Report of the Secretariat of the Swiss abroad does not point to any modification of its activities. The main areas remain the same. Capped



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State Councillor Louis Guisan, President of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, who reckoned that the better-off members of the Swiss community abroad, earning over 50,000 francs, were not likely to be interested in the scheme offered to them last year. But Mr. Marcel Ney, Director of the Secretariat of the Swiss abroad, said that 80 per cent of 5th Switzerland earned less than 30,000 francs a year.

New subscriptions to voluntary Old Age Insurance following the appeal launched last year totalled 14,000 — a relatively small figure. There are now 39,000 Swiss abroad subscribing to Voluntary Old Age Pension. They pay 13 million francs a year and receive 97 million in exchange.

Other themes, such as the Swiss Solidarity Fund and the problem of compensating those Swiss who have lost their livelihood abroad were also discussed. A comprehensive report on this Assembly will be published in a forthcoming issue.

ROCHE FACES DIFFICULTIES IN GERMANY

Hoffman-la-Roche, the Basle-based chemical giant, is having trouble in West Germany. The Federal Cartels Office in West Berlin has been conducting an enquiry into the firm's pricing policy in the Federal Republic following the price-cutting orders given last year by the British Government on the drugs Valium and Librium marketed in the UK. In the belief that these two highly popular tranquillisers were overpriced, the Government had ordered Roche to cut their prices by three-quarters, and an action by the firm is still pending at the High Court.

Roche could have similar trouble in West Germany. The Cartels Office is however, also examining the prices of competing products. Roche completely disagrees with the office's findings regarding the market impact of the two drugs. While the West German authorities claim that they take well over half of the market, consisting of sales at pharmacies and to hospitals, Roche says the percentages amount to 10.5 per cent for Valium and 2.4 per cent for Librium. The Cartels Office also complains that the drugs are dearer in Germany than elsewhere in Europe. Roche answers by recalling that these prices have never been raised since Valium and Librium were introduced on the West-German market ten years ago.

Roche has an important subsidiary in West Germany. With 2,000 employees, it recorded a 400 million D.M. turnover last year, making it one of the highest earners per employee in the European chemical industry. This point was also put forward as an argument by the Cartels Office but the General Manager of the firm, Mr. Dietrich, said that this was due to its high level of investments and efficiency.

TECHNICAL ITEMS

SWISS LICENCES FOR JAPAN

The Industrial Electronics Co. Ltd. (AGIE), at Losone-Locarno (Ticino) considered as one of the world's leading firms for the construction of electro-erosion machines, has granted the licensing rights for the construction of two types of machine from its electro-erosion range to the Hitachi Seiko company, a branch of the Japanese group Hitachi. To start with, the Swiss firm will supply the necessary generators, it being imperative that these satisfy the highest technical standards. The purpose of this co-operation is to widen the Swiss firm's participation in the Japanese market. The Ticino firm also hopes by this means to be able to offset the limitations on output caused by the current tension on the labour market in Switzerland. The AGIE licences will enable the Swiss firm's Japanese partner to complete its manufacturing programme, which is based in part on the construction of electrolytic machine tools. The possibility of stepping up co-operation between the two firms with regard to the sale of machines is still under discussion. Founded in 1954, AGIE now has nearly one thousand employees. It exports over 90% of its output.

MACHINE TOOL NOVELTY

Wishing to concentrate its activity in the field of cable-making and electro-technics, the Cable and Wire-Drawing Works at Cossigny (Vaud), has decided to sell the majority of the share capital it holds in Tarex-Manurhin Co. Ltd., Geneva, to Premax Co. Ltd., Machine Tools Factory, Geneva. The activity of Premax Co. Ltd., a firm specialising in the field of programmed automatic lathes, will then include Tarex Co. Ltd. (Geneva), P.T.P. SpA (Tortona, Italy) which manufacture automatic lathes, gear grinders and cutters, as well as Produmatic Co. Ltd., (Châteauneuf-en-Thymerais, France), specialising in modular automatic lathes, and Fimur SpA, Italian machine tool foundry (Carbonara, Scrivia). The activity of the Geneva factory will be considerably increased as a result of its integration in the Premax group. The group's turnover amounts to some 60 million Swiss francs and the number of employees to over 800.

NON-POLLUTING POWER STATION

Within the framework of its participation in the fight against pollution, Technicair Co. Ltd. (Geneva) has received a big order from the Elektrizitätswerk of Basle for the installation of two high capacity SF electrostatic filters in a power station situated in a residential part of the town. After the units already installed in Berne and Geneva, these filters, some 39 feet high, will process 400,000 cu.m/h of air

at 200°, in this way capturing the polluting elements given off by the combustion of heavy fuel oil. The dust content at the exit to the filters will be distinctly lower than the minimum laid down by federal recommendations. The dust collected in the filters will be conveyed to silos by means of an entirely new system of high pressure pneumatic transport.

SWISSAIR: 21 MILLION FRANCS FOR WATER PURIFICATION

Swissair has decided to build a water purification plant at Zurich/Kloten airport. This plant, which will cost some 21 million francs, should be operational in 1976. It will be used to cleanse the water of all organic and inorganic elements from the technical departments of Swissair, in accordance with the most recent legal regulations. The water will be recycled in a closed circuit for re-use. In this way, Swissair's technical department will be able to effect a big reduction in its consumption of precious drinking water. In addition, this plant will help take the load off a local water purification plant. The new water purifying plant works according to the principles of electro-flotation (purification) and inverse osmosis (desalination), which have already proved their effectiveness in the United States and Germany. It is the first time however that these processes have been applied one after the other. Swissair has already tried out these processes in its own experimental plant for some time now. Patents have been taken out in several countries.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Although it has no direct access to the sea, Switzerland occupies a leading position in the construction of *diesel marine engines*. In 1973, 257 ocean-going vessels were equipped with engines built under Swiss licence. The Swiss firm and its licensees supplied 36.6% of the total world output of these engines in 1973, as compared with 33.9% the previous year.

Within the framework of the 3rd International Packaging Exhibition Swisspack 1974, held in Basle from 14th to 18th May this year, prizes were awarded for the best packagings of the year. The firm *Klausfelder Packagings Co. Ltd.* at Vevey won the 1974 Swiss Technical Oscar for a folding box with an insulating layer for ice-cream; brand new in conception, this packaging combines cardboard and expanded polystyrene.

In 1973, 13,320 private homes were built in Switzerland, i.e. 9.3% more than the previous year. This figure represents just under a sixth of all *new accommodation* built last year. From the housing census in December, 1970, until the end of 1973, the number of private homes increased by over 36,400; they thus number over 409,000.