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Colin Farmer reports from Montreux

WHAT is the most challenging field in television?

"In Britain we have come to accept that light entertainment is probably the most difficult area in which to succeed," Edward Durham Taylor, editor of London's Television Today, told representatives from nearly 30 countries at the 1981 Golden Rose of Montreux festival for television light entertainment.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the nine-day event in the Swiss lakeside resort, Mr Taylor said: "The viewers are there waiting to be amused, waiting to see programmes that make them feel better and that make them forget the problems they have had at work or have at home.

"Finding enough of that talent

Mikhail Baryshnikov and Liza Minnelli in the winning show



to satisfy the endless appetite of television is an exacting job. We should all remember with a little charity that no one sets out to make bad programmes."

Mr Leo Schuermann, Director General of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, noted "the seriousness which surrounds

radio and television entertainment programmes."

He commented: "When I see all of you here discussing so seriously the topic of fun and fantasy, one is tempted to ask if something has gone wrong along the way!

"But, of course, I am well

Serious business of being funny

aware that television entertainment constantly requires highly specialised know-how and considerable thought and reflection if one is to succeed."

This year's winners? The coveted Golden Rose was won by the "musical category" spectacular entered by ABC of New

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York, "Mikhail Baryshnikov on Broadway," featuring the classical ballet star and Liza Minnelli in a salute to Broadway. The Golden Rose carries a cash award of Sfr 10,000 – and substantial value in re-sale rights.

Swedish Television's "new trends" category programme "Ladies' Choice" – a women's lib style show made with warmth charm and a sense of self-irony – won a second place Silver Rose and was also awarded the Press Jury prize.

A second Silver Rose was not awarded this year because none of the "humour category" programmes were considered worthy of distinction.

"Special mentions" were awarded to programmes from Belgium and Yugoslavia.

But there were the inevitable disappointments for others.

Canada failed in its attempt to become the first country to win the Golden Rose three years in succession. The programme from Brazil was excluded from the contest when the Brazilian member of the International Jury failed to arrive in Montreux. And Britain – winner of more Montreux awards than any other country – also went home empty-handed.

Switzerland entered two programmes and Britain four – the BBC's "Grace Kennedy Show" and "Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy," London Weekend Television's "End of Part One" and Southern Television's "Worzel Gummidge: A Cup o' Tea and a Slice o' Cake."

The International Jury included BBC Head of Variety Robin Nash and London Weekend Television Head of Comedy



BBC's Grace Kennedy Show was one of four programmes entered by Britain

Humphrey Barclay. The Press Jury was chaired by Britain's Edward Durham Taylor and also included Daily Telegraph TV critic Richard Last.

Unlike certain screen festivals the Golden Rose – co-organised annually since 1961 by the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation and the resort of Montreux – produces no sensational scandals, no political protests or walk-outs. But there was one issue this year which did cause something of a minor upset – so minor in fact that by the time the festival was over it had almost been forgotten.

This concerned the Italian musical show "Palcoscenico" (The Stage) which contained a German song relating to the Second World War and with words allegedly Fascist in content. The programme prompted a written protest from 10 members of the 28-member Press Jury,

most of them from the Netherlands and West Germany and the others from Yugoslavia and East Germany.

But the organisers stressed it had not been the intention to offend in any way any nation participating at the Golden Rose.

And the producer of the Italian programme said his purpose had not been to create controversy but to emphasise the disaster into which Germany had been plunged by Fascism.

But there was no walk-out, no further protest – and the 600 television and news media representatives from nearly 30 countries continued their friendly and informal contacts, for which the Golden Rose of Montreux has over the years become so internationally-renowned in the world of television entertainment.

This year's Festival ended with an unscheduled presentation – a farewell gift to Markus Drack, Press Officer of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation and the Golden Rose for the past 15 years. Mr Drack – who has been appointed to the newly-created post of Personal Assistant to the SBC Director General – was presented with crystal and an engraving of historic Chillon Castle by members of the Golden Rose press corps.



Edward Durham Taylor (left), editor of Television Today, and Richard Last of the Daily Telegraph present a farewell gift to Markus Drack

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