

666 (4)

GREEK PROGRAMME: 1930-2000 BST

FRIDAY, 6th JULY, 1951

FESTIVAL CHRONICLES No. 10

1. Signature Tune - DOWN THE MALL - HMV B 9487
2. THE STORY OF LLANGOLLEN EISTEDDFOD - by
P. Callinicos (S)
3. LLANGOLLEN EISTEDDFOD - INTERVIEW WITH SOLON
Michaelides - Rec. interview by P.
Callinicos (S) of the well-known Greek
composer, Mr. Solon Michaelides, who is
acting as one of the Judges of the Eisteddfod.
(MCF 2003) With Actuality.
4. INTERNATIONAL POSTER EXHIBITION by Mrs.
E. Megarefs (S)

Narrator & Continuity
Writer

- G. Megarefs

1st Voice

- P. Callinicos

2nd & 3rd
Voices

- P. Callinicos &
Mr. Solon Michaelides

4th Voice

- Mrs. E. Megarefs

NARRATOR: The Festival of Britain has not only brought into being its own special events and exhibitions but like life-giving sap, it has flowed into all Britain's cultural manifestations that existed before it, giving them fresh splendour and vigour. So when the Festival proper is over, its temporary pavillions demolished and its passing exhibitions dispersed, its spirit will flower in the new seed it has scattered in its passing.

One of the cultural events which existed before the Festival, and which has acquired a special significance this year is the musical Festival of Llangollen. But of this we shall let our contributor, Panos Callinicos who has just come from there, speak to you.

LLANGOLLEN

CALLINICOS: Llangollen is a picturesque little town in North Wales. It is mirrored like a nymph in the crystal clear waters of the river Dee, and surrounded on all sides by green hills, in parts wooded, in others, covered with lush grass. When the sun is shining on it, the emerald landscape might have been strewn with diamonds.

During the three days I spent there the weather was more than favourable. The northern landscape was crowned with an Attic azure sky. Only the word "perfection" can describe the result.

Llangollen is an old town. Its bridge dates back to the 15th century; the neighbouring Abbey of the Order of the Cistercians was founded about 1200 and the remains of the castle which dominates the surrounding area, has witnessed

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wars, now lost in the mists of prehistory.

Its roots, then, strike deep. And yet Llangollen, as it revealed itself to my eyes (for, believe me, it was nothing short of a revelation) might have been created only yesterday - so fresh and unspoilt it looked.

In this ancient Welsh spot, then, an annual event, started in 1947, has been organised - an international musical festival, called the Eistedfodd of Llangollen.

You may wonder what the strange word means? There is in it something of the meaning of the Greek Amphictyonic leagues, and of Greek Festivals like the Olympia, the Pythian, the Panathenea. Etymologically, Eistedfodd means an "assembly", a "meeting" - but in the 12th century it came to mean also a bardic gathering - a festival in which musical and poetical contests were also held. It is in fact said that a prince of North Wales, Maelgwyn, who lived in the 6th century A.D., in order to prove the superiority of song over music, proclaimed a competition between bards and minstrels, in which the contestants were to swim across the river Conway. And because he seems to have in mind a bard who was at the same time a powerful swimmer, and who therefore stood a good chance of getting across first, he hoped to prove, by his own peculiar process of reasoning, not the athletic prowess of his protégé, but the superiority of the bard as such over the minstrel as such.

When Edward I of England annexed Wales to his kingdom, he legalised, for reasons of political expediency, the bardic institution of the Eistedfodd. In time, however, the festival died out, and only with the new enlightenment which the French Revolution brought in its wake, was the Welsh national feeling rekindled, and the ancient Welsh custom revived.

Since then, the Eistedfodd takes place every year - now in one town, now in another. Since the beginning of our century, in fact, with the full awakening of Welsh nationalistic feeling, the effort has assumed nation-wide proportions.

The purpose of this national Eistedfodd is the promotion of Welsh poetry and music, and more generally, of Welsh literature, the cultivation of the Welsh language, the preservation of the country's customs, and the fostering of Welsh patriotism, in a nation which had at one time feared submergence in the Anglo-Saxon ocean.

But from this insular ideal - whether or not justifiable we are not concerned just now - the idea of an international musical Eistedfodd at Llangollen emerged in recent years - an idea absolutely in keeping with the Olympic idea, with the spirit of friendly emulation and collaboration among people. Alongside with this, the International Festival serves to give the Welsh people and to all others who attend it, an opportunity to enjoy a few days of pure music and song.

The 1947 Festival - the first of its kind - was confined to international contests of amateur choirs and soloists. Later folk dances and songs were added to the programme, lending the Festival fresh colour and life. In the last four years, choirs and dancing teams have come

from Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Holland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden, the U.S., Spain, Yugoslavia, and, of course, Great Britain and Ireland. This year, Chile, Canada and Finland are also participating. 40 choirs took part in 1947, this year about 120 choirs, not including numerous groups of dancers, are giving performances.

The spectacle of men, women and children from so many nations in the world, in their picturesque costumes, thronging the giant marquee, erected in the middle of the meadow in which the contests are held, and the surrounding fields and hill sides as well as the picturesque winding streets of the enchanting little town of Llangollen, is a thing which once seen is never forgotten.

NARRATOR: In the picturesque Llangollen, our colleague, Panos Callinicos, met the well-known composer, Solon Michailides, from Cyprus, who was one of the adjudicators on the musical contests. Perhaps our listeners remember Mr. Michailides since he spoke from our station, about this Festival in 1949. This year, he had the goodness to give our colleague, Panos Callinicos an interview, which we had recorded in Llangollen yesterday. Here they are now, discussing the local festival, sitting out of doors in a field adjoining the marquee.

INTERVIEW

CALLINICOS: As you are amongst the adjudicators, Mr. Michailides, we wonder if you would do us the favour of giving us your authoritative comments on the way the contests are carried out.

MICHAILIDES: Nothing would give me greater pleasure. The Adjudicators' Committee then consists of five members, amongst whom are an English conductor, a Hungarian composer and a Greek.

CALLINICOS: Yourself, of course.

MICHAILIDES: Yes. Every choir must sing two set works, and a third of its own selection; but this last must, in any case, be by a composer of their own country. The choirs are divided into five groups - the mixed, the male, the female, the boys' and the children's choirs. In each case, one of the adjudicators presides in turn. It is he who is mainly responsible for the final decision.

CALLINICOS: The work of adjudicating must be most exhausting and incessant. As a matter of fact I've been looking for you since early this morning for our interview, and have only just managed to find you.

MICHAILIDES: Oh, yes, it's fairly exhausting and highly responsible. The standard of the performances is so high as a rule, and the difference in the quality of the interpretations so small, that it is often extremely difficult to choose between them.

CALLINICOS: I see in the programme that one of your works - the Crux Fidelis - is included in tomorrow's contest. Is it a recent composition?

MICHAILIDES: No, I wrote it before the war, but it was published in this country only two years ago.

CALLINICOS: The title seems to suggest a religious subject.

MICHAILIDES: That's quite right. The ^{text}score is borrowed from a Good Friday Service and has a close affinity with one of my Byzantine Sketches, for strings.

CALLINICOS: So it is in essence a Byzantine work, despite its Latin title?

MICHAILIDES: Byzantine, of course; coming from a Greek composer it could scarcely be otherwise.

CALLINICOS: That's very interesting. Now, Mr. Michailides, you have heard all the performances so far, isn't that so? Which choirs impressed you most?

MICHAILIDES: I would prefer not to express an opinion until I've heard them all, and have a general picture of the Festival. But I can say this; that the considerable number of choirs we've listened to so far, were quite admirable. I am thinking just now of the outstanding performance of the Canadian choir, which deservedly won the first prize yesterday in the Folk Song contest. And again, of the Ukranian and Swiss choirs - the one remarkable for its vigour, the other for its finesse of expression, - which both won the second prize. Today we listened to the ~~children's~~ ^{youth} boys' choirs, and there were some extra-ordinarily good ones among them, like the German choir from Bielefeld, the Cardiff Choir, the French choir from Grenoble, and the Finnish choir from Helsinki.

CALLINICOS: And what did you think of the dances? Isn't it a pity that no Greek team came over?

MICHAILIDES: Yes, a great pity. In the dances, we were all particularly impressed, first of all by the famous Serbs...

CALLINICOS: They were absolutely marvellous...

MICHAILIDES: ~~for~~ the plasticity and harmony of movement, their fine feeling for rhythm and music. ~~were delightful.~~ The French and Indonesians were also extremely good. But the dances, that to my mind stood out from the rest, were the delicate and graceful German and Austrian ones.

CALLINICOS: Yes, I agree, they were very fine.

MICHAILIDES: Still, as you no doubt know, we have, besides the choir-singing and dancing and the rest of the contests held in the day time, concerts in the evenings too.

CALLINICOS: Oh yes, of course.

MICHAILIDES: Now the concerts are particularly interesting this year, with various artists of international fame taking part, like the Italian baritone, Tito Gobi, whom we shall be hearing tonight, and the famous Chilean pianist, Claudio Arrau, who will be playing with the London Philharmonic in a symphony concert on Sunday, which concludes the Festival. Silver

CALLINICOS: So there are a good many more treats in store for us. Thank you very much Mr. Michailides. I'm certain you are anxious to return to your duties now, so I must detain you no longer. Thank you again.

MICHAILIDES: The pleasure was mine, I assure you.

NARRATOR: And now to complete the picture of the musical festival of Llangollen, we shall give you the song "ALOUETTE", performed by the University Choir of New Brunswick, Canada, which won the first prize.

GRAMS: "ALOUETTE" (MS arr. Tremblay) St. Joseph's University Choir. MLO 10340. Actuality from Llangollen 5.7.51.

NARRATOR: We now leave beautiful Wales and return to London, to the North Bank of the Thames, opposite the Festival Exhibition. In the narrow long gardens, which run the length of the bank, an international exhibition of posters is being held. This exhibition too (with its 300 posters approximately) in which 17 European countries are taking part (Greece is not amongst them unfortunately) does not, strictly, belong to the Festival, but is again one of those manifestations which the great event has promoted. Our colleague who visited it yesterday will give you her impressions briefly.

MRS. MEGAREFS: The thing that strikes the visitor the the exhibition of international posters is that in an age of worrying problems and feverish rush like ours, they are remarkable for their simplicity, gaiety, and friendliness. And indeed, the poster could not achieve its object in our day, if, to our innumerable heart-searchings it added its own riddle; if in the wear and tear of present day life, it demanded time and study to make it intelligible.

Every country, of course, has brought its own character into its posters. The British poster testifies to a finesse of humour, and to the gentleness and affability characteristic of daily life in this country. The poster asking the public to deposit their litter in the waste-paper baskets, is to my mind a typical example. There is no hint of severity there - no suggestion of the order about it; only a railway employee, snowed under a heap of paper litter which a passing train scattered about him, and a waste-paper basket standing empty beside him tell the tale. Of course the Englishman can at once see the funny and human side of the scene.

But what amazed me were the Danish pictures. Their fresh, luminous colouring; their child-like quality of unstudied artlessness; their originality; the imagination they display, were wholly unexpected. Soon, however, I found it only natural in works from the country that gave us Andersen's fairy tales. A poster announcing a concert, for instance, is a real fairy-tale advertisement. It shows a female figure, with decorative flowers for features; four chords made up of her hair stretch taut from her head to her first finger; and on these strings she is playing with the bow which she holds in her right hand.

The French posters have all the intensity and passion which we associate with French painting. The

tragic subject with a spiritual import, is their element. The advertisement for the film about the French heroine, Odette, for instance, shows you the barred window of a grimy and ruined prison. On the blackened wall, as though engraved with a rough tool, we have the title of the film and the names of the leading actors, while through the window, against a background of deep blue sky, an aeroplane and two parachutes are to be glimpsed.

Only one or two bright posters make an exception - particularly one by Matisse on which the fine technique of the master, brings out the joyous nature of Southern France.

The Swedes, the Norwegians, the Swiss, the Germans, the Dutch, show the characteristic teutonic features - painstaking precision and thoroughness - but showing free use of colour. And here I must mention an advertisement of Swiss telephones, that stood out amongst the rest. Diagonally across a rich yellow background, lay a pure white quill pen, and crosswise over it, the jet black ear-piece of a telephone. If the height of commercial art is to bring home its message without words and only through design and colour, then this is the perfect poster.

The Czech, Polish and Hungarian posters drew much attention. Chiefly, for what information they might contain about life in the countries behind the Iron Curtain. In the heavy shadow of political and social ideologies, artists seem to work in dark colours chiefly - the posters seem rather cheerless, as a result and their range of subjects was limited to cultural events and party propaganda. Two or three Czech posters, however, stand apart from the rest both for their colouring and design - particularly one advertising a folk-dance festival showing a young woman redolent of vitality and youth.

Despite the variety of posters, the exhibition brings out the similarities of the European nations - the unity of European culture. Even where ideological severity forbids the treatment of light and ephemeral subjects (as of the tipsy man lifted by a balloon, or of the fireman rushing to put out a fire with a refreshing drink) there again we find ourselves on common ground in the theatre, in music, in contests, and above all, in travel - in the universal longing of man to see and get to know "the cities of many men and their minds".
