

Concert

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CONCERT.

SWISS MALE CHOIR, SWISS ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY and SWISS ACCORDION GROUP, in aid of the Swiss Benevolent Society, on Friday, 25th March, 1949, at Conway Hall, Holborn, W.C.1.

In a recent article of mine, in which I referred to the long and faithful services rendered to the Swiss Colony, by my friend, Mr. E. P. Dick, as conductor of the Swiss Orchestral Society and the Swiss Male Choir, I expressed the pious hope, that, as a mark of appreciation and affection, he would be honoured by a "full house" at the arranged concert for March 25th.

This wish was unfortunately not fulfilled, causing not only disappointment to myself but in a greater measure to all those, who had worked so hard to present a performance which was worthy of a better attendance.

It is to be regretted all the more, as the receipts were earmarked for the benefit of the Swiss Benevolent Society. Whilst last year five hundred supporters went to Conway Hall, this year barely three hundred found it convenient to attend; many were missing who, I humbly suggest, ought to have been there. Fortunately this lack of support did not act as a damper to the performance as such, and I can safely say, that all those who found it necessary to keep away from Conway Hall, missed an enjoyable evening.

The concert, which started punctually at 7.30 p.m., was opened by the Swiss Orchestral Society playing the Passepied from the "Suite Rococo" by Borowski, in excellent style. This was followed by the Overture of Nicolai's "Merry Wives of Windsor," it was a pity that the first violins were not imbued with the same spirit of exuberance as the "Merry Wives," their performance lacked tone and warmth, and the flute players too seemed to be at variance with the Ensemble.

They were followed by our well-known pianist, Ruth Huggenberg, who played Brahms's Rhapsody in B minor Op 67 with great technical skill, one could have perhaps wished a little more warmth in her execution. The applause which she received was, however, well merited.

The next items on the programme consisted of two songs: "Gott schütze die Reben am sonnigen Rhein" by Attenhofer and Deker's enchanting "Thurmwärts Minne" both songs were excellently rendered as to tone and diction by the Swiss Male Choir. This choir

has made splendid progress for which they and their conductor are heartily to be congratulated.

The Accordion Group under the competent leadership of Mr. A. Gandon then appeared on the platform, in becoming national costumes. When reviewing their last year's performance, I voiced the opinion, that the rendering of the various items was too long and over generous. The hint then given has borne fruit, they played four items: "Ländler Marsch" (Brauchli), "La Jurasienne" (Thöni), "Rheinländer Polka" (Helbling) and "Toggenburger Ländler" (Zuber) with a commendable liveliness and exuberance and above all "short and sweet." The "Juchzers" which came from all corners of the hall was proof enough how much their performance was appreciated.

This almost hysterical outburst from a Swiss audience, whenever accordion music is played, has always puzzled me. I imagine that these noises are signs of sheer delight in the music played. Now, I too, can get deeply moved by a piece of music, but can you imagine me giving vent to my emotions or feelings by a heart rendering and high piercing shriek à la Dick Barton, during the rendering of some of the lovely passages in Beethoven's Sixth or Eighth, I would at once be forcibly removed and taken to a place where people "who utter shrieks in the night" are usually taken to, and yet nothing happens to those who express their feelings of delight during an accordion playing performance. It is queer, is it not?

After a short interval, the Swiss Orchestral Society again appeared on the platform. This time, they played the first movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor together with Ruth Huggenberg. Not wishing to judge this performance from the angle of those performances which concert goers are accustomed to hear at some of our well-known Concert Halls by famous orchestras, I never-the-less can truly say, that the orchestra and especially Ruth Huggenberg distinguished themselves; both soloist and orchestra worked in perfect harmony, and are to be congratulated on this, not easy performance.

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The second item played consisted of a selection of melodies by Tchaikowsky, well played, but somehow too long; for my part, I would have preferred to hear the whole Piano Concerto instead of only the first movement.

Ruth Huggenberg, followed by playing Chopin's Polonaise Fantaisie, Op. 61, again her technique was faultless and her execution without a flaw. As an *encore* she played a Mazurka by Chopin. Amidst loud applause she was presented with a lovely bouquet of flowers. The Colony possesses in Ruth Huggenberg a capable and earnest artiste.

Once again the Swiss Male Choir appeared, they lined up to sing "La Chanson du Ramoneur" by Doret and "Zieh' mit mir in den Lenz hinein," both very well sung and with feeling, I especially liked the latter, the baritone solo was finely rendered by Mr. G. N. Ross. It is a sheer delight to listen to this Choir.

The Concert concluded with a few numbers played by our accordionists, their performance was again delightful and most enjoyable, and both Mr. Gandon and his youthful players are to be heartily congratulated.

In concluding this report, I wish to pay a special tribute to Mr. E. P. Dick, the conductor of the Swiss Orchestral Society and the Swiss Male Choir, who has given us an evening full of delight and enjoyment.

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GENEVA IN MODERN FICTION.

"By the Lake," a novel by Kay Dick.

William Heinemann 8/6.

Geneva, that lovely city on the banks of the Rhone, is made to serve as the background to this, Kay Dick's first novel, entitled "By the Lake."

The action — such as it is — takes place in the period during the two world-wars. Robert, an English boy who is an illegitimate child, is sent to a school in Geneva and lives in the house of an old watchmaker and his wife. He provides the subject for a psychological study of mental development from childhood to adolescence, and his feelings and emotions are dissected and analysed.

Through his adoptive father the boy is connected with an old Swiss family, the members of which are introduced in turn. The author, who was herself educated in Switzerland, seems at ease in her descriptions of Geneva and of its inhabitants whose volatile gallic temperament she contrasts with the stolidity of the German-speaking Swiss. When, however, she ventures on German-Swiss localities and people, she is on less familiar ground and the result is a travesty.

The story is of the slightest and consists of trivialities interspersed with lengthy depressions into metaphysics. These are dexterous efforts, not without literary ability, but their style, ornate and flowery, is often laboured and turgid.

The characters are somehow unreal and their conversations stilted and unnatural. Perhaps the most skilfully drawn is that of the boy's frivolous and wayward young mother. The narrative is completely devoid of humour.

In fairness to the author it must be said that the diffuseness of the work and the absence of a plot are not accidental. She has made an attempt at Flaubert's ideal of literary composition and she quotes, in fact, the great French writer's saying that he could think of nothing more beautiful than to write a book on nothing, with scarcely a subject, sustained by the strength of its style alone.

Whether she has succeeded, let the reader judge.

J. J. F. S.

SWISS CLUB BIRMINGHAM.

The Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Club Birmingham was held at the Midland Hotel on Monday, March 21st. The new Committee elected is as follows:— *President*: Mr. F. E. Brunner. *Secretary*: Mr. P. Duvoisin. *Treasurer*: Mr. A. Klötzli.

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