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A cultural canton with a difference

BY BARBARA FATZER

The cliché of a cultural desert is in need of revision. Since 1994 Thurgau has boasted a constitutional article which the Federation does not enjoy: a statute on cultural promotion.

NOT ONE SINGLE subsidised theatre exists in Thurgau. Yet the canton's cultural life is flourishing, primarily thanks to personal initiative and voluntary zeal. Theatre is alive and well from Kreuzlingen to Aadorf, Frauenfeld to Bürglen; and the genres range from social satire to the absurd.

Most theatres in the region have one thing in common: professionals share the stage with amateurs. Another key factor is the Thurgau Theatre Festival, held every two years since 1989. The next festival is scheduled for 8 to 11 November 2001 in Sirnach, where a dozen stage and drama companies will give performances ranging from children's theatre to readings and classical drama, culminating in the appearance of the

Barbara Fatz is a free-lance journalist resident in Thundorf (TG).

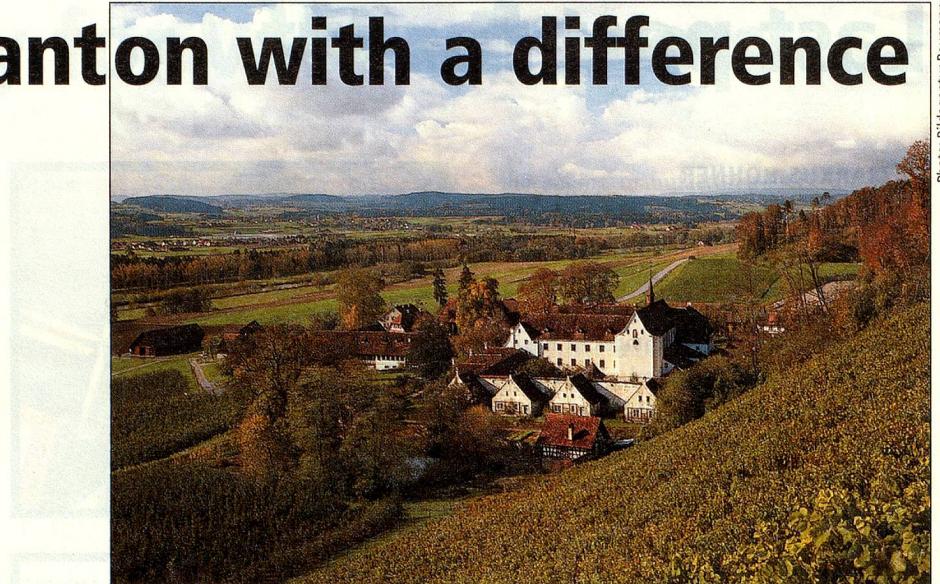


Photo: Bildagentur Baumann

The Kartause Ittingen Foundation has transformed the former monastery into an important cultural centre for Thurgau.

Sirnach Operette, famous beyond Thurgau's borders.

Ittingen: cultural magnet

In Thurgau one looks in vain for philanthropists to donate art collections. Here everything has to be built from scratch by dint of hard work and dedication. The Kartause Ittingen Foundation is a good example.

Since 1983 this former monastery has not only housed the Cantonal Art and Ittingen Museum, but also provided an infrastructure for training seminars and cultural events. On 5 May 2001 it will be the venue for a concert to launch the International Lake Constance Festival, in which Thurgau participates as a bordering canton. Following this, the Whitsun Concerts featuring renowned soloists and orchestras will be

held at the beginning of June. These concerts are broadcast by Radio DRS.

The canton operates four other museums including the Napoleon Museum on the Arenenberg. The Museum of Archaeology in Frauenfeld opened only five years ago and houses a rich collection of exhibits from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages. It collaborates closely with the Museum of Nature and organises events throughout the year to provide adults as well as children with a hands-on experience of history. In addition the canton boasts some 30 local museums and collections, run and financed by associations and private individuals.

One characteristic shared by Thurgau residents is their love of festivals. In villages throughout the canton one finds entertainment evenings and festivities organised by associations and clubs. What is special about the Thurgau cultural scene is that there is no clear distinction between spectators and actors. The feeling of being part of the performance is what makes Thurgau's cultural life unique in comparison with urban regions.

Thurgau promotes an individual style of tourism coupled with environmental awareness. Visitors can choose between overnight accommodation in anything from a hayloft or farmhouse right up to first-class hotels which offer cultural and culinary programmes. Informative brochures provide hikers and cyclists with useful tips and maps.

"Swiss Ping Pong"

The "Swiss Ping Pong" encounter programme offers Swiss Abroad the chance of getting to know Switzerland on a very personal level. It offers one to two weeks staying with one or two host families; accommodation and meals are free of charge. Guests pay only a modest registration fee. The cantons of Berne, Fribourg, Jura, Neuchâtel and Vaud have taken over patronage of the programme for 2001. This will allow Swiss nationals resident abroad to experience the Expo.02 region around the Lakes of Biel, Morat and Neuchâtel. For further information and registrations for 2001, contact:

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