

News from the Capital

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NEWS FROM THE CAPITAL

The "Last Judgement" at Berne Cathedral is being restored

The tympanum of the main portal of Berne Cathedral, the "Last Judgement" created by Erhard K ng and Meister Albrecht around 1500 – considered a cultural and historical attraction of the federal capital in every tourist guide – is not looking its best at the moment. Iron scaffolding and numerous empty pedestals give a clue to what is happening. The 236 statues which make up the impressive sandstone sculpture have suffered heavy damage in the course of the centuries. Forty-eight figures, some life-size sculptures, must be replaced. This work, the exact copying of the weatherbeaten originals, has kept Walter Fuhrer, sculptor of the Cathedral Builders' Association, busy for nine years. Forty copies have already been completed; several are in a side portal of the Cathedral and are waiting there for the final accomplishment of the huge task. In about two years, everything should be ready: then the "Last Judgement" tympanum of the Berne M nster, one of the most important and richest church portals of the late Gothic period, will regain its original beauty.

A romantic journey by steam train around Berne

Those who still love the romance of the old steam engine will once again this summer have the chance of some beautiful train journeys around Berne. The popular steam train will be making trips in the Sensetal, that is, between Flamatt and G mmenen, from May to October every first and third Sunday in the month. "Der Feurige Elias" ("Fiery

Eli"), a beautiful old steam locomotive, is to be seen on the Solothurn–Zollikofen–Berne Railway (SZB) from May to October on every second Sunday of the month, and on the Berne–Worb Railway (VBW, Worb–laufen–Worb stretch) on the fourth Sunday of the month. For the journey in these original steam trains a (small) steam supplement is charged on top of the standard fare.

Curtain up on the Berne Theatre Season

The Berne Stadttheater (City Theatre) – which this year celebrates its 70th jubilee – keeps to its tradition this year in presenting all aspects of dramatic art: plays, operas, operettas and ballets. The 1973/4 season opens on September 15 with Max Frisch's "Die chinesische Mauer" ("The Great Wall of China"). The premi res of theatre plays which follow are, in sequence: Pavel Kohout's "Poor Murderers", Shakespeare's "Hamlet", "Menschen gl cklich machen" ("Make People Happy") – the world premi re of a play by Walter M. Diggelmann, "Der gute Mensch von Sezuan" ("The Good Woman of Sezuan") by Bertold Brecht, "The Wild Duck" by Henrik Ibsen, Georgio Strehler's adaptation of the Gozzi fairy tale "Der Rabe" ("The Raven"), "Adam and Eva" ("Adam and Eve") by Peter Hacks, and Ostrovsky's "The Forest".

The series of great opera evenings begins on September the 22nd with Mussorgsky's monumental "Boris Godunov". New productions follow of Kalman's "Countess Mariza", Benjamin Britten's "Midsummer Night's Dream", Umberto Giordano's "Andr  Ch nier",

In the centuries which ensued, battle upon battle raged as the confederate states liberated themselves from neighbouring powers. After the Habsburgs, it was the turn of the Burgundians to be defeated, when their duke, Charles the Bold, marched against the Swiss and was defeated at Grandson and at Morat. However, the Swiss mercenaries were to suffer defeat at the famous battle of Marignano against the invincible Francis I of France in 1515. This defeat kept them from further extra-territorial attacks and now the thirteen cantons of the Confederation settled down to a peaceful life contenting themselves with sending their troops abroad, whence the famous Swiss Guard, which still exists today. The sixteenth century evolved with the Reformation throughout the country.

Though thirteen member states were divided up by the Catholic and Protestant faiths, they became obliged at the same time to keep to a stable policy in both state and foreign matters. By the 18th century, in spite of interior strifes, Switzerland was known to the rest of Europe as an idyllic state. But with the French Revolution, the oligarchy and subjugated territories of the old Confederation were destroyed. The Austrian, Russian, and Revolutionary armies turned the entire country into one huge battlefield.

However, the federal r gime was restored by a Mediation begun by Napoleon and ended in 1815 by the Vienna Congress. On this occasion, Switzerland's new constitution was decided upon just as it is today with its 22 cantons. In 1847, with the rupture between liberal and conservative cantons leading up to the "Sonderbund" civil war, the country's peace was threatened. Finally in 1848, the new constitution of Switzerland was established in a confederation of states reunited in a Chamber of Commons and Chamber of States. Since 1850, Switzerland has managed to remain peaceful and neutral. This is indeed of vital importance when one considers its position at the strategically vital crossroads of Alpine routes.

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"The Gipsy Baron" by Johan Strauss, "Blood Wedding" by Wolfgang Fornter, Verdi's "The Force of Destiny", "Julius Caesar" by Händel and "Der Rosenkavalier" by Richard Strauss. The programme of the traditional ballet performances has not been finally decided at the moment.

In the Atelier-Theater at the same time rehearsals are in full swing for the new season. The following premières are envisaged: "Der Snob" ("The Swell"), a comedy by Carl Sternheim (on September 1), the thriller "Doppelspiel" ("Double Game") by Robert Thomas (on October 3), George Bernard Shaw's mystery play "Candida" (on November 7) and "Zum Teufel mit dee, Sex" ("To Hell with Sex"), a farce by Anthony Marriot and Alistair Foot (on December 12). The Berne concert season which is about to begin once more promises the music-lover a varied programme and a crowd of events. Two or three times a week concerts take place in the Casino, in the Cathedral, in the Berne Radio Studio or the Rathaushalle (Council Hall). Classical, Romantic and post-Romantic music are the mainstay of the concerts of the Berne Music Society in winter 1973/4, for which a season ticket can be bought. The society is also putting on numerous chamber music recitals. Ten symphony concerts, several summer concerts and Sunday matinees are organised by the Berne Orchestral Association, which presents rarely-played pieces as well as standard works. Prominent Swiss and foreign conductors and soloists will be guests in Berne and make the rich concert programme even more attractive.

More deaths on the Matterhorn

Two Japanese mountaineers came unstuck on the Matterhorn and hurtled 500 metres down the east wall.

A tourist from Geneva witnessed the scene through his telescope. He immediately phoned the office of Air Zermatt. Only one person was in attendance. This person thought that the tourist had seen falling rocks, but was finally convinced when he was given precise details. He called for a relief flight by the Swiss air guard. A helicopter took off from Zermatt and eventually saw two bodies roped together at the foot of the mountain. They were transported to Zermatt the next day. They were the 10th and 11th deaths on the ill-fated Swiss face of the Matterhorn this year.

An American banker, Stan Zundell, 61, has told the tourist authorities in Zermatt that he planned to beat the world record of solitary ascensions up the Matterhorn. According to this Los Angeles financier, the Matterhorn has never been scaled more than seven times alone by the same man. The Zermatt tourist office wrote to him saying that the Matterhorn wasn't really intended for this kind of exercise. It was hardly recommended as Mr. Zundell had a troublesome heart and arthritis . . .

Mr. Graber visits Israel

Mr. Pierre Graber, Head of Switzerland's diplomacy, has been invited to visit Israel by his Israeli counterpart, Mr. Abba Eban. This visit will take place from 10th to 13th September. Mr. Graber will

be accompanied by Mr. Ernesto Thalmann, Secretary General of the Political Department. This visit follows Mr. Graber's recent journey to Cairo, where he chaired a meeting of Swiss diplomats in the Arab world.

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