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A country paralysed

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It is hard to know where to start. This is my umpteenth attempt to write something about the coronavirus outbreak in Switzerland. Every version so far has more or less been out of date as soon as I typed the last word. First, I described the spectre of COVID-19 in Italy. Second, the angst surrounding the first coronavirus cases in Ticino. I then tried to write something about the impact on sporting and cultural events. In my fourth

draft, I said the worst was probably yet to come. I also considered the implications: the government's emergency powers, the upending of democratic processes, the shutting of schools, the ban on gatherings, the closure of non-essential businesses. Even these aspects seemed to have been overtaken by events by the following day. Meanwhile, infections and deaths were rising fast. So was the number of people suddenly out of work.

This is anything but a new and difficult kind of normality. How can it be normal when we are constantly facing new, arduous and unprecedented challenges? Certainly, things will have changed again by the time you read this magazine. Perhaps my hope (while writing this at the end of March) that the crisis could be over by the end of May has turned out to be true. Or maybe I am completely wrong and Switzerland's shutdown has had even graver consequences.

We should not overlook the positive aspects: in Switzerland many people are showing kindness and consideration to others during this crisis. It starts with helping older people who are at risk. This is important to consider, because everyone's fortitude is being tested. The surreal fact of the matter is that, although we are all in this together, we are also alone. The poorest, the weakest and the most vulnerable members of society have never felt so isolated, and this at the very time when they need all the human love and warmth they can get. Essentially, we are all social beings. They as much as anyone else.

Yet there are still reasons to be cheerful. One of these is Stephan Eicher, who recently won the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Swiss Music Awards in recognition of his 40-year career in music. Reason enough for us to pay tribute to this magnificent musician and his body of work.

We are also looking forward to getting to know you, our readers, a little bit better: "Swiss Review" is conducting a reader survey, and we would love you to tell us what you think about our magazine – both good and bad. Your feedback is important to us.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cover photo: Stephan Eicher performing in Lucerne on 27 February 2020. Photo: Marco Masiello

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