

Othmar Schoeck in London

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

A FINE EVENING'S ENTERTAINMENT.

JEAN BARD AND THE SWISS INSTITUTE ORCHESTRA.

The "Literary and Musical Evening" arranged by the New Helvetic Society and the Swiss Institute Orchestral Society for February 17th, at Conway Hall, has been a memorable treat for the all too few members of our Colony who bestirred themselves to make the acquaintance of Jean Bard, our famous reciter of poetry of Geneva. His name and fame truly befitted the man. He is a real bard, he recreates and he lives in the poetry, and the poetic or dramatic prose texts he recites. He acts on the platform, he uses all the notes and sounds of the human voice, he becomes, for his hearers at need, a crying child, an agonised mother, a jubilant father, a sighing lover, a laughing comedian, a wisely commenting philosopher. His face, his hands and every other part of his agile body assist the voice to express and convey the meaning of each word. There is another, non-acting kind of recitation which one, as a rule, expects on a literary evening, where the text is spoken evenly and, with luck, intelligently. It leaves the imaginative work to be done by the audience, which, generally incapable of it, rapidly gets bored and tired. Not so Jean Bard. He stirs you up, makes of the poetry a thing of your own heart's experience, forces the scene as vividly on you as any film could do, and provides the same natural warmth as the stage. So much so, that one feels sure Jean Bard would make an ideal Hamlet or Romeo.

Jean Bard's programme was truly Swiss: it took the best from poetry irrespective of nationality, not neglecting the partly more modest gems of his own compatriots. He showed us Rabelais as a most powerful prose poet in a passage where Pantagruel bewails the death of his wife and rejoices in the birth of a son. He made of Little Red Ridinghood a heart-rending drama of monstrous cruelty. He made the audience rock with laughter at the pitiful sight of La Fontaine's amorous lion, who in order to gain the girl he desires allows his claws to be cut off and his teeth pulled out, leaving him a helpless victim in his enemy. He gave us a sad hour as a desolate mother clandestinely visiting the grave of her son, who was hanged, conversing with her lost child, once such a sweet, wonderful baby. He reproduced the inescapable desolation of an endlessly drizzling rain (Verhaeren). He showed us the thousand and one delights of a contemplative evening in a village by the lake (Spiess). He acted the comedy of the havoc created in a family by a refined but utterly incompetent tutor. (Toepffer). He recreated the malicious, petty, scandal-mongering religious spinster in a small village, making the simple parson's life unbearable. (Artus). Although most of the audience were Swiss German — our Welsh friends mostly missed this treat — it thunderously applauded Jean Bard's French entertainment. Our gratitude is due to the New Helvetic Society for bringing this fine artist to London, and to the Swiss Institute Orchestral Society for assisting in the arrangement of the evening.

The Orchestra also, I think, surprised the audience by the truly excellent performance given of a very ambitious programme. The Swiss Institute Orchestra is getting better and better with each concert it presents to the Colony. To make an amateur orchestra, comprising 13 fiddles, five other string instruments, a flute, oboes, clarinets, trumpets and horns, play the Freischütz-Overture, not only without a hitch, but with a warm musical feeling and vivacious expression, is no mean achievement of Mr. Dick's and his enthusiastic collaborators. The Tchaikovsky Selections were equally well done and the orchestra acquitted itself beautifully of the delicate task of the No. 20 Concerto in D-minor by Mozart, with Miss Frida Bindschedler at the piano. Miss Bindschedler has made a very good entry into the small circle of first rate artists our Colony can boast of by her piano performance at this evening. Her Solo pieces, Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue by Bach, in Busoni's elaboration, were scarcely chosen with the most lucky hand for the mixed audience she had, but those who appreciate a competent, though perhaps a little too diffident rendering of the best sort of piano compositions had good reasons for richly applauding Miss Bindschedler. A telegram, sent to Mr. Dick the day after the concert, expresses, I believe, the sentiments of the whole audience: "Heartiest congratulations, better than ever, I enjoyed it very much, lovely evening, reserve me two tickets next time."

Dr.E.

THE SWISS CHORAL'S BUFFET DANCE.

Present economic conditions are responsible for some of our societies departing from the traditional annual gatherings and substituting novel attractions in order to keep contact with the other members of the Colony. The Swiss Choral Society had arranged a Buffet Dance for Friday, February 19th, when about 200 members and friends assembled at the First Avenue Hotel. The committee had taken great pains to see everybody comfortable and the different parties had reserved tables. It was noticed that the Colony was well represented. Dancing began soon after 8 o'clock, and at about 10 o'clock, Mr. Gerber, the President of the Society, extended words of welcome to those present; he was especially gratified to see so many charming ladies whose presence was so essential for the success of the evening. He stated that amongst their many guests he had the pleasure of greeting M. de Jenner, the Chargé d'Affaires at the Swiss Legation, and M. de Bourg, 1st Secretary of Legation who was also their Honorary Vice-President. Mr. de Bourg had always been a staunch supporter of the Swiss Choral Society since he had arrived in London. Mr. Gerber further singled out their old friends Messrs. G. Marchand and Zimmermann from the City Swiss Club, the Rev. and Mrs. Hahn, Mr. and Mrs. Boehringer, from the Swiss Observer, and Mr. Seymour, their conductor. Mr. de Jenner in returning thanks said that in deference to the wishes of the Committee he was going to be brief, but if they wanted to hear a speech from him, he had one prepared for the next day's film show arranged by the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. He continued by saying that he not only came in his official capacity, but that he hoped to make himself at home and make friends with everybody in the room before the evening was over.

Dancing was indulged in to the strains of an excellent orchestra until 2 o'clock in the morning and was agreeably interrupted by a few popular songs rendered from the choir, some solos exhibiting at its best Mr. Conrad's admirable voice, and another solo, "Tom Jones Waltz Song," rendered by Miss Winifred Parrott, whose singing was only surpassed by her personal charms.

There cannot be any doubt that this new venture in the social activities of our Colony was a complete success, but all the same, we are inclined to prefer the traditional dinner with the Ball following.

Special thanks are also due to Mr. A. Indermauer, the popular chef of the First Avenue Hotel, who had spared no trouble and expense in the preparation of the great variety of sandwiches and other dainties which were greatly appreciated by everybody present.

O.F.B.

OTHMAR SCHOECK IN LONDON.

A little more than four years ago, in this same concert hall, the Eolian, some songs of Othmar Schoeck, certainly the most serious and perhaps the greatest of Swiss composers, were sung for the first time. Last Thursday evening our illustrious compatriot appeared in person to direct a small string orchestra which gave his famous song cycle "Elegy," the principal being Keith Faulkner, the first of British baritones.

The concert was organised by the British section of the Society for Contemporary Music, which has been responsible for introducing many important new works to London.

The songs themselves were sung in an English translation, but there was no note in the programme to enlighten a puzzled audience as to who had made these excellent translations.

The songs are reflective and romantic in tone; the singer looks back on memories of past loves. There is more light and shade in them than either singer or orchestra could give us; Othmar Schoeck itched in vain to infuse them with the spirit of the fine points. But in general we must thank Mr. Faulkner for the depth and majesty which he gave to the general melodic line of the piece. His is a fine voice.

Mmes Sophie Wyss and Lily Zeahner have sung many songs of Othmar Schoeck in this country. But they have invariably sung his middle-period songs when he was under the influence of Hugo Wolf. Musically this will probably remain his best period, but "Elegy" though in the great spirit of German song, is modern to its last detail. But amongst moderns he towers above the sensation-mongers and the "stunters," because he is a real musician, and in his art are the seeds of genius.

A glance at the music columns of our serious press will show that it was not for nothing that our compatriot made the long journey from the heights above Brunnen to Wigmore Street.

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Pour faciliter les arrangements, le Comité recommande aux participants de s'annoncer au plus tôt à M. F. F. Boehringer, 23, Leonard St. E.C.2 (Telephone: Olerkenwell 9595).

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RESULT GRASSHOPPER v. CASUALS.

The result of the match played at Millwall Football Ground is Grasshoppers 4 Casuals 0.