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# SWISS CULTURAL EVENTS DURING JANUARY

## SALUTING GUNS OVER THE RHINE AT BASLE

It is of course not yet time for the famous Basle Carnival. But the ancient custom of "Vogel Gryff", which is observed on Thursday, January 13, will attract many spectators to the banks of the Rhine at Basle—for these celebrations in fact take place outside the main centre of Basle in so-called "Little Basle", which lies over the river on the right bank and once a year recalls its ancient independence in this way, with great humour and much festivity. But the thunder of saluting guns and the ruffle of drums will also be heard from the left, or city bank as the "Wild Man" comes sailing down the river on his raft to the Middle Bridge over the Rhine and is welcomed in full form in front of the Café Spitz by the other two emblematic figures of Little Basle—the mighty "Leu" (lion) and the legendary "Vogel (bird) Gryff". These symbols of the three Little Basle neighbourhood societies then perform their imposing ceremonial dance before the crowd on the Little Basle side of the bridge.

## HUMOUR AMONG THE WINTER CUSTOMS

Although the New Year is already long past, the almost frightening din of "Silvesterklausen" is not heard in *Urnäsch*, in Appenzell, until January 13. This ancient rustic Old Year ceremony is still carried out in accordance with the Julian calendar, and although this has long been out of date, the fact none the less provides evidence that the custom is a very old one. In the *Engadine* the customary "schlitteda engiadinaisa", bringing the promise of sunshine to come, never fail to give pleasure to whole villages at a time. These festive sleigh-rides can be enjoyed on January 8 at *St. Moritz*, on January 16 in *Pontresina* and on January 23 in *Samedan*. In the Lower Engadine, February 6 is the date for the *Scuol* village festival, "L'hom strom". This is in fact a symbolical farewell to winter and takes the form of burning a giant, cunningly woven doll. On the same day *Locarno* celebrates its Fishermen's Festival.

## A SELECTION FROM THE MANY EXHIBITIONS

Seven contemporary artists have been allotted the Musée Rath in *Geneva* for an exhibition beginning on January 22. Their names are Albin, Collet, Aluma, Chambaz, Milo, Monnier and Katz. The *Vieux-Lausanne* Museum, which is able to put on temporary exhibitions in the historic Old Bishopric building, is showing children's drawings in January. Themes from the history of art and culture will be dealt with by the "Architectes visionnaires" show in *Geneva*, in the Cabinet des Estampes on the Promenade du Pin, and in *St. Gall*, in the splendid surroundings of the Stiftsbibliothek. Here the theme will be "Church History of the Lake Constance Region" as illustrated by priceless manuscripts of the 9<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The Helmhaus in *Zurich* will play host to contemporary Basle artists until January 25. The Graphische Sammlung of the Federal Institute of Technology in *Zurich* is able to display the graphical work of Albrecht Dürer in its entirety up to January 16. The Bündner Kunsthau in *Coire* will be showing Swiss paintings and drawings with Grisons subjects until January 9.

## FAMOUS ORCHESTRAS VISIT SWITZERLAND

Two great musical bodies whose names already have almost the force of legend, are at present making tours in Switzerland. The Bach Orchestra from the Leipzig Gewandhaus will play in *Zurich* on January 14 and in *Berne* on the following evening. Its name derives from the fact that as long ago as 1781 the City of Leipzig organised regular subscription concerts in the Gewandhaus, or city cloth hall, which had excellent acoustics. This excellent orchestra, which retained its name even after moving into its own concert hall in 1884, has been conducted over the years by musicians such as J.A. Hiller, Mendelssohn, Gade, Reinecke and Arthur Nikisch. Then, towards the end of the month, the Orchestre Lamoureux (Paris), under the baton of J.-B. Mari, and with the violinist Ida Haendel, will make its appearance in this country. A programme of French works will be performed in *Geneva* on January 24, in *Lausanne* on the following evening, in *Zurich* on January 26, in *Berne* on 27 and in *Fribourg* on 28. The conductor and violinist Charles Lamoureux (1834–1899) founded the orchestra, having set himself the task in 1881 of cultivating contemporary

music with a large ensemble. This survey must not omit to recall that the orchestra of the Festival Strings Lucerne, which, though based on Switzerland, undertakes extensive foreign concert tours, enjoys a first-class reputation. The string orchestra, under the direction of Rudolf Baumgartner, will give a concert in *Zurich* on January 13. The musical life of the Tessin will be enriched on January 10 by a concert given by the Quatuor Musicorum Arcadia from Milan in the RSI Radio Auditorium in *Lugano*. Further chamber music will be offered by the Quatuor instrumental de Paris on January 21 and 22 in *Geneva* and by the Wiener Trio on January 21 in *Zurich*.

## THEATRE COMPANIES ON TOUR

"Schauspieltruppe Zürich" is the name taken by a group of players who present works seldom produced and thus provide various theatre-loving places in German-speaking Switzerland with impressive theatrical evenings. This group of professionals will commence a new tour in the Kurtheater in *Baden* on January 8, followed by the City Theatre in *St. Gall* the next evening. That great artist Maria Becker plays the rewarding rôle of the English Queen Anne in the historical comedy by Eugène Scribe, "A glass of water" which—though it seems hard to believe—has held its place in French and German versions since 1841. An important part in the theatrical life of Western Switzerland is played by the Parisian companies, who also, however, present their new pieces in German-speaking Switzerland. Furthermore, the Zurich Schauspielhaus company gives welcome guest performances in various places. On January 12, the "Theatre am Neumarkt" will re-open its doors after a well thought-out conversion for a season of international theatrical works lasting until May.

## AN ENGLISH CHILDREN'S LIBRARY IN ZURICH

A new library for children of all nationalities who wish to read books in English has just been established in *Zurich*. Called "The Children's Library of *Zurich*", it has more than one thousand books attractively displayed on low, convenient bookshelves and divided into three groups for beginning, intermediate and advanced readers. Organizers of the new library are confident that it will meet the needs of very many children, benefit not only English speaking children from American, Canadian, Australian and British homes, but also children in families where English is the mother tongue of at least one parent and of Swiss children who have lived abroad with their families for several years in an English speaking area.

At the formal opening of the library special displays of books for children by Swiss artists and writers were exhibited. Books by Felix Hoffmann, Alois Carigiet and Selina Chönz, Fritz Hug and Hans Fischer were among those shown. Area artists and writers as well as librarians from several Swiss libraries joined Swiss, American and British cultural leaders in complimenting the women who were instrumental in organizing this library of books in English for children in *Zurich*.

The Children's Library of *Zurich* is a non-profit cultural organization staffed exclusively by trained volunteers. It is located in the Community Center of St. Andrew's Church on Promenadengasse and is open on Wednesdays from 3.30–5.50 p.m. and on Sundays from 11.30–1.00 p.m. E. G.

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