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CITY SWISS CLUB'S 110th BANQUET AND BALL

Undaunted by the present day's bombing alarms, bugging risks and cost-inflation nearly 200 members and guests attended the 110th Annual Banquet and Ball of the City Swiss Club, held on 21st November – as usual at the Dorchester Hotel. The unbroken tradition of this festive occasion – before winter sets in – with the ladies present in full force is too precious to be missed, particularly in times of tension like the present, perhaps even more so than when things are better for everyone. To the present generation of the Swiss business community in London it is a matter of pride as well as pleasure to participate in the most notable social event of our Colony introduced by the founders of the City Swiss Club in a happier period for our host-country.

Its repetition in 1975 within the splendour of the ballroom at the Dorchester was fully worthy of its ancient tradition. If, as in recent years, again no cabaret or other personal entertainments were provided, the atmosphere of this successful evening was no less happy. The well served dinner and even the speeches, the subsequent dance and the traditional Tombola with many most desirable prizes all contributed to the pleasure of the occasion.

This year's Club president, Mr. Roger Suess, introduced his speech of welcome to all the members and guests with a special tribute of our appreciation to our Ambassador Dr. A. Weitnauer. "It was not without sadness", Mr. Suess said, "that we received the news of your impending departure to take up your new post at the head of the Swiss Foreign Office in Berne. After the rather too frequent changes in our Embassy in the sixties we all were pleased that you were able to stay with us in the United Kingdom which you admire so much and which you so rightly claim still to have the highest quality of life in the world.

You have given a new impulse to Swiss culture in this country and we are deeply grateful for the keen interest you have always taken in our activities."

The President then extended a particular welcome to Lord and Lady Sandford. As President of the Anglo-Swiss Society and member of the Anglo-Swiss Parliamentary Group Lord Sandford is well known both in our Colony and in Switzerland – not least also as a keen skier.

Mr. Suess then greeted as the Club's guest Mr. Ney, the director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad in Berne, and Mr. Garraux an executive member of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, who the previous evening had given the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in London a most interesting talk on modern art in Switzerland.

With special thanks to its organisers the President then recommended the Tombola to everyone's generosity with the aim of reaching £1,000 on this occasion, which in fact was nearly attained before deduction of the expenses, our churches and the Swiss Benevolent Society being the usual beneficiaries.

In two short speeches Dr. Weitnauer and Lord Sandford thanked the President for his expressions of appreciation and the Club for its hospitality. Dr. Weitnauer returned the compliment by praising the Club's and other societies' contribution to the good Anglo-Swiss relations, observing that so many of us who had come here for a few months were attracted to stay all their life. Lord Sandford, a former member of the Heath government, though sorry about the frequent changes of Swiss ambassadors in London, expressed his admiration of all Dr. Weitnauer had been able to do for fostering the excellent Anglo-Swiss relations.

Concert in advent

It has become a tradition at the Swiss Church in Endell Street to have a concert a few weeks before Christmas. This year it took place on 3rd December. It was in aid of the Swiss Churches in London, and under the patronage of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. It was organised by the Musical Director of the International Liszt Centre for 19th Century Music, Lennart Rabes. As has become a custom, young artists performed.

The concert began with Liszt's *Weihnachtsbaum* (G.186/1-4) 1875. It was played by Lennart Rabes on the organ, followed by a hymn sung by the audience and a reading in English from Isaiah 9,2-3 and 5-7.

The Sonata No. VI in E major for flute, continuo and organ by Bach was next on the programme. Uli Stefan played the flute solo with a fine sense for musical phrasing. It was altogether a deeply felt performance.

Telemann's Cantata No. 65 for the 1st Sunday in Advent (*Erwachet zum Kriegen*) (for bass, flute, continuo and organ) was sung by Martin Nelson. One rarely meets an English singer with such clear German diction. His pleasant voice blended well with the other instruments.

Shuna Wilson (cello) played all the continuo parts and came into her own in the *Pieces en Concert pour violoncello et Orgue* by Couperin. Her performance showed excellent feeling for the style of this particular work. She had a full and vibrant tone, and her interpretation did justice to the delicacy and beauty of the composition. A word of praise, too, for the organist who managed with great skill and sensitivity to adapt the piano part of the original to the organ without spoiling in any way the exquisite texture of the work.

Lennart Rabes showed his real mastery in Widor's Toccata for organ from the 5th Symphony (Op. 42). And the concert ended with another Advent hymn sung by the audience who showed their great appreciation of the artists' performance by spontaneous and prolonged applause.

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