

# "Wilhelm Tell Choir" at the Albert Hall

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1937)**

Heft 800

PDF erstellt am: **20.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690930>

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## CITY SWISS CLUB.

MARCH 9TH, 1937.

Mr. Pagani's world famous establishment was filled on Tuesday night by an enthusiastic crowd of members and guests of the City Swiss Club who had gathered to welcome the Wilhelm Tell Yodel Choir from Bern now on a visit to this country.

The attendance was so great that I am afraid it is beyond my powers to give an adequate description of the proceedings or to do justice to the Yodel Choir, so I am going to give an account of what took place in collaboration with my brilliant colleague "ST."

We spent a large part of the evening deciding what each of us was to say and it finally struck me that we were acting rather in the manner of those two gentlemen who broadcast important boxing events, so that when I got home and went to bed I dreamt that "ST." and "CK." were reporting the evening as follows.

Good evening everyone. We are taking you over to Pagani's and we are going to give you a description of the Yodel Choir. I have just entered the hall. I have never seen such a gathering and such enthusiasm. Don't you agree, Mr. ST. Yes, I think I can definitely say that the room is packed, Mr. CK. Well, I can see all the most eminent members of the Swiss Colony. I have just shaken hands with ..... I think I had better not mention names in case I have overlooked someone of importance. The President, Mr. Boehringer, is graciously receiving the guests and everyone is very happy and making a good deal of noise. The Choir are just entering the room, but from where I am, it is difficult to see everything that is going on. Can you see better, Mr. ST? Yes, Mr. CK, I can definitely say that the Choir are entering the room and are shaking hands with the President. They are dressed in Swiss Costume and there is one Lady, Fraulein Gritli Wenger with them. They are now approaching the bar, and the seconds are getting ready to ..... Dear, dear, I am afraid things are getting rather mixed.

The gong has just gone and we are all going into the dining hall. Of course, the announcement in the Swiss Observer said that we were all to arrive by 7 o'clock and that dinner would be served *punctually* at 7.30 and, of course, 8 o'clock has struck and we have not even commenced, but I understand that this is as it should be and that it would cause something like a revolution in the City Swiss Club and might lead to numerous resignations if ever proceedings started at the time advertised.

Eventually we started dinner and during the third round, the Yodel Choir gave us a song. I thought this was rather hard luck, but as my neighbour sarcastically remarked, perhaps they preferred singing to eating. I thought this was hardly complimentary to Mr. Pagani, as the salmon was really very good.

After dinner there were a few speeches. The President announced that, owing to a sudden indisposition, the Minister Mr. Paravicini was prevented from being present. He welcomed the guests and the Choir and short speeches were made in reply. Mr. Boehringer then said that he could not terminate without expressing his thanks to Mr. Stauffer for having organised the evening and Mr. Stauffer replied in an eloquent speech.

We have now settled down to listen to the Choir and I am going to ask Mr. ST. to tell you something about the Choir and about the evening's entertainment. Thank you, Mr. ST.

Mr. CK. has just handed me over the microphone, hallo everybody!! Pagani's calling, the British Isles and Switzerland.

There is a tremendous uproar, can you hear me? Mr. CK. would you be kind enough to shift the bottle of Fendant it worries me and tempts me at the same time; thank you Mr. CK. I am definitely obliged to you. — That's better. — Don't mention it Mr. ST.

The Yodlers are now just taking a last "gulp" from their glasses and are getting ready to mount the platform, which is in front of me, the President announces that the Choir is going to sing — I can't hear the name of the song, because my neighbours are shouting themselves hoarse, — but I presume it is a Swiss song. — Mr. CK. would you kindly tell your friends to give the singers a chance. — Thank you Mr. CK.

They are off — yes Mr. CK. it is a Swiss song — oh lovely, what a grand ..... I beg your pardon — there is dead silence whilst the sixteen Yodlers sing of snow clad mountains, the yodling solos are given by Messrs. Sommer and Tanner the Champion Yodlers of Switzerland — oh! beautiful — the singers are now leaving the arena, — no, — the platform, amongst stupendous applause. — I can hear a voice shouting — good old ..... the rest is drowned by shouting, — a marvellous crowd isn't it Mr. CK?

Yes, Mr. ST. I am frightfully impressed — don't be so highbrow Mr. CK.

There is now a lull in the proceedings, someone is speaking, I cannot hear very well, because someone in the vicinity is trying to keep his chicken bone on his plate.

Mr. CK., would you kindly tell the Gentleman in front of me, to remove his serviette, which he is carrying round his neck, I cannot see the President, thank you Mr. CK., — oh! I am sorry Mr. CK. he told you to mind your own business, it is really my fault, I ought to know better, tell him I'll see him later.

No offence, Mr. ST. "à la guerre comme à la guerre."

There is renewed applause — something is going to happen — yes — here comes Gritli Wenger all hot and bothered — she bows, she smiles — oh what a hat! and now she sings, 260 eyes are glued on her — but she doesn't mind — has she not sung before an audience of 10,000 people at the Albert Hall on Saturday last? 260 eyes are a mere bagatelle.

What a naughty song, fancy singing of elderly gentlemen with "no heat," but it is such a comic song, and according to the noise some of the elderly gentlemen make on her concluding, they still seem to be "well heated" or is it the Fendant?

Mr. CK. would you be good enough to mind the microphone whilst I am going to order another seven bottles of Fendant for the Yodlers, we must keep their "Stimmbänder" well oiled?

Certainly Mr. ST.. I hope they enjoy it, — well I am giggered, there goes ST. drinking too and on the cheap, yet he doesn't yoddlle, well, well, well, there'll be some questions asked when it comes to squaring the bill. —

Thank you Mr. CK. I will take over again, just wait a second whilst I hiccough, — that's alright. — Are you sure Mr. ST.?

There is Gritli singing again, this time she isn't naughty, what a fine song, do you remember Mr. CK. how often we heard this song many, many years ago, when we were young and "well heated?"

Yes Mr. ST. I do, — but I do not appreciate your concluding remark, you are getting rather vulgar.

Sorry Mr. CK., I was carried away.

The company is now eating again, in comparative silence, the excellent Pêche Melba seems to do its work, but not for long, again the Yodlers assemble and this time they sing "Trittst im Morgenrot daher," the Flag Thrower removes his "Mälcherhüetl" and with emotion written on all the faces the diners listen to our National Hymn.

Don't you think Mr. CK. that this Choir cannot only yoddlle well but sing equally beautiful?

Yes, Mr. ST., they are a marvellously blended Choir. —

Look Mr. CK., what on earth is the Flag Thrower doing, he is taking off his shoes, I do hope he hasn't a hole in his socks, no, thank God that is alright, tables are now removed and to the accompaniment of the Choir, he gives a fine performance of flag throwing.

Don't you think Mr. CK. it is a pity that the Hall is not higher, you ought to have seen him at the Albert Hall last Saturday, it was a performance well worth seeing.

Decidedly I am sorry I missed it Mr. ST.

Now just look, Mr. CK., someone has just presented me with a cigar, what luck, and I wasn't even asking for it, and there is someone making remarks about Hitler and Mussolini, — it is getting hot, — I had better get off the Air or I might one day be sent to a concentration camp — would you mind taking over, hallo! hallo! Mr. CK. will give you a further excellent report of the proceedings, the enthusiasm is reaching fever point, many bottles are carried out and promptly replaced, so far there are no other casualties. Thank you Mr. CK.

Well, you have just been listening to Mr. ST. and I think he is to be congratulated on the way in which he has acquitted himself of his task and for the very clear account he has given us.

Don't you think, Mr. ST. that the Choir gave a very marvellous performance? I do definitely, Mr. CK. I do wish ST. was not so fond of the word definitely, and I wonder why these commentators always think it necessary to be so polite to each other. However, I def....., there we go again. It must be infectious.

During the evening, a raffle was held for a picture painted by a Swiss Artist. I am sorry that I was not the lucky winner, as the picture was a magnificent bit of Swiss scenery and was beautifully painted.

I must confess that I learnt a lot about Yodelling during the evening. I was sitting next to Pastor Hofmann-de Visme who kindly en-

lightened my darkness by telling me something about the intricacies of the art.

I spent a most enjoyable evening and was overwhelmed by the magnificence of the singing. I could not help admiring the skill of the gentleman who manipulated the flag during one of the songs and managed some most complicated movements, in spite of the fact that the lowness of the ceiling hindered him considerably.

The Committee is to be congratulated on a most successful evening and the fact that 130 persons were present proves that its initiative was much appreciated.

ST. and CK.

## "WILLIAM TELL CHOIR" AT THE ALBERT HALL.

There are many ways of Propaganda to advertise the beauties of our country; we have come across a number of more or less artistic posters, we read, or do not read glowing accounts of holidays spent on the "Playground of Europe" by Journalists who have been there "on the cheap," or by clergymen who write in their Church Magazine, after having passed a few days amongst the Alpine splendour, on the same conditions as the much maligned Journalists.

Not so long ago, a President of one of the Swiss Societies in London, said that we Swiss are a modest people, I do not wish to argue the point, it might lead me into a lot of trouble, but considering the liberal way in which two important professions of the community are treated, I would add that we Swiss are generous too.

Posters do not talk, at least not in a sense, nor do we always read or even believe what clergymen are telling us, it is the way of the world that we always find out too late what is good for us miserable mortals.

The Swiss Federal Railways have found out a new way to remind the people of this realm of the beauties of Switzerland, and in their generosity, which some people will say is not justified, they have sent us for the last four years the "William Tell" Yodel Choir, which is composed of members of the Staff of our State Railways.

They sang last Saturday, March the 6th, at the Albert Hall, on the occasion of the Polytechnic Tours Reunion before a full house.

The Choir started the programme by a song called "Abschied vom Berg" with yodel solo. I am not going to mention every item, with which they entertained an enthusiastic audience, they were billed for 5 numbers, but in the end they nearly had to double this number by encores.

They sang of spring, of love, of our glittering mountains, of the silvery lakes and sun-kissed hills; which after these dreary dull days of winter, brought thoughts of the warm sunshine coming and the budding trees and flowers. I am sure I was not the only one who felt like this, for all round one could see smiling faces made happy by these lovely thoughts and memories.

Whilst threatening clouds are still gathering in the political firmament, there was assembled in this imposing Hall the large Polytechnic family, to spend a few happy hours together and to exchange remembrances of hours spent on travels in foreign countries under perhaps happier auspices. Perhaps, where the jolly laughter of Tourists used to echo, the guns will roar again; what a stupid world! Why must this mistrust, jealousy and discontent embitter this all too short life of ours? — I could not forbear but to reflect on this, but when amongst great applause, Gritli Wenger in her picturesque Bernese costume, with her plaits hanging over her shoulders appeared, all was forgotten. It is a wonderful thing how these simple and unassuming songs touch one's imagination.

Gritli Wenger is, in the realm of folk lore, a great singer because she puts all her innermost feelings into her songs.

As an *encore* the choir rendered a song entitled the "Echo over the Lake of Thoune," which brought the house down, seldom have I heard such applause at the Albert Hall. The "star" turns were Messrs. Sommer and Tanner, who enjoy a great reputation as yoddlers in our country; one of the singers was situated in the gallery, no doubt to give the impression that he was on a mountain, whilst his partner "down below" suggested the echo. This was some of the finest yoddling I have ever heard.

As a special turn, the choir brought along Sepp Walker, the champion flag thrower of Switzerland, a tall, broad shouldered man in a coat superbly embroidered with silk patterns of Edelweiss; and with the accompaniment of Gritli Wenger's harmonica playing he was twirling, in a most amazing manner, the Swiss flag into the air. It was a marvellous exhibition of skill, and the audience was not sparing in their applause.

After the conclusion of the choir's turn, the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, appeared on the platform to shake hands with the performers, he also spoke a few words to the vast audience.

This all too short visit of our countrymen to this country has been a great success, and they can well be satisfied with their achievement; they have literally sung themselves into the hearts of British people.

From a propaganda point of view this visit must rank very highly, and seems to me a infinite greater value than a number of advertisements in the Daily Press, or some, not always very artistic posters. I do not know who is responsible for this splendid idea of sending this famous choir over here, but whoever it is to be congratulated on this far-seeing piece of advertising.

ST.

### SWISS ICE HOCKEY TEAM.

The following opinion about the Swiss Ice Hockey Team, published in the Hornsey Journal, might interest our readers:

"On Saturday, Canada and Switzerland played the remaining final pool match and a great game resulted. It was judged by two referees, who kept a very tight rein on both teams, with the result that the match was the best of the tournament. Switzerland recovered from the shock of an early goal by Canada and equalised near the end. During extra time Canada got the important goal and so won the world's championship.

If I had to give medals in this tournament I should award the gold medal to Switzerland. To run both Canada and Great Britain into the final pools was a great achievement. In all their games they have displayed the finest of sporting spirits and have always been a joy to watch.

The silver medal would go to Canada and the bronze to Great Britain, while I would give a special award to the Harringay management for the way in which they tackled a very great task."

### EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

The Editor,

"The Swiss Observer,"

23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

Dear Sir,

With great interest I read Mr. "Kyburg's" letter dated 1st instant, published in your edition of last Saturday, and I do not think that ever before have I read a letter which expresses my personal feelings so well.

During the last few days I have talked this matter over with various Swiss friends, and I do think that a good 90% of the Swiss I know are fully in agreement with Mr. Kyburg's opinion, and I sincerely hope that on this occasion the Authorities in Bern will see their way clear to do for Switzerland's "pioneers abroad" what they would like to have done for them.

On the last occasion when this matter was brought forward we heard that Switzerland never sent special representatives abroad for any occasions, which, however, is not quite correct, as we all know that for manoeuvres on many occasions, Swiss officers of high ranks have represented Switzerland, this, even in England.

I hope that before long the English Press will be able to give in its columns the names of the Swiss representatives at the coming Coronation, which will undoubtedly avoid a repetition of what happened a year ago when many of us were asked time after time by English friends why Switzerland was not represented at the funeral of the late King George V.

Hoping to read in the coming edition some more opinions regarding this matter,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

S. M. BRUGGISSER.

### THE SWISS INDUSTRIES FAIR AND THE WORLD MARKET.

At the first glance it may perhaps appear paradoxical to connect a strictly national industries Fair with the world's markets, but the contradiction is merely an apparent one for those who are aware that since its inception the Swiss Industries Fair has always aroused lively interest on the part of international trade and commerce. Every year people from some 30 European and overseas countries attend the Fair, and in the last few years their number has averaged 1,500.

The reasons for this great interest in our national fair are easy to understand: they lie in Switzerland's reputation for producing high-grade goods, a reputation which is thoroughly merited. Swiss trade and industry has endeavoured year by year to place on the market only goods of first-class material and workman-

ship. In some branches Switzerland has always led the way; for instance in the watchmaking trade and textile industry, the electrical trade built up on the "white coal" of Switzerland and engine-building. None of these have ever lost their reputation, even in times of trade depression.

No doubt the depression which started with the war and has more or less continued to the present day has struck a grave blow at Switzerland's business relations with other parts of the world, but her economic relations with other countries have never been entirely broken off. It is one of the great merits of the Swiss Industries Fair to keep open the channels leading from our national industries to foreign markets. Every year it is seen at the Swiss Industries Fair that the products of Swiss industry are well able to compete with those of other countries. Moreover, our Fair is a source of attraction for large numbers of buyers and visitors from abroad. The vast halls of the Fair exhibit, so to speak, everything that native industries have to show. The clear and orderly arrangement of the Fair saves the foreign merchant a lot of time and facilitates his selection of the goods in which he is interested. At the same time he has an opportunity of getting personally into touch with manufacturers.

World economies are still far from being normal, but a slow improvement is gradually becoming perceptible. The devaluation of the Swiss franc has no doubt contributed in great measure to the re-opening of former relations. This is all to the advantage of our export trade, on which the country depends to a large extent owing to its peculiar economic position. The Swiss Industries Fair will not fail to carry on its traditions and lend a helping hand to national work.

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### FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Saturday, April 10th — Swiss Club Birmingham — Swiss Rally and Annual Dinner and Ball, at the Midland Hotel, Birmingham. (Reception 6.15 p.m., Dinner 6.45 p.m.).

Friday, March 19th, at 8 o'clock — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting — with lecture by Dr. H. P. Zschokke, Central-President of the N.S.H. on "Schweizerische Selbstbehauptung in heutiger Zeit," at the "Swiss House," 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.

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11h. — Ecole du Dimanche.

6h.30 — Culte et prédication — réunion de prière.

7h.30 — Répétition du Choeur.

Dimanche 21 Mars — Jour des Rameaux, Ste Cène matin et soir.

### MARIAGE.

Paul E. Lequint de Givrins (Vaud) et Hildegarde Liebmann de Horb am Neckar (Württemberg) le 4 Mars 1937.

M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme reçoit à l'église, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2, le mercredi de 11h. à 12h.30 et sur rendez-vous à son domicile, 102, Hornsey Lane, Highgate, N.6. S'adresser à lui (téléphone: ARChway 1798) pour tous renseignements concernant les instructions religieuses, les mariages et autres actes.

### SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2. (near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 14. März 1937.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst und Sonntagsschule.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst.

8 Uhr, Chorphrobe.

Mittwoch, den 24. März 1937.

6.30 Uhr abends. Passionswochengottesdienst und Feier des Heiligen Abendmahls.

Anfragen wegen Religions- bzw. Confirmationsstunden und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde: C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W.4 (Telephon: Chiswick 4156). Sprechstunden: Dienstag 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche.

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