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

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1949)

**Heft:** 1113

**Artikel:** The Lausanne Choir

**Autor:** [s.n.]

**DOI:** https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691786

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## THE LAUSANNE CHOIR "LA CHANSON DE LAUSANNE."

We publish herewith a few particulars of the above Choir, which will take part in the " Fête Suisse " program on the 9th of June at Central Hall, Westminster.

That the Swiss are music-lovers, no one can deny. It is in the folk song, old and new, that their keen patriotism, allied to a firm attachment to tradition and national customs, finds its finest artistic expression. Words and music of popular songs are handed down from generation to generation and every village and town throughout the country has its well-trained choir, which brings music and colour to fête-days, festivals and pageants.

Descended from the older " Pays de Vaud " choir, the group known as the " *Chanson de Lausanne* " has, since 1940, acquired an official status : it is the official choir of Lausanne, seat of Government of the Canton and Republic of Vaud and has won a well deserved reputation as one of the finest choral ensembles in Switzerland. Its members are all voluntary workers, keen lovers of music, who delve into forgotten archives to find and revive old songs, melodies, folk-dances and costumes. Almost every member of the choir has a professional occupation of some kind, usually far removed from the sphere of music, and can devote evenings and weekends only to training and research.

The " *Chanson de Lausanne* " in its present form was founded in 1940. Its aim at the time was the entertainment of troops mobilized at the frontiers to defend the country's neutrality. It did excellent work during the war years, visiting Swiss military camps and civilian internment camps harbouring refugees of all nationalities.

As an official choir, the " Chanson " is often called upon to broadcast from the Western Swiss Station (Sottens Radio Lausanne), to give concerts elsewhere in Switzerland and, since 1945, to serve generally as the ambassador of Swiss popular art. Marseille, Menton, Nice, Monte-Carlo, Dijon, Strasbourg have warmly welcomed this remarkable choir and critics have praised the harmony and finesse of its timbre, the warmth and quality of its tone.

The repertory includes, not only old songs sprung spontaneously, centuries ago, from the throat of now forgotten peasant-musicians, but also the works of modern composers who have voiced the simple and yet grandiose harmonies of the beautiful Lake Leman landscape. In their songs, Gustave Doret, Jacques Dalcroze, Carlo Boller and Carlo Hemmerling have captured the spirit of the vineyards, the Lake and the Alps — the very spirit of their soil. The costumes worn by members of the " *Chanson de Lausanne* " are all in the authentic style of the Vaudois tradition.

*The Vaudois Costume.*

Originally worn daily in town and country, the Vaudois costume suffered a period of eclipse in the course of the XIVth century, ousted by " modern " international fashions. Some thirty years ago, in about 1916, interests in the old costumes was revived by a group of civic-minded, patriotic women. Family treasure chests were ransacked to find remnants of old styles; works of popular art — engravings, church frescoes and the like — were studied for the details they might reveal.

The Vaudois costume is exceptionally simple, influenced perhaps by the old sumptuary laws of Calvinism. It bears a distinct imprint of late XVIIIth century modes. The dress for " best " is composed of a full, plain woollen or silk ankle-length skirt, tight bodice — sometimes of black silk, sleeveless, to wear over a white blouse — white fichu, colourful apron, white cotton stockings and black buckle shoes; it is completed by long, black net mittens. Most distinctive are the coifs : the bonnet of black silk edged with lace (lacemaking was once flourishing cottage craft in the Canton) or the beribboned " chimney-pot," light straw hat for summer wear. This style of hat is characteristic of Vaud and features in early XVIIth century portraits. Plainer garments, cool and practical, were devised for weekday wear : short-sleeved blouse worn under a light blue, full-skirted cotton gown, covered by a striped or coloured cotton apron. Many country women and girls to-day have discovered the essential practicalness of this garment and wear it regularly for work in the fields.

Masculine costumes for Sunday or ceremonial wear are in XIXth century style (about 1830) ; they are made of sober-hued brown, dark green, blue or black worsted. The workaday costume is composed of a white shirt over which is worn a sleeveless or short-sleeved cotton jacket of the " armailli " or cowhert type; cowherds to-day still wear the straw skull-cap.

By reviving the customs and melodies of the past, the " Chanson de Lausanne " has achieved a remarkable civic task, counteracting the influence of town life which so lamentably tends to divorce entire populations from reviving contact with the soil.

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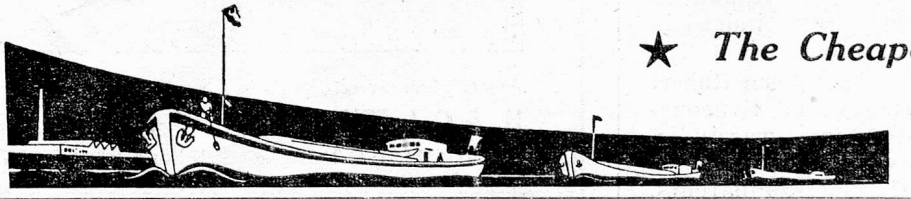

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