

Roundabout Switzerland

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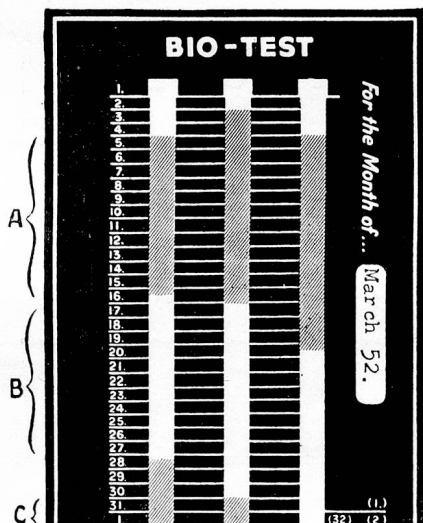
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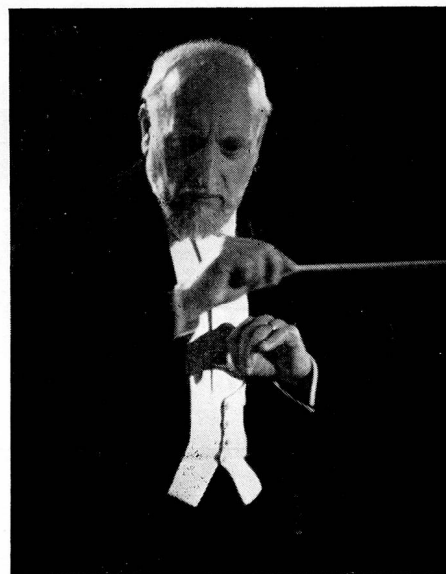
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DECEMBER puts the accent on indoor events, with an impressive programme of concerts and exhibitions in all the principal towns and cities.

Pride of place goes, as usual, to the Orchestre de la Suisse romande, which this month is giving symphony concerts in Lausanne and Geneva. And conducting it is the man whose name will always be associated with this fine orchestra: Ernest Ansermet. Switzerland's musical life certainly owes much to his dynamic personality, for he was the driving force that not only brought the orchestra into existence



Ernest Ansermet

but kept it together when its future was in jeopardy. Ansermet, born 71 years ago in sleepy Vevey, showed early musical talent, but as he was also good at his sums it was thought figures would be safer than fiddles as a career. So while studying the piano and the violin, young Ernest was also diligently preparing for a more mundane existence.

At 22, his university training behind him, he started in Lausanne as a teacher of mathematics. Fortunately for music this episode did not last long. In 1909 he threw up his job and went to Berlin to learn how to be a conductor. Two years later he was back to take over the Montreux Casino orchestra, and was spotted by Stravinsky. Then Serge Diaghilev, exiled in Ouchy and preparing for his triumphant American tour, needed a conductor. Ansermet got the job — and from then on he never looked back.