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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 atuned 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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