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Old granary becomes new cultural centre

Costumes and musical instruments are also a part of our culture

One of the numerous events planned for the anniversary year which merits a special mention is the opening of the Burgdorf "Kornhaus" (22–25 August 1991). Work on the project, which involved converting the 18th century granary in Burgdorf's "Unterstadt" into a Swiss museum of folk music and traditional costumes, has lasted ten years.

Where grain and salt were once stored, exhibitions of traditional Swiss costumes, traditional musical instruments and old record players will be on display. The project has been supported by the Swiss Confederation, the Canton of Berne, the town of Burgdorf, other towns and cantons and numerous private donors.

History of costumes

In the costume section on the second floor, the Swiss Traditional Costume Association compares some hundred figures in traditional costumes (which were carved and dressed for the National Exhibition in 1939) to traditional

costumes worn today. The exhibition also shows how the simple and natural coloured clothing of the old country folk developed into colourful, richly worked traditional costumes. The former garments of linen or wool were not only common in the alpine region at the time the "Kornhaus" was built, but were also worn in neighbouring countries. And even today, the contemporary and varied traditional costumes of Switzerland can well be compared to those of neighbouring countries. A historical presentation of traditional costumes should include information on the ethnic and geographic setting, and this is provided in a multivisual presentation on the ground floor.

The organisation of musical instruments

The music department of the Burgdorf "Kornhaus" (1st and 3rd floor), unlike other collections of musical instruments, does not simply exhibit what has been collected over the years, but is organized according to a scientific concept. A systematic collection of all types of Swiss folk instruments, from the "chlefeldi" (related to the castanets) to the valve trumpet, are on display. These 130 exhibits grouped according to types of instruments, are described in four languages and illustrated with audio-visual aids. Whilst the collection illustrates the history and the distribution, the design and method of playing Swiss traditional instruments, the 1st floor shows how they are used. Twelve masked figures in this attractive exhibition present the function of folk music as an accompaniment to seasonal customs. In other showcases, traditional Appenzell "Streichmusik" (strings), the "Ländler" band and the Bandella (a small Ticino brass ensemble) demonstrate folk dance music. A number of "quieter" instruments remind the visitor of parlour music. They include the Schwyz and Glarus zither, the Emmental, Toggenburg and Kriens neck zither, the "Langnauerörgeli" (small concertina), the violin, the "Schwäbelpfeife" (flue-pipe), as well as the piano, harmonica and



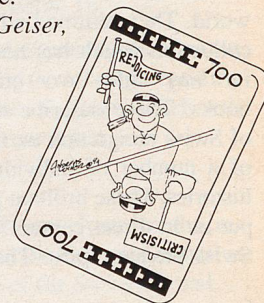
About one hundred figures in traditional costumes were produced for the 1939 National Exhibition, some of which are life-size. (archive photo)



Moser-Buebe (Moser Brothers). Albert Moser (1895, Biel – 1981, Los Angeles) with the violin, Paul Moser (born 1899) with the concertina and Ernst Moser (1894–1936) with the double bass. (archive photo)

home organ. A further showcase does justice to all sorts of revivals, like the "Wander-vogel" and the singing movement, the songwriter and folk movement, street music and even briefly, colloquial rock and alpine jazz are covered, for it is also part of the exhibition's policy to show the newest and latest forms which testify to the constant changeability of folk culture.

Brigitte Bachmann-Geiser,
curator



An appeal to the "Auslandschweizer"

It is well known that earlier emigrants, who could not fly home on a visit, would take their musical instrument with them to ensure against homesickness. Old musical instruments from Switzerland, scores and song books, as well as photographs of musicians will be thankfully accepted and carefully preserved in the Burgdorf "Kornhaus".

The Burgdorf "Kornhaus" is open daily from 22nd August 1991 (except Mondays). For information tel. 034 23 10 10