

In meomoriam Ernest Ansermet

Autor(en): **M.E.**

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1969)**

Heft 1567

PDF erstellt am: **27.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691372>

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Advisory Council: R. J. KELLER (Chairman), GOTTFRIED KELLER (Vice-Chairman), O. F. BOEHRINGER, J. EUSEBIO, A. KUNZ, C. NATER, R. M. SUESS.

EDITED BY MRS. MARIANN MEIER WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN

Telephone: 01-253 2321/2.

Published Twice Monthly at 23 LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: PAPERWYSE STOCK LONDON

Vol. 55 No. 1567

FRIDAY 11th APRIL 1969

IN MEMORIAM ERNEST ANSERMET



"I believe in my audience to be able to understand music. That's why I will not impress with mere outside effects: for truth will always be the loser."

This confession of the great conductor Ernest Ansermet reveals better than anything else could do what his conception of an orchestra's influence was.

Ernest Ansermet is dead; not only did the musicians of the "Orchestre de la Suisse Romande" lose their "patron", as they called him in affectionate reverence. The French-speaking part of Switzerland lost their promoter who made the country fully aware of its Latin character. And his name will always be mentioned in connection with the defence of contemporary music. The young mathematician Ansermet had been an admirer of the Canton de Vaud together with the author C. F. Ramuz and the painter R. Auberjonois. And that is the reason why he founded the *Orchestre de la Suisse Romande*, his idea, his creation, his work. He looked for his musicians everywhere — and found them, filled them with plenty of enthusiasm, which they needed, if their first aim was not just to find the means of subsistence. The governments of the Cantons in Western Switzerland and of the Bernese Jura helped, and private sources guaranteed the artistic freedom. Today it is one of the first symphony orchestras of the world.

Ansermet would have made a steep career in the United States. He refused, his loyalty to the soil where he was born took the lead. He toured all over the world: success followed him everywhere. Many recordings with

"Decca" brought his musical interpretations to far-away villages and increased the number of his admirers.

Some time ago he published a book on "*Les Fondements de la Musique dans la Conscience humaine*" and compared in it music with logarithms, questioning the psychological significance of those. He fought against atonal music although usually being ahead of new movements in art. His merit lies not only in the fact that he inspired creative productivity but he made millions of people realise that Switzerland has other aims than producing cuckoo-clocks and Emmentaler cheese.

The 25th February, the day of Ernest Ansermet's funeral, proved again the immense popularity and reverence amongst all social classes. Representatives of federal, cantonal and municipal authorities attended the service, more the last concert especially performed for him by 'his' orchestra before he was buried in the cemetery of Plainpalais, close to the composer Emile Jaques-Dalcroze.

M.E.

Biographical Notes.

Ernest Alexandre Ansermet was born at Vevey on 11th November 1883, son of Gabriel and Marie Ansermet, née Charoton. He was educated at Vevey and at the Faculty of Science of Lausanne University and the Sorbonne in Paris. He graduated with Lic.-ès-sc. in Lausanne. Simultaneously, he studied music (piano, violin, composition) with Alexandre Dénéreát in Lausanne, Barblan and Ernest Bloch in Geneva and Gedalge in Paris. He married twice, his first wife having died in 1940.

From 1906 to 1910, he was teacher of mathematics in Lausanne. The following year, he became conductor of the *Kursaal Orchestra at Montreux*, later of the *Geneva Symphony Concerts*. After 1918, he was director of *Diaghilev's Russian Ballet*. He held an honorary doctorate from the Universities of Neuchâtel and Lausanne, honorary citizenship of Geneva and was *Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur in France*. Chief Conductor of *l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande* and Guest-Conductor of many famous orchestras the world over. Composer and writer on music.

In the autumn of 1967, the great conductor handed over to Paul Klecki, formerly in charge of the *Berne Symphony Orchestra*. At the first concert of the "*Orchestre de la Suisse Romande*" after Ansermet's death, he asked for a minute of silence. Every concert goer that evening (24 February), received a *souvenir brochure* which contained not only an obituary, but also the promise to carry on his work. "Music", he had said, "was as necessary to man as water".

ANGLO-SWISS NEWS ITEMS

Great Britain was amongst the countries which sent exhibits to the International Tourism and Sports Show in Lausanne, which, for the first time, included a section for sports aviation. The other countries represented were U.S.A., France, Italy, Czechoslovakia and the host nation, Switzerland.

For a month, beginning on 3rd March, Swiss engineering troops are engaged in trying out bridging material of English origin. An instructor of the British Army is on the spot, and the transport of these bridges (made of a light-metal alloy and erectable in about one hour) was undertaken by English Army trucks driven by military motorists. The British soldiers also take part in Army exercises.

"Swiss sales charts reveal that the British have increased their market penetration in Switzerland over the past year", says "The Times" Motoring Correspondent in Geneva. The West Germans retain first place, with the French second, but both lost ground to British manufacturers. British Leyland have a go-ahead marketing organisation in Lausanne, and they, Ford and Vauxhall have all increased car sales in Switzerland. The "Mini" has become the best-selling British car in Switzerland. The British Leyland Motor Corporation announced that the company was raising a loan on the Swiss finance market of 60 million Swiss francs. The purpose is to extend assembly plants in the Continent. A later announcement just received stated that the loan was not fully taken up.

The Central School of Drama, one of the world's best-known drama academies, amongst whose graduates are Sir Laurence Olivier, Sir Michael Redgrave and his daughter Vanessa, performed Joe Orton's kitchen sink comedy "Loot" at the Kaufleuten Theatre in Zurich. It was given in aid of refugee students.

In 1968, Switzerland imported carpets to the value of 131 million francs, 11% more than in the previous year. More than half of the hand-made rugs came from Persia, whereas Great Britain took first place with machine-made carpets, a quarter of all the carpet imports.

The Swiss première of "The Timeless Hour" by the Scottish poet William Sharp (pseudonym Fiona McLeod) was given at the theatre of the Goetheanum at Dornach, Solothurn.

The British Ambassador to Switzerland, Mr. H. A. F. Hohler, gave an address on Great Britain and the Commonwealth at the invitation of the Swiss-British Society in Berne (at the Guild House "Distelzwang").

The well-known writer on international affairs, François Duchêne, has been appointed Director of the Institute of Strategic Studies in London as from 1st October next. He is a Swiss/British dual national. The Institute has 32 member states and is an independent research centre for military and strategic studies within international relations. One of its publications is "Military Balance", a list of details of striking power and armed forces of the world.

(By courtesy of A.T.S., "Weekly Tribune" and "Echo").

RECENT DEATHS IN SWITZERLAND

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland recently:

Dr. Nazar Reichlin (83), Schwyz, *Kantonsingenieur* from 1921 to 1956.

Prof. August Buxtorf (92), Basle, field geologist in Burma before becoming Lecturer of Geology at Basle University in 1907; Professor from 1920 to 1944; President of the Swiss Geological Commission from 1926 to 1953; honorary doctorate from Lausanne and Geneva Universities.

René May (75), Lausanne, engineer in charge of the Rhone Valley corrections; Commune Councillor of Lausanne.

Otto Klein (95), oldest Railway Manager of the world; with the Morschach-Brunnen Railway since 1904, a line which will shortly be replaced by a bus service.

Ernest Apothéloz (56), Basle, Manager of "Allgemeine Treuhand A.G."

Jean Verdier (67), Geneva, painter of repute.

Pater Veit Gadiant (91), Rapperswil, Professor at the Kollegium of Stans; co-founder and Editor of "Schweizer Schule".

Dr. Emil Bosshart (85), Zurich, well-known philanthropist who created a fund in aid of the Teachers' Training College Kreuzlingen.

Jules Trembley (90), Lausanne, well-known sculptor of Geneva origin, who lived in Paris for many years.

Miss Frieda Hilty (98), St. Gall, presented the old ducal Castle of Werdenberg to the Canton of St. Gall; the property had been in the family since 1835.

Edmond Gilliard (94), Lausanne, author and philosopher, the last member of the "Cahiers Vaudois" Group, of which Ramuz and Ansermet, too, were members; for 30 years (to 1935) teacher at the *Gymnase* in Lausanne; holder of many awards.

Dr. Carl Schauwecker (82), Wabern/Berne, citizen of Schaffhausen; he founded the "Baukontor Berne A.G."; since 1930 Consul-General of Finland.

Jean Peitrequin (66), Lausanne, engineer, journalist, politician; for 10 years member of the Cantonal Parliament, Commune Councillor, and from 1951 to 1955 National Councillor (Radical Democrat); Municipal President of Lausanne from 1950 to 1957.