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SWISS ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL CONCERT

AT

CONWAY HALL, Red Lion Square, W.C.1

on TUESDAY, MARCH 29th, 1938.

For some reason or another the Swiss Orchestral Society — which I consider one of the brightest assets the Colony possesses — arranges their Annual Concert, almost at the tail end of the Social season; it is rather a pity, because many of us who have to attend so many functions, week after week, begin to long for a little respite; but in spite of this, I should not like to miss the performance of this orchestra which has given us, in the past so many enjoyable hours. —

I am glad to say, that a great number of our compatriots share my opinion, hence the really fine attendance, which we witnessed on Tuesday, March 29th at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.

It must have been gratifying to Mr. E. P. Dick, the untiring conductor and to the orchestra at large, to have such a numerous and enthusiastic attendance, amongst which was the Swiss Minister, accompanied by Mlle. Jaqueline Paracivini.

I think I mentioned once before, that to write about the performance of an amateur orchestra is by no means an easy task, it goes without saying that one cannot judge such a performance in the same way, as, say for instance, the London Symphonic Orchestra, or any other professional orchestra, and yet, a little, what I might call, constructive criticism is often very much resented.

I intend therefore to steer the middle way, taking the risk that some of my readers will accuse me of seeking an "easy way out," but I am sure, that on giving this matter a second thought, they will agree with me, that there is no alternative way to deal with such a performance.

Putting my personal opinion aside for a moment, quite a number of people, whom I questioned about their views of the programme used continuously the expression of "high brow" music. This rather puzzles me, and I should be very grateful if some kind reader would tell me and my readers, what exactly is meant by the term of "highbrow;" of course, if what we call good music, comes under this heading then I have nothing further to say.

To make myself quite clear on this subject, I did not consider last Tuesday's musical fare as "high brow," and I particularly wish to congratulate my friend Mr. Dick, for having taken the bull by the horns, and given us, for a change some real good and wholesome music. Having played myself for some time in an amateur orchestra, I am fully aware of how easy it would be to satisfy an audience with the usual noisy and old fashioned stuff which is so often dished up, and which, I am sorry to say, invariably "goes down well."

It wants a little bit of courage to break away from that tradition and for that courage I wish to congratulate my friend Mr. Dick and his orchestra. —

Without going into many details, and bearing fully in mind that the orchestra is of an amateur status, I have no hesitation to state with a sincere conviction that the performance was a creditable one, although I must frankly confess that this concert does not rank amongst the best performances, which I have heard from this orchestra.

There seem to be some extenuating circumstances; I have since learned, that several regular players were, owing to illness, prevented from taking part in the concert, amongst them no less than four first violins (out of ten), and I need hardly emphasize how seriously such a weakening affects a performance; on former occasions I had an opportunity to remark on the really fine "ensemble" of the ten first "fiddlers," they possess a rare clearness of tone which is seldom found in an amateur orchestra.

No doubt this unfortunate weakening, of an otherwise perfect ensemble was responsible for some of the unsteadiness and it must have worried the conductor considerably.

It was due to the fact of six having to play for ten, that the Overture "Ruy Blas" by Mendelssohn, and the first movement played from Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony were rather weak, especially the latter piece. Those, however, who know the score of the Italian Symphony will agree with me, that this work is by no means

an easy undertaking for an amateur orchestra.

Here the weakening in the first violins was most pronounced, through it the orchestra lost some of the balance, which on former occasions was one of the features of their playing, the Brass instruments became somewhat overpowering. But in spite of the facts mentioned, it was nevertheless a creditable achievement.

Although my remark about the first part of the programme might be called rather derogatory, as far as the orchestra is concerned, I am happy to say that the second part made fully up for some of the shortcomings witnessed in the first half of the programme.

The orchestra gave us a spirited and exceedingly competent rendering of Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro" overture.

A selection from the Opera "La Tosca" by Puccini proved very popular and was played with assurance, perfect unison and beauty of tone. In fact I liked this performance, together with the Mozart Concerto, best of all, the understanding between the conductor and his players was a remarkable feature.

There is evidently some really good material amongst the performers and thanks to their prevailing efficiency they produced a great effect.

The orchestra finished the Programme with Meyerbeer's Coronation March.

A concert of the Swiss Orchestral Society without soloists would not be complete, and here I am glad to report, that once again the orchestra has broken one of their traditions; in the past we have listened to matured, or sometimes to even "over" matured artists; this year the conductor has given a chance to our youngsters, and I am pleased to say, that the experiment proved to be successful.

On the programme was mentioned Rosemary Pfandler, and I am rather in a quandry as to whether I should call her, according to musical etiquette, Mlle., Miss or Madam, because neither really meets the case, and I therefore take the risk of calling her simply "Rosemary," hoping that the young lady will forgive my transgression; in return I am willing to allow her to call me "uncle."

Before I voice an opinion about her performance, I would like to mention that Rosemary is eight years old (I apologise again for divulging the age of a Lady, a thing I have never done before), I understand that she has performed in public since the age of four when she played a piano duet with her brother Raymond; this is, of course, a remarkable feat, considering that most of us, at that age made "noises" which hardly could be called "musical." On attaining her 5th year, she "switched" over to the cello, and I understand that she is at present trained in the Suggia-Cassals School, studying under Valezina Frohawk, who is a pupil of Suggia. —

Rosemary played the solo cello part in the Adagio from the Concerto in D for Orchestra by Haydn, rather an ambitious undertaking for a very, very young lady; considering her age, and the size of her instrument ($\frac{1}{2}$ size cello) which hardly allows a full tone, she accomplished her task with great credit; and the little nervousness which in turn reflected on the orchestral accompaniment was perhaps excusable.

I liked her best in Schumann's "Träumerei" — the piano accompaniment very ably executed by her brother Raymond, — this kind of playing, for the time being seems to suit her better.

The "encores" given, "The Merry Peasant" by Schumann, and Schubert's "Berceuse," fully deserved the applause they received by a sympathetic audience.

This little artiste has two great assets, — youth and talent — and I have no doubt that in years to come, she will make her way to fame, and I shall yet be proud of having allowed her to call me "uncle." Even Melba could not have accepted the flowers and box of chocolates with greater grace than little Rosemary.

The second soloist billed on the programme was Mr. Theodore Weil, I have not been informed of his age, but using my own judgment he must be in the early twenties.

Mr. Weil, of course, is no stranger to the Colony, he has played on previous occasions, but

I venture to say that he has never played better before, he was really in "grand form," and although he has not yet reached the towering heights of a Kreisler, he has given as an excellent rendering of the violin solo part in Mozart's Concerto in A (K.215), his technique, in this by no means easy concerto, was almost faultless.

The enthusiasm and warmth of tone which he put into Monti's Czardas brought the "house down," and Fiocco's Allegro was equally successful.

The two encores "Sicilienne" by Paradis and "L'Abeille" by Francois Schubert proved that Mr. Weil is a real artiste, and I am sure, if he would take up music as a profession he would make his way, even in an age when only the best get to the top of the ladder.

Mr. E. P. Dick proved to be an excellent accompanist.

I understand that Mr. Weil is a prominent member of the "London Junior Orchestra" and a protégé of its conductor Mr. Ernest Reed.

It might interest our readers to hear that the orchestra will repeat the concert slightly altered, on Saturday, April 9th, at 7.30 p.m. at the Surrey Chapel Mission, 193, Blackfriars Road, S.E.1, through an invitation from the Rev. R. F. Skinner. —

And so ended once again a concert of the Swiss Orchestral Society, which proved to be a great success, and I heartily congratulate Mr. E. P. Dick, the enthusiastic conductor, and his faithful colleagues on their remarkable achievement.

ST.

ANNUAL DINNER AND BALL OF THE SYMPHONIC SOCIAL CHOIR.

At the First Avenue Restaurant, High Holborn, W.C.1.

My connections with the above mentioned Society is of recent date, if my memory serves me right, I attended their 3rd Annual dinner for the first time just about twelve months ago at the Schweizerbund, 74, Charlotte Street, W., and a very enjoyable affair it was.

I therefore looked forward to their 4th Annual Dinner, which took place on Thursday last, March the 31st at the First Avenue Restaurant, High Holborn, and I am glad to say I was not disappointed. —

This Choir is a somewhat Cosmopolitan one, and is composed of members of various nationalities, amongst them a number of our compatriots, a further connection with the Colony they can also claim by having their headquarters at the "Schweizerbund," 74, Charlotte Street, W.

It is undoubtedly due to these facts, that I have been asked to join them at their Annual Festival as their guest.

The Choir has as its conductor, Mr. E. A. Seymour, F.R.C.O., who is well-known in the Swiss Colony, having for some time conducted the Swiss Choral Society, and his excellent organ playing at the Annual "Fête Suisse," has become an appreciated feature.

All these various factors made me feel quite at home, on Thursday, March the 31st, at the First Avenue Restaurant, and in spite of the cosmopolitan mixture, there existed perfect harmony, — not only in a musical sense, — throughout the evening, which proves once more that different nationalities can get on together well, if only they are left alone by some of the mischievous politicians, and I am afraid also by some over anxious Press fanatics.

The top part of my Menu bore the inscription "Wo man singt, da lass Dich ruhig nieder, böse Menschen haben keine Lieder," although I would not take this well-known adage too literally, I must confess, that on looking around, I felt quite safe, and I was sure that the many happy and smiling faces did not harbour any evil designs. I might also mention that no less than 180 people sat down to a really excellent dinner, prepared by a really competent Chef, our countryman, Mr. A. Indermayer. —

Just before dinner was served the Choir gave a Song of Welcome, "Begrüßungslied" by Burgard-Wasem, which was heralded in by Fanfares; I thought this a very good idea.

As on a previous occasion, I had again the pleasure to sit next to the Lady President, Mrs. K. Horn (this Society has a Gentleman as well as a Lady President), and I was pleased to see that in spite of her great age, she is still as enthusiastic as ever, and beloved by every member of the Choir.

One happy feature I can record, the speeches were few and very short, and I wish this example would be followed by some of our Societies in the Colony. —