



A Century of Music and Still Going Strong

The Basel region has a lively classical music community, and one of its most enthusiastic participants is the Liestal Orchestra.

The symphony orchestra in Liestal, known to its members as OLi, has a long and proud history. The survival and expansion of the orchestra has been the result of dedicated work behind the scenes from various presidents and committees; much of the following information was recently accessed from the state archives in Basel-Land.

Past

The Liestal Orchestra was founded in 1873 by 19 friends. Despite a promising start in 1885, progress halted due to internal administrative wrangles, and by the time they were resolved in 1896, the available resources had dwindled drastically. At this point the orchestra's equipment consisted of "a double bass, 4 clarinets, 3 horns and a viola". Apparently, the double bass had "no strings" and the horns and clarinets were described as being "unfit for use and completely useless". Fortunately over the years, the orchestra has been able to build up a wider range of instruments.

In 1906 violinist Julie Köchlin, a founding member, took over as president. At around the same time, Karl Lüdin joined as conductor, and both participated until 1919. At a time when Europe was going through dramatic political and social changes, they were commended for helping make this "extremely difficult time a happy one".

The next 29 years were marked by Walter Sterk (1920-1949), when the orchestra was financially back on track after a drop in membership. The musical programmes diversified and extended to playing music in hospitals and nursing homes. The orchestra's talents were widely recognised, with one music critic remarking: "A concert under Walter Sterk is a social and artistic event of the first order."

In 1949, Peter Zeugin, a young pianist with little conducting experience, took over. He adapted rapidly to his new position, and the orchestra prospered and gained new audiences. It proved to be a defining period, as the organisation of the orchestra has remained largely

unchanged ever since. A music critic at the time described the orchestra as having "left the former amateurish spelling far behind".

Present

Based on this solid foundation the orchestra has continued to thrive. Since 2003, Yaira Yonne has been the musical director, the first woman to hold this position. The orchestra has benefitted from her wide-ranging talents – from composing music through to playing steel drums. Today there are around 50 active members from Basel, Basel-Land, Solothurn, Aargau and Bern. The orchestra has always welcomed new members; its friendly philosophy is illustrated by the age-range of members, from 15 to 70. All are encouraged to contribute their skills and help the orchestra expand. As well as contributing musical expertise, they also help in developing and maintaining the website, creating brochures and promotional material and doing various administrative tasks.

Each year, programmes are selected by the conductor and music committee to maintain a balance between classical and modern styles. As well as playing famous popular pieces, the orchestra likes to try out lesser-known



The Liestal Orchestra today



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compositions. Sometimes it also commissions works which it then premieres. Each year, the orchestra concentrates on developing two musical programmes. Besides weekly rehearsals, the members get together during the busy weekend in the run-up to major concerts. These are also fun social highlights for the members.

Future

At the moment the organising committee is working on a long-term strategy, including looking for people or organisations to sponsor their work. Support is needed because during 2013, the orchestra will be working on two exciting new programmes with two professional concert-masters. The orchestra also intends to continue special programmes such as the Tango programme featuring a professional Tango-Trio and dancers, as it did in 2011, or projects with the Cantabile Choir Pratteln as in 2012. Although well received, these programmes were costly, so support from sponsors was much appreciated.

In October 2012 the orchestra held a successful concert in the Stadtkirche Liestal. The next will be a cooperative project with a group of gifted young musicians from the music school in Liestal known as the “classic strings”. The orchestra will present two concerts in Liestal on 27/28 April 2013, featuring Mozart’s *Jupiter Overture*, a Concert for Orchestra and Percussion by Darius Milhaud with a 16-year-old soloist, a string symphony by the “classic strings”, and the D Major Symphony by Louise Farrenc by the whole ensemble. www.orchesterliestal.ch



Faiz Kermani
is part of the PR
team for Centrepoint
the international
community in Basel.

He also serves
as President of the Global Health
Education Foundation, a US-based
not-for-profit healthcare charity which
aims to improve educational resources
and training for healthcare professionals
in developing countries.

www.centrepoint.ch

www.globalhef.org

It was an enthusiastic group of people of various nationalities that met at the Bottmingerschloss in October, their main object being to learn about the Swiss state school system. This was part of the Gatherings4Spouses programme for helping newcomers to Basel to settle in, with various presenters including Margaret Oertig (author of *Going Local*). Yannick Hohn introduced the story behind “give a chance” – a charity concert with wonderful musicians and dancers to support schoolchildren in Cameroon. At the end was a highly amusing talk about Basel’s autumn fair (*Herbstmesse*) by

have and the more we know what they need, the better we can do.” And she emphasizes: “It’s not just a matter of helping by providing a service, but also of connecting locally and globally. All our board members have lived abroad and know how challenging it can be, but we’re global citizens who know how beneficial it is to be local citizens too.”

The monthly Gatherings4Spouses meetings are always held on Wednesday mornings at the Bottmingerschloss. According to organizer Kaya Usher-Samayoa: “It’s got such a wonderful



Bottmingerschloss

Bryan Stone, historian, author and long-time resident in the Basel region, followed by an excellent lunch.

It’s typical of MyTown4You. This new organisation’s aim is to be a true one-stop shop for newcomers, helping them settle in and familiarize themselves with local culture and customs. As a non-profit organization where membership is free of charge, it’s effectively a club (it also has a business arm offering one-stop shop solutions for individuals and companies). It was only founded recently, so is still in the development phase.

“We’re always open to new ideas,” says founder Katrin Adler. “Anybody can visit our website: the more members we

atmosphere, just right for our gatherings.” Meetings follow a regular pattern: presentation of a special topic such as insurance, schooling or something equally serious, with time for questions, followed by a light-hearted session on a local event or custom in this tri-national region. And it’s a golden opportunity to meet other people – both local and global.

www.mytown4you.com



Anitra Green
Originally from
London, studied
classics and came
to Switzerland
before women even
had the vote.