

# Music without Distraction

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"Switzerland's affluence rests to a large extent on her Weltverbundenheit, her relationship with the world. In this, the Swiss abroad form an important pillar of great significance for Swiss economy. If she wants to keep her place in an ever-increasing and world-wide competition, it is imperative that such pillars must be maintained and if possible strengthened. From experience, it has been seen that ever increasing immigration restrictions create more and more difficulties. All the more should the still existing possibilities be used by maintaining good relations with countries available for immigration, and in addition by determined co-operation with all institutions looking after the interests of the emigrants and the "Fifth Switzerland." Constant improvement of schools and vocational training centres must be promoted at all levels. Many countries have caught up in the field of professional education and training during the past decades and are more and more anxious to improve their "presence" in the immigration countries. For this reason, too, it is vital to take care of the young Swiss emigrants who want to work abroad temporarily."

Dr. Schaffner reminded the Swiss people that they would have to remember this interest in maintaining the Swiss communities abroad when they are called to the poll on the second *Ueberfremdungsinitiative* (the Initiative regarding the "overforeignisation" of Switzerland). The electorate would have to decide which was preferable, the reasonable stabilising policy towards foreign workers as advocated by the

Government, or the drastic surgical cut proposed in the Initiative, which would have the gravest consequences not only for the Swiss service industries and Swiss economy, but which would take away the basis for "Fifth Switzerland". Immigration and similar agreements were no one-way streets! It would be deplorable if the image of Switzerland as a tolerant and world-open country came to grief in an unfortunate electioneering campaign. Federal Councillor Schaffner closed his address with the following words:

*"We must remember the wise and prophetic words by the great French scholar André Siegfried when we hear such demands for restrictions, for reservations and for a closed door:*

*"Privez du reste la Suisse de cette activité extérieure de grand style, vous n'avez plus qu'un pays de montagnes, réduit à un niveau de vie médiocre"*.

*"Only as long as we are willing and able to put side by side with our traditional name for good relations with the outside world a corresponding readiness to give, can we face the future with confidence. In our foreign relations, both humane and economic, the upright old words by Goethe must be a guide:*

*"Mann mit zugeknöpften Taschen,*

*Dir tut niemand was zu lieb:*

*Hand wird nur von Hand gewaschen,*

*Wenn Du nehmen willst, so gib!"*

*(Nobody is anxious to please the tight-fisted; he who expects to receive, must give.)*

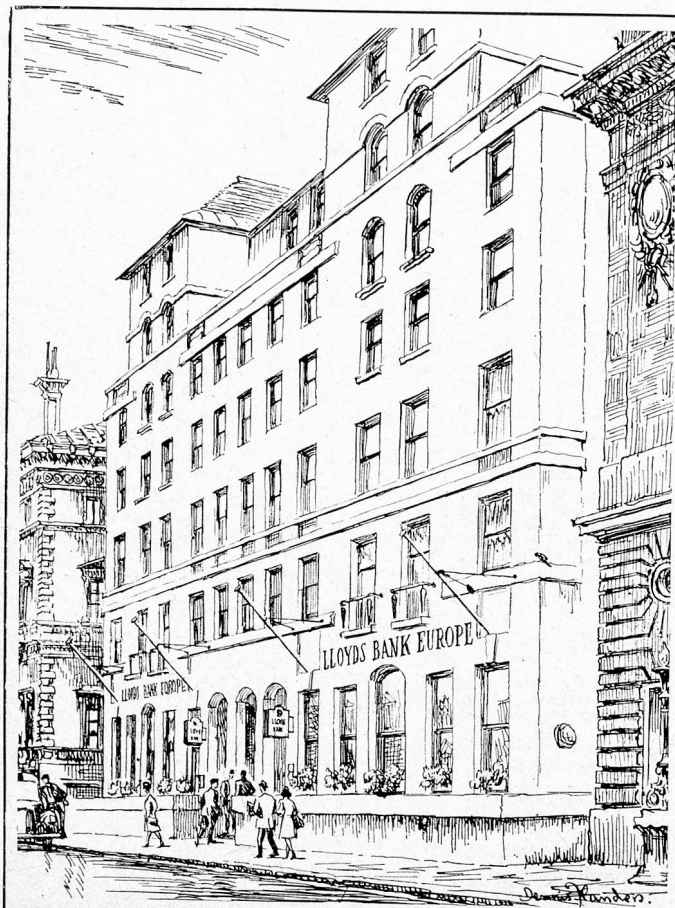
(Condensed from the speech in German by MM)

## MUSIC WITHOUT DISTRACTION

You may have been intrigued, running through the list of "forthcoming events" in the last but one issue, by an advertised gramophone performance of Dvořák's *Requiem* at St. Martin's-in-the-Field "in the setting of a totally blacked out church and a floodlit cross". You may also have asked yourself how such an event could possibly be related to anything Swiss.

Well, the promotor of this original musical happening, Mr. Kurt Kettner, who deals in stamps off Charing Cross Road, is a great lover of our country and believes his concerts are a marvellous publicity for Switzerland, and deserve to be mentioned in these pages.

Although the interest Mr. Kettner's concerts can have for Switzerland is a rather dubious question, they have a distinct interest of their own. Receiving me in his office, whose walls are thickly lined with stamps, Mr. Kettner, a genial, ebullient man with a roundish face, spouted forth with indomitable enthusiasm all his achievements in the way of musical production. A German citizen, Mr. Kettner has spent his happiest years in Zermatt, where he intimately knows the mayor, the innkeeper, the postman, the cheese-maker, the bell-ringer, and all the sedate population of the old village. In acknowledgement for the beautiful years he has spent there, he is filled with an overwhelming desire to do a good turn to Switzerland. His two life-passions are our country, and music; they are closely related, and it was in Zermatt that the idea of



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"music without distraction" originated and was first realised. Zermatt has bestowed one more blessing on Mr. Kettner: it is in its peaceful and beautiful scenery that, as he candidly told me, he meets God. Therefore Switzerland, Music and God are the three great causes that inspire his feverish concert-promoting activity. He has already aired one concert on the Swiss short-wave service and has organised three "music without distraction" programmes in St. Martin's-in-the-Field. Stamps are no more than his breadwinner. When he has folded his valuable albums and locked them in his safe, when the store is shuttered down, Mr. Kettner hustles home with glorious visions in his mind and works till the early hours of the morning in preparing for the next concert. He makes sure they are enhanced by the noblest personalities, among them Sir Gilbert Inglefield, former Lord Mayor, who patroned the events in St. Martin's-in-the-Field. Mr. Kettner likes to point proudly to a pile of periodicals which each contain a write-up on one of his creations. He may have to sit down and relax when he reads this one.

Mysticism aside, there is a rationale behind "music without distraction", where the audience is shrouded in a blackness suffused with music, with just an inspiring halo of illumination to gaze at. Mr. Kettner contends that there are far too many distractions in an ordinary concert. A garish dress, a fidgeting neighbour, a lady prettier than the music, coughs and raspings will tend to pull the listener's attention away from the performance. In "music without distraction", the audience is confronted with nothing but music, and due to his more complete involvement with the performance, will reach the highest degree of emotion.

This sounded fascinating and I was most eager to experience this for myself.

St. Martin's was quite full that evening: Mr. Kettner had managed to attract a motley, but fairly aged audience. He asked a deacon with a dazzling red cassock to read forth from the pulpit his grandiloquent welcome address. The lights went out, the cross glittered under the spot-light and stereophonic music swelled from loud-speakers adroitly concealed around the church.

The performance was beautiful. Dvořák's *Requiem Mass* being a completely new work to me, this was an especially interesting evening. After two hours of thunderous and overwhelming music, last intonations died down, the lights went on again, the altar seemed quite bare, the bleary-eyed and mute audience stood up indecidedly, having visibly come a long way.

My verdict on "music without distraction" will be that it owes its success almost entirely to electronics. It is undoubtable that high fidelity, stereophony and judicious positioning of the loud-speakers contrive to make

the music sonically nearer and more tangible to the listener than live performers ever could. The music is also far louder, and the vaults of St. Martin's were never flushed with such a high decibel-count before Mr. Kettner entered its history. In some of the loudest choral parts, the loud-speakers were unable to cope with any more sound without distortion. So it is true that, the music being both louder and nearer—thanks to electronics, it can grip the listener more tightly. But do the blackness of the church and the floodlit cross help him to get in a mood attuned to the music? The blackness in St. Martin's is not complete: the lights (and the distant traffic hum) of Trafalgar Square pass through the windows. Worse, the cross in this church is a florid and glossy piece of silverware, both unreligious and ugly. A plain, wooden cross would have rendered to the concert its proper religious dimension.

For my part, I do not find that such a musical arrangement actually helps the listener in concentrating on the music. He may well be more systematically assailed by sound, but he is left alone with himself, there being no performer on which to fix his attention. What "music without distraction" completely leaves out is the communication between performer and audience. In a live performance the musicians play for us, they are addressing their skills to us, and we acknowledge this by giving them all our attention. The beauty of the performer-audience relationship is naturally absent from a "music without distraction" performance, so is the fascination of watching the craftsmen at work, which makes a live piano recital so much more vivid than a recorded performance. "Music without distraction" is really a glorified gramophone-hearing, but this fact does not lower the worthiness and value of the experiment, especially when many people prefer gramophone or radio performances to live ones. In fact, Mr. Kettner might have initiated a new style of entertainment to be adopted the world-over. Let's wish him this; he will have earned his fame with plenty of hard work!

(P.M.B.)

### 35th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANGLO-SWISS CLUB, LOCARNO

Whilst recently on holiday in the sunny Ticino, quite by chance I heard of the Anglo-Swiss Club in Locarno and made a point of finding out a little more about it. To my surprise, I learned it had been in existence since January, 1934!—and, in fact, this year celebrated its 35th Anniversary!

The "Locarnesi" were most sceptical and pessimistic as to its future success when first the Club was founded that January day back in 1934—for at that time world affairs were uncertain to say the least; and there were already rumours of war. Nothing daunted, the

preparations for the formation of the Club went ahead, and at its first memorable assembly Walter Braun (now living in Zurich) was elected as President. The founder members were: Riccardo Danzi, A. Torriani, Giuseppe Franscella, Dir. Bolla, Riccardo Mazzoni, Umberto Respini, Francesco Varini and Augusto Brunoni.

The Club was very soon in full swing and many interesting evenings were spent in the study of England's economy, culture, history and art—membership went from strength to strength and many closer Anglo-Swiss ties formed.

With the passing of the years so, too, came new Presidents to carry on the good work—Nellie Brunner took over from Walter Braun, followed by Beatrice Aus der Au, J. Baummler, Alfred Meister, M. Hausamann, Alberto Pellanda and, ninth President in the scale, Linette Meschini, who is still in office, and whose painstaking efforts have contributed so much towards the success of the Club. Some of our older readers will recall this familiar name, for the current President is the wife of Carlo Meschini, whose father, Arturo, a true "doyen" of the Swiss Colony in London, was the popular and so likeable proprietor of the world famous "Pagani's" Restaurant in Great Portland Street, W.1. (alas, destroyed during the war), the meeting place of so many celebrated Artistes and Gourmets.

The 35th year of foundation was celebrated with a special anniversary dinner at the Hotel Palma au Lac, Locarno, and in pride of place—the Swiss and British flags—side by side.

On behalf of all Ticinesi, and indeed all Anglo-Swiss, I wish the Anglo-Swiss Club, Locarno, continued success and many more anniversaries; and may I be forgiven if I misquote Dante . . . "Ben faranno i (Linette) Meschini. . ."

O.F.B.

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