

News in Brief

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In "Monsieur Ansermet on the Music he enjoys" "The Times" recorded an interview with the great man. He was asked:

"Is London still the centre it was in those days? 'Yes, of course, but in a different way. The musical world is more divided now than it was then. Formerly, an event in Berlin or Vienna had its repercussions in the other major capitals, like London or Paris. But now each city is isolated: the commercial organization of musical life has become more important than the cultural currents, and a major event in one city is of concern only there.'

"M. Ansermet pointed out that the case of his own country, Switzerland, being small and having fewer composers of its own, was rather different. 'We are more attentive to outside happenings. For us Benjamin Britten, for example, seems a more important composer than he does for the French.'

"It was M. Ansermet who conducted the first performance, in Geneva, of Britten's new *Cantata Misericordium* at the Red Cross centenary concert in September — 'a most beautiful work'. He reminded me that he had conducted *The Rape of Lucretia* at Glyndebourne shortly after the war, and he has always admired and sympathized with Britten — 'he is writing greater music than anyone else today'. The Swiss composer Frank Martin is another contemporary for whom he has especial sympathy.

"What other music does he enjoy conducting? 'Well, the classics, which I do more now than I used to: I've just recorded all Brahms's symphonies, as well as Beethoven's and six of Haydn's. Young audiences have got to build up this classical background. But Debussy, of course, is my great favourite. And all Stravinsky: that is, except for the more recent works; up to the Symphony in C and the Symphony in Three Movements. Of his later works, *Norwegian Moods* and the *Circus Polka* seem truly Stravinskian—and *In Memoriam Dylan Thomas* is perhaps one of the finest of them.'

"How, I asked M. Ansermet, does he feel about the new music of today? 'Some of it — all this improvisation — isn't music at all; it's just like children at play. Of course, I had the reputation between the wars of being a pioneer of new works — Ravel, Bartok, Honegger and many others — and I was very active in the I.S.C.M. But I found myself unable to follow the modern movement after World War Two.'

The special report in "The Times" ends thus:

"At 80, M. Ansermet remains a figure to be reckoned with. This youthful octogenarian, though less familiar on our concert platforms than we might wish, occupies a prominent and secure place in our musical affections."

And with this nobody would disagree, and we wish our illustrious compatriot many happy years to come.

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The Editor would also like to thank the many readers who have sent her Christmas cards. Their good wishes and support give her encouragement in her work.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Direct connection to the ski-ing centres of the Grisons and Eastern Switzerland from Zurich is offered by a new highway inaugurated on 1st December. The long cherished project of a road along the Walensee to avoid the climb over the Kerenzerberg, often icy and sometimes dangerous in the winter, has thus been realised. Lovely ski-ing areas such as Pizol, Flumserberge, Klosters and Davos are now even nearer and more comfortably accessible for ski fans in and around Zurich.

Savognin, a new winter resort on the Julier route to St. Moritz, attracted attention already last winter thanks to ski and chair lifts built on private initiative. These facilities have now been doubled and the small village (3,900 feet) is ready to welcome skiers who prefer close-to-nature sport to fashionable resort life.

In the Canton of Valais, in which several alpine pastures are not easily accessible, the system of transporting milk pipe-line has been adopted on a large scale. In fact, at the present moment milk pipe-lines in the Valais total over 125 miles in length. These pipe-lines consist of plastic pipes buried under the ground. The satisfactory results experienced so far allow experts to estimate that the cost of transport by milk pipe-line varies between 1.5 and 3 centimes per litre, whereas transport by road amounts to nearer 5 to 6 centimes a litre, i.e. in some instances almost four times the figure for the new form of transport.

In the kitchen of the Zurich Central Station a giant gas stove has been installed on which can be used more than one hundred casseroles. It has a capacity for baking more than six hundred pieces of pastry per hour and for warming over one thousand plates at one time. Installation of this giant was difficult and had to be done with the utmost speed to avoid any interruption of the service. Thanks to a work team of thirty men, the new gas stove was ready for service hours ahead of schedule.

[O.S.E.C and S.N.T.O.]

Davos. — There are some one hundred and twenty-five winter resorts in Switzerland offering the skier a wide variety of slopes and runs, and today there is hardly a ski region access to which has not been facilitated by one or even several skilifts; the same is true of the nursery slopes. Such facilities do not strike the modern skier as being anything out of the ordinary, and yet their conception is not so very old. The first skilift in the world was built at the Bolgen in Davos in 1934, exactly thirty years ago. The originator, the Zurich engineer Ernst Costam, had the idea while on a ski excursion in the Bernese Oberland. As he was climbing up from Grindelwald to the Kleine Scheidegg inspiration came to him from the contact line of the electric railway: "How wonderful it would be, if one could get hold of that wire and be pulled uphill!"

[S.N.T.O.]

NIGHT TELEPHONE SYSTEM AT SWISSAIR

A new automatic telephone-answering system will be used by Swissair Reservations in London (REGent 7931) from 1st January to provide a twenty-four-hour service. The system, operating from 9 p.m. until 8.30 a.m., will record messages for the attention of its human "colleagues".