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CONGRATULATIONS

Our compatriot, the well-known pianist Mr. Albert Ferber has recently returned from a most successful Concert Tour in the Americas. The following is a reprint from the "New York Times" (8.11.65) after his *début* in New York.

SWISS-BORN PIANIST EXCELS IN DIVERSIFIED PROGRAM

Albert Ferber, a Swiss-born pianist who has made his home in London for the last 25 years, played his first New York recital last night in Town Hall.

Mr. Ferber is no youngster, and this was no ordinary *début*. He had not gone very far in Beethoven's Variations on Salieri's "La Stessa, la Stessissima" when it was evident that he is a master musician and, no fooling, complete with head and heart as well as hands.

The Beethoven is an early work (1798), by no means comparable to the Diabelli set or "Eroica" Variations in terms of substance, but it's a charmer, and Mr. Ferber made the most of it. The beautifully judged dynamic gradations, the way his left hand had of stealing up as if from a distance, and the wit that gleamed through the technique promised much for what was to follow, and the promise was gloriously kept.

The Schubert work listed simply as "Sonata in A major" proved to be the big A major (D. 959), Schubert at his most expansive and most romantic, with the saucy little scherzo that anticipates Chopin's Ecossaises. It was a magical 35 minutes, a performance of breadth and an intimate kind of vitality, enhanced by downright ravishing piano tone.

Mr. Ferber followed the general Schnabel outlines in his playing, but it was no mere copy. The Schnabel recollection it evoked most strongly was that pianist's dictum that the Schubert sonatas are "a safe supply of happiness".

Since Mr. Ferber's reputation, at least on records, was built largely on his Debussy, it was surprising to find that composer represented last night by only three Preludes — "Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest," "La cathédrale engloutie" and "Feux d'artifice". These were given an orchestral kind of performance, revealing a most sensitive touch as well as a big palette.

The Liszt transcriptions of Chopin songs may be empty bravura pieces, but what a grand display was made of them! It was the kind of material, and playing, most pianists would save for a bang-up conclusion, but the Debussy was yet to come, as were a suite from Roberto Gerhard's "Don Quixote" and Villa-Lobos's "Dance of the White Indian".

R. D. F.

Readers can hear Mr. Ferber on "BBC Home Service" on 10th April (11-11.45 p.m.) and "Third Programme" on 3rd May (10.30-11 a.m.)

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NEW HOLIDAY CENTRE ON THE WORLD'S
BUSIEST MOUNTAIN

The 6,000-ft. Rigi, located in Central Switzerland about 25 miles south of Zurich and less than 18 miles east of Lucerne, is the world's most visited mountain, receiving about one million tourists and holiday-makers annually. A new kind of holiday centre, unique not only in Switzerland but in all Europe, is currently under construction at Rigi-Kaltbad, on the southern slope of the mountain at an altitude of 4,750 ft. Called "Hostellerie Rigi", it will be dedicated in October 1966. When completed, this "well-balanced combination of a sport hotel, holiday apartment house, restaurants, and later a conference hotel" — as the future Director of the complex described it — will be able to accommodate 500 guests. The Director added, in the course of a recent interview that the conference hotel will be particularly well-suited for corporate training courses of several days' duration and similar industrial functions. To insure maximum utilisation, however, it will be used as a normal holiday hotel on weekends and during the summer and winter holiday seasons. The sport hotel, to which will be annexed an apartment house with sixty-eight holiday flats (owner units) will feature a fascinating choice of restaurants: There will be the luxury restaurant "Zur Trotte", with exclusively à la carte service and an extensive wine cellar from which gourmets may personally select their own bottles. In the self-service restaurant, meals will be served much as they are prepared on international airlines. The Tarascon Alpine Club will be for those who prefer fine food in a casual atmosphere (it is named after Tartarin de Tarascon, the delightful Rigi mountaineer created by Alphonse Daudet). Memories of still another literary hero who "climbed" the Rigi will be awakened by Mark Twain's Bar, where regular patrons will each be assigned a storage compartment in which to keep their unfinished bottles. A sensational feature of the new vacation centre will be its indoor swimming pool. By pressing a button, it will be possible to lower the ceiling so that it completely covers the pool and becomes the floor of a large meeting hall. Said the Director of the new "Hostellerie": "The Rigi, accessible from Zurich, Switzerland's metropolis, in barely one hour, is the classical walker's mountain. It has more than 60 miles of walking paths — and not a single motorised vehicle. A place of absolute peace, a private preserve for pedestrians and children at play. Provision has been made for ample parking at Vitznau, the starting point of the Vitznau-Rigi cog railway, and at Weggis, from which a cablecar will run directly to Rigi-Kaltbad — all of which will give our guests at least temporary freedom from the bondage of the motorised age".

[S.N.T.O.]

We should like to mention here that "The Times" had an article on the Rigi on 9th October, called "A Swiss Sanctuary Free From Cars". In it the writer, Mr. E. M. Nicholson, recalls that the Rigi was one of the world's earliest tourist centres; a hotel was erected there 150 years ago, and the Rigi had the first European mountain railway in 1871. He thought that the historic role as an attraction for international tourists seemed to be weakening, and that it now had more the aspect of a place run by the Swiss for the Swiss. No doubt, the plans for the new holiday centre as outlined above will soon remedy any possible weakening of interest.