

TRAVEL

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Swiss
savoir-faireOpernhaus exemplifies
Zurich's cultural ambitionBy PAUL HOFMANN
New York Times Syndicate

Switzerland's largest city officially describes itself as a "world-class metropolis," although its inhabitants number just one-twentieth of New York's. Yet Zurich's location in the heart of Europe, the Swiss watch reliability of its communications and other services, its banking and business establishment, and its intellectual life all lend credibility to its global claim.

Zurich's cultural ambitions are exemplified by its Opernhaus. The 1,230-seat neo-Baroque building on the east shore of Lake Zurich is starting its second century after recent restructuring and enlargement with a bid to rival such shrines of opera as LaScala and other major houses.

For playing in the operatic big leagues Zurich has called on a 44-year-old Viennese, Alexander Pereira, who during the past seven years served as chief of the Konzerthaus music center in Vienna, Austria.

Pereira's first season as Zurich Opera manager presents some 20 productions with Agnes Baltsa, Renata Bruson, Montserrat Caballe, Jose Carreras, Mirella Freni, Edita Gruberova, Thomas Hampson, Ruggero Raimondo and other international stars, mostly in classics by Mozart, Wagner, Verdi, Puccini and Richard Strauss.

A highlight on the Opernhaus program is the premiere, on Jan. 19, 1992, of the ballet "Tanzpoem," or "Dance Poem," by the newly fashionable Alexander von Zemlinsky, who was the musical mentor and brother-in-law of Arnold Schoenberg. Reprises are on Jan. 22, Feb. 1 and 15, and March 1.

Other Zurich Opera novelties are Ligeti's "Grand Macabre" on Feb. 25 and, on several afternoons, Menotti's children's opera "Hilff, Hilff, die Globelinks."

Opera prices range from \$10.70 for gallery seats on some evenings to \$270 for a chair in an orchestra box at a premiere. Many performances are largely subscribed. For more information write to: Opernhaus Zurich, 1 Falkenstrasse, 8008 Zurich, or phone 262-09-09.

MUSIC

The classical and romantic repertory from Haydn to Brahms and the Second Viennese School from Mahler to Webern dominate the programs of more than 100 concerts and recitals scheduled at the Opera House and the Tonhalle this winter and spring.

The orchestra of the sumptuous Tonhalle, at 1 Claridenstrasse, facing the Opernhaus across the

lake, has a new permanent guest conductor, Claus Peter Flor, from Leipzig, Germany.

At the opera, Hall Weikert will present Charles Ives' "Central Park in the Dark" in a matinee April 5. At the Tonhalle, "Music From the U.S.A., 1905-1971" by George Carter, Joe Raposo, Caplan, Crumb) will be played by the Helios Ensemble April 12.

Tickets for the opera-house concerts cost \$5.70 to \$34.30; for the Tonhalle, \$7.15 to \$64.30. For more information on performances at the Tonhalle call 201-15-812.

GETTING AROUND

Zurich's Kloten Airport is linked with the central railroad station, or Hauptbahnhof, by frequent trains. The fare for the 10-minute trip is \$3 in second class, \$4.85 in first.

Eight lines of Zurich's efficient surface transit system converge on the square outside the Hauptbahnhof. The ticket for a short ride on the blue trams and trolleys is \$1.20 for 30 minutes, \$2 for longer rides within the city limits, good for an hour with any number of transfers. Children ages 6 to 16 pay half price; under 6 travel free.

Tickets are bought from one of the vending machines at every stop, which are so elaborate that even some residents ask practiced bystanders for assistance. Newcomers may prefer to buy a 24-hour ticket for the entire city network at \$4 or for the whole region at \$16 from employees staffing the underground "ticketteria" at the Hauptbahnhof.

MUSEUMS

The Kunsthau, at 1 Helmholtzstrasse, boasts one of Europe's largest collections of modern art since Impressionism. There are also works by Baroque masters from Italy and the Netherlands and by such Swiss painters of the 19th and 20th centuries as Bocklin and Hodler.

The Kunsthau is open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday to Friday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Admission is \$2.15; for occasional special exhibitions, \$3.70 to \$6.40. Take tram No. 3, 5, 8 or 9. For more information call 251-67-55.

Rietberg Museum is at 15 Gublerstrasse in the Villa Wesendonck, a mansion in a park near the western lakeshore in which Richard Wagner lived for years. Now city-owned, the villa contains a 2,000-item collection, including pre-Columbian artifacts. A show of sculptures by artists of Nigeria's Yoruba people closes March 12.

The Rietberg Museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday, 5-9 p.m. Wednesday. Ad-



The snow-capped mountains surrounding Zurich are a favorite retreat for the world's sports enthusiasts.

mission is \$2.15; free on Wednesday evening and Sunday. Take Tram No. 7. For more information call 202-45-28.

Admission to the following collections is free: Swiss National Museum, at 2 Museumstrasse, north of Hauptbahnhof, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday. For more information call 221-10-10.

Thomas Mann Archive, at 15 Schonberggasse near the Polytechnic, is open from 2-4 p.m. Tuesday and Saturday or by appointment. Take Tram No. 6 or 9. For more information call 256-40-45.

Toy Museum, at 15 Fortunastrasse (fifth floor) near Bahnhofstrasse, is open from 2-5 p.m. Monday to Friday and 1-4 p.m. Satur-

day. For more information call 211-93-05.

EATING OUT

A recent addition to gastronomic Zurich is an offshoot of the Parisian Brasserie Kipp, centrally located on the ground floor of the tower of the astronomical observatory at 2 Uraniastrasse.

It serves drinks, snacks and such substantial fare as choucroute garnie or cassoulet (either one at \$18.60) from 9 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. daily. Book early for Lipp's panoramic Jules Verne Bar on top of the 150-foot tower, which is popular for private parties. For more information call 211-11-55.

Food isn't the main attraction of Kronenhalle, atmosphere is. This old brasserie, at 4 Ramis-

trasse, near the opera house, has become relatively more expensive than it used to be a few years ago, but it has remained a Zurich institution. Pictures by Matisse, Picasso and Miró hang on the dark-wood paneling, lace curtains at the windows screen the fashionable patrons from the street.

At Kronenhalle if you skip the French-style entrees and the fabled chocolate mousse on the menu you can still have a filling lunch on St. Gall bratwurst and rosti, Zurich's all-purpose sliced-and-roasted potato side order, with a small carafe of Pilsener wine and an espresso at \$27. For more information call 251-66-69.

Geschneitztes (sliced and creamed veal) sausages and other local fishes can be sampled in the

ancient guildhall restaurants around City Hall.

Zunftaus zur Safran, at 54 Limmatquai, is a 600-year-old arched building, designated as a historic landmark. It now houses a risotto on its ground floor. Risotto with mushrooms, seafood, saffron or other garnishings are around \$22 a helping. For more information call 261-65-65.

Fast food is centered around the central railway station. Paul Hofmann, former Rome bureau chief of The New York Times, visits Switzerland frequently.

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Travel tidbit: People make the place

We were watching the Yugoslavian civil war on the television news, flinching every time a shell landed in the tiny walled city of Dubrovnik. "I wonder what happened to the guy we met on the top of the mountain," Mickey said.

I couldn't remember his name, but the memories were clear: a young man raising a beer glass in Trebinje, or leaning out the doorway in Cilipi shouting "Ho-nust! Ho-nust!"

He couldn't speak English, so that was the closest he could get to shouting "Jones!" I finally found his name in a notebook I carried during that week on the Adriatic coast. Seki.

We'd never heard of Trebinje, but the schedule board in the local bus depot assured us that we could go and come back the same day. We rode a clean modern bus 20 miles up a rocky mountain slope, with locals carrying chickens home from market, and enjoyed the banter even though we couldn't understand a

crossroads
Iris Jones

word.

We explored the old streets of Trebinje and returned to the hotel bus stop half an hour before the afternoon bus was scheduled to take us downmountain. We were drinking beer in the nearly deserted hotel bar when we saw Seki, sitting with a young woman across the room.

He stared at us until we noticed him. He waved us over and kept waving until we picked up our beer glasses and crossed the room. Seki smiled, bowed, pointed to chairs and shouted for more beer.

We couldn't speak their language, and they couldn't speak ours, but talking with your hands and your feet is an important travel skill so we were soon deep in "conversation." They spoke Yugoslavian. We spoke English.

I had a dictionary so the paper-plate mats were soon covered with words and pictures. He drew a map of North America and we marked Detroit on it. He "asked" about our children and we held up two fingers. Seki worked in a winery somewhere near Dubrovnik.

We missed the first and second bus. We waved goodbye and ran for the last one. That would have been the end of it if we had taken the tour bus the next morning to the Sunday folklore presentation in the village of Cilipi, 10 miles south.

We took the 50 cent local bus instead and when the tour buses left we had the town to ourselves for an hour before wandering back to the

bus stop on the main highway. I was kicking stones on the shoulder of the road when I first heard somebody yell "Ho-nust! Ho-nust!" The second and third time he yelled we looked around to see where the voice was coming from and saw a man leaning out of a doorway of the hotel across the street. "Ho-nust!"

"He's saying Jones," Mickey said. "It's Seki!"

"Where did he come from?" Seki lived in Cilipi; we had worked in the winery. He dragged us into a wine bar where we spent the afternoon sampling the local wine and drawing pictures.

Meeting Seki was just a travel experience, one of many. But when I see news reports of war damage in Dubrovnik, and hear that the beautiful village of Cilipi has been demolished by gunfire, I don't think of history. I think of Seki. I'm glad I remembered his name.