

A Symphony Orchestra for Palestine.

HUBERMANN'S PLANS.

Vienna.

In an interview with a representative of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency here, Mr. Bronislaw Hubermann, the famous violinist, discussed his plans for the establishment of a first class symphonic orchestra in Palestine. One of the aims of such an orchestra, he declared, would be to give an opportunity to first class musicians, who had lost their positions in Germany owing to the anti-Jewish policy of the Nazi regime, to earn a decent livelihood. Already a large number of Jewish musicians from Germany of the first rank, both members of orchestras and soloists, had expressed their willingness to become members of such a Palestine orchestra.

The Palestine Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Hubermann continued, would attempt to organise large international theatrical and musical festivals in Palestine. Classical and modern theatrical musical works of a Biblical subject could be produced in their natural, historical environment. Apart from the economic importance of such festivals for Palestine, they were likely to increase the cultural reputation of the Jewish people in the whole world.

Although expecting the enthusiastic support of the Palestine public for such an orchestra as well as direct subsidy from the three large cities in Palestine and from the Government, the annual budget of such an orchestra, Mr. Hubermann pointed out, would still show a considerable deficit running into several thousand pounds. Two-thirds of this deficit Mr. Hubermann hoped to be able to cover. An account for that purpose was, indeed, already opened with the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Tel-Aviv under the name of "The Chairman of the Society of Friends of the Palestine Orchestra."

The first season of the symphony orchestra, Mr. Hubermann concluded, would start in October, 1936. It was to give twelve regular concerts in Tel-Aviv, ten in Jerusalem, eight in Haifa and, at least, the same number of concerts to audiences of workers and school children. Special concerts were also planned for the Jewish colonies.—J.T.A.

Simchath Torah in Jerusalem.

By JULIAN AVISIGLA.

At Simchath Torah, Jerusalem is *en fete*. How joyous is the "chassid," the streimele-hatted, Kaftan-garbed and ear-locked memorable figure of Yerushalayim, who all the year round prays for the peace of the city and on Simchath Torah dances with the best of them.

Then there are the Karaites, who, in their subterranean house-of-worship, pay homage to the Law in honourable and ancient custom, and to the favoured few spectators give insight to the quaint ceremonies of their fast-diminishing sect.

The general run of visitors had gone to the "Hurvah" Synagogue in the main alley of the Jewish Quarter. The "Hurvah" afforded the usual Simchath Torah celebration, but we, who were initiates, knew of the Nissimback school in the hinterland of the Old City, where the old Jerusalemites, relic or product of four generations, foregather in enthusiastic anticipation of the festival. We felt that more spiritual satisfaction could be derived from the more fervent celebrations of the revel.

On Simchath Torah night, the "chassidim" relaxed. Why so? Because they were going to dance with the Law, and take it for bride, and a wedding was always a time for geniality. Our party included a number of females—not-to-be-looked-at or to be driven away from men's society the rest of the year. But the gabbai, austere man though he was, winked. "It makes no difference to-night," he said, "if they only stand on the threshold, and be careful not to let their dresses touch the congregants coming in"

We gave profuse thanks, adding apologies for intrusion.

"No, we are all Jews," said the 'gabbai,' very open-hearted on this night of all nights. "Let us rejoice."

Above, in a little gallery running clear round the lofty dome, the envious wives of the "chassidim" watched the pretty Jewish girls from abroad who, so people said, never shaved their head when they married and walked arm in arm with their menfolk.

The preliminaries were all too brief; they were undoubtedly hurried, because the real business was waiting. Then the "chazan" solemnly approached the Ark, and, amid a clamour of benedictions, pulled aside the parochot, and opened the door.

The procession commenced. There were, in that seemingly little synagogue, some forty scrolls of the Law—gifts, we were later to'd, from pious co-religionists abroad. Each was ornately accoutred, and the bells rang merrily upon the rods as the Scrolls were lifted down and placed in the loving care of the congregants.

Then spirits rose. A few double shuffles ambitiously developed into high-stepping dances. The bearded and ringletted chassidim, resplendent in their purple or green

or bright brown velvet robes with fur trimmings, their picturesque fur-cone hats and drab slippers—the "chassidim," I say, grew almost riotous.

"Tanzen schneller! Schneller!" shouted the "gabbai." We had provoked some comment when conversing in Hebrew, for any other than Yiddish is taboo among these gentry. But the young children, holding flags of paper topped with apples and candles, forgot in their excitement parental admonitions.

"Look, look!" shouted one youngster, in fluent Hebrew, surprising, considering his upbringing, "Shlome's uncle is carrying two." Apparently Shlome's uncle was a "yachsan"—one of the favoured elite.

Merrier and merrier the circle grew. The thirty-odd celebrants (for some carried two each of the Scrolls) hummed and sang aloud the traditional songs of the occasion. They sang of the glory of the Lord, and of the magnitude of His blessings.

"Ai-a-ia-ai!" sang the women in the gallery, fanning themselves the while.

"Ai-ai-ai-ai!" sang the women and children, in the intervals of munching at their apples and blowing out other children's candles.

"Oy-oy-oy-oy!" chanted the men, treading out a saraband round and round the "amud," or pulpit, and diffusing joy with every cry.

Soon the children grew tired. Strange though it seemed to us, two hours had passed in the merry celebration. The Scrolls were being replaced as we left the synagogue and entered the winding, cobble-stoned paths of the inner Old City, and mounted the steep inclines towards the Jaffa Gate.

The nights were starry and alive with enjoyment. An unwonted alertness stirred the main streets of the Old City. Further up, outside the Jaffa Gate, crowds of people and of chalutzim paraded the main road, Jaffa Street, arm linked in arm, shouting out seasonal songs or chiming in with choruses to the verses of some inspired songster.

"Simchath Torah" has become a time for religious and national rejoicing jointly in Eretz Israel. Both in city and colony, in old and new settlements, in Judea and in the Emek, the inhabitants of a rejuvenating country celebrate it as in the olden days, when the festival was one of the Three Great Pilgrimages, to Yerushalayim. And again, in our days, in the steady redemption of the land—a redemption that is winning a stronghold soil for a stronghold people—there is evolving that deep consciousness of nation and belief that brings back so irresistibly the glorious spirit of those golden times of Israel when it was a power in the Land.

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