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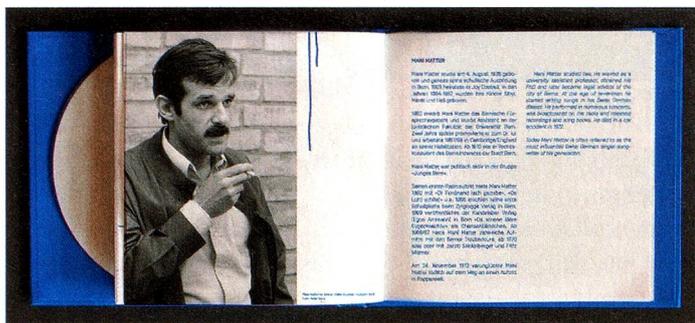
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Little gems

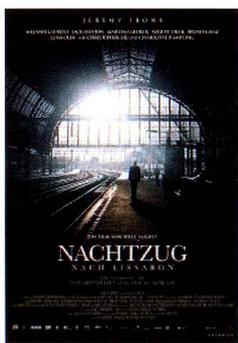


“Kunscht isch geng es Risiko”

Mani Matter is inimitable as a singer-songwriter because nobody can create images with words like he can. Yet his work has been covered constantly over the decades by everyone ranging from schoolchildren to rock stars. Now, Mani Matter’s songs are also available in a four-part a cappella version. The Kammerton Quartet from Winterthur has worked on the CD “Kunscht isch geng es Risiko” for almost ten years. Their achievement is a resounding success. The melodies remain close to the original, while the arrangements are imaginative, full of charm and humour and the vocals are of top quality. The four singers of the Kammerton Quartet have skilfully blended classical a cappella singing with the original. It does not sound at all highbrow or contrived: “dr Glünggi” curses crudely, “s Heidi” is yearned for

longingly, the polar bear growls in “Eskimo” and the polyphonic purring with “Sidi Abdel Assar vo El Hamma” is an absolute pleasure.

“Kunscht isch geng es Risiko – Mani Matter a cappella” CD; Zytlogge Verlag, Berne; CHF 29, EUR 26. Available also from www.kammerton.ch



From Berne to Lisbon

“A chance encounter can sometimes change someone’s life entirely,” wrote Pascal Mercier, a philosopher and author with roots in Berne, in his novel “Night Train to Lisbon”. That was in 2004. The novel became an instant bestseller and was translated into 32 languages. Nobody could fail to be touched by the story of the solitary and eccentric Bernese grammar

school teacher whose life is changed by a brief encounter with a Portuguese woman. The book has now been turned into a film with a star-studded cast. It is directed by the Dane Bille August, while Jeremy Irons plays the part of the teacher, Raimund Gregorius. He is joined on screen by Charlotte Rampling, Christopher Lee, Mélanie Laurent and Bruno Ganz. It is remarkable how the director succeeds in transferring

the novel’s complex narrative structure to a movie. Jeremy Irons produces a spellbinding performance. As he searches for information about the life of a Portuguese author and doctor in Lisbon, the audience is completely captivated by his story and also by the city. The film premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in February and is now set for release at cinemas worldwide. This is definitely a movie not to be missed.



Writers in the kitchen

Authors write about their favourite recipes here rather than their favourite books. Literary critic Angelika Overath and her husband Manfred Koch invited authors to reveal their favourite recipes and to tell a story about them. “It doesn’t matter whether it’s an autobiographical account, an essay based purely on the list of ingredients or a completely fictional tale, just please share your culinary treats with the world,” was their plea. Thirty-seven authors seized upon the opportunity to make their contribution to the book entitled “Tafelrunde”. They indulge in childhood memories and bring flavours and aromas to life. Berlin author Michael Kumpfmüller makes a garlic chicken dish and writes about the god of garlic; Franz Hohler expertly prepares a nettle soup; Lea Singer gives an account of the perfect birthday menu for a 40-year-old child and, with his cold larder, Hans Magnus Enzensberger does not so much reveal his talent as a great cook, rather the ability to astonish friends with simple food. “Tafelrunde” is an unusual and, in places, adventurous cookbook best read and enjoyed while experimenting with a group of friends.

“Tafelrunde. Schriftsteller kochen für ihre Freunde”; Angelika Overath; Luchterhand-Literaturverlag; 382 pages; CHF 29.90; EUR 19.99. Only in German. Also available as an e-book.



Bulletins

Tax agreement with the USA

An agreement on the US tax law FATCA was signed between Switzerland and the USA in mid-February on behalf of the Federal Council. The Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) enables the USA to force foreign banks to disclose the accounts of US customers to the US fiscal authorities. Independently of the agreement now signed, Swiss banks must implement the FATCA law from 2014 or face being excluded from the US capital market. The agreement between Switzerland and the USA allows Swiss banks to benefit from simplified procedures.

Healthcare strategy

The Federal Council set out its strategy for the future of Swiss healthcare at the end of January in a paper entitled "Gesundheit2020". A total of 36 measures are provided. The Federal Council stated that the current healthcare structures are too heavily focused on acute and inpatient care. Patients will have to be provided with more differentiated care services in future. The priorities will be the prevention of illness as well as long-term care for the elderly and chronically ill. The Federal Council believes an amendment to the Health Insurance Act (KVG) is required.

How long do we work for just to cover tax contributions?

The Federal Tax Administration has calculated for the first time how many days the Swiss work on average just to cover their tax contributions. This clearly differs depending on income, marital status, canton

and commune. Based on a family with two children and a gross income of 80,000 Swiss francs a year, Geneva with 20 working days for taxes and Schwyz with 21 are the most favourable locations, whereas the most days are worked in Delémont (40) and in Neuchâtel and Lausanne (43). A single person with an income of 50,000 Swiss francs works for 13 days just to cover taxes in Zug, 20 in Schwyz, 43 in Solothurn and 45 in Neuchâtel. The results can be viewed in full in German at "Tax Freedom Days" www.estv.admin.ch -> Steuerstatistiken -> Steuerbelastung -> «Tax Freedom Days»

Who keeps their promises?

The online voting aid Smartvote has examined the discrepancy between promises made during election campaigns and the actual political behaviour of Swiss parliamentarians. It comes to the conclusion that new members of parliament fail to keep their electoral promises more often than experienced parliamentarians. The same is true of members of the centre parties – the Green Liberals (GLP) and the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP). The most inconsistent politicians are Margrit Kessler (GLP) followed by Fabio Regazzi and Yannick Buttet (both CVP). Among the party leaders, Martin Landolt of the Conservative Democratic Party (BDP) most frequently breaks his promises. Andy Tschümperlin from Schwyz, the Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP) National Councillor, followed by Social Democrat Roger Nordmann, Walter Wobmann (SVP) and Daniel Vischer of the Greens are truest to their word.

Quotes

"To create is to resist. To resist is to create."

Stéphane Hessel, French diplomat and writer, died on 27 February 2013 aged 96

"Faint-heartedness and delusions of grandeur have repeatedly been the driving forces behind moves to forsake our Switzerland and its values and to adapt."

Swiss President Ueli Maurer at the Albisgüetli Conference

"Switzerland is undergoing enormous change and, at the same time, endeavouring to project the illusion of stability."

Mario Erdheim, psychoanalyst and ethnologist from Zurich

"In order to defend Switzerland's interests, I would travel to the ends of the earth if necessary."

Swiss President Ueli Maurer in an interview

"This is a huge blow to social cohesion in our country."

Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga on the CHF 72 million that Daniel Vasella was to have been paid in return for doing nothing

"If the human brain was simple enough for us to understand, we would still be so stupid that we couldn't understand it."

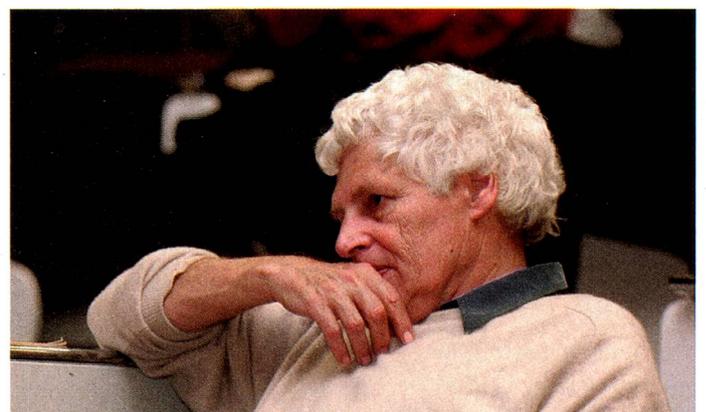
Jostein Gaarder, Norwegian writer (born 1952)

"An original thought is as rare as a gold coin in the gutter."

Christian Morgenstern (1871 - 1914)

"I'm a Grey, not a Green: grass is for cows."

Luigi Snozzi, Swiss architect (born 1932)



Jörg Steiner rarely raised his voice but often spoke powerfully. He observed the world, often with concern, and described what he saw. One example is the 1996 novella "Der Kollege", the story of an unemployed person who disappears from society. Other works written in the 1970s in collaboration with the graphic artist Jörg Müller include children's books like "Alle Jahre wieder saust der Presslufthammer nieder" and "Der Bär, der ein Bär bleiben wollte". In "Wer tanzt schon zu Musik von Schostakowitsch", published in 2000, we read: "That the truth is a story which changes from day to day is only natural." This sentence reveals much about Jörg Steiner, his misgivings, his sense of humour and his ability with language. In his last work "Ein Kirschbaum am Pazifischen Ozean", published in 2008 as a recollection of a trip to California twelve years earlier, Steiner wrote: "We don't understand what happens to us." Jörg Steiner passed away on 20 January 2013 at the age of 82.