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Roland Zoss & Jimmy Flitz



No sooner has Roland Zoss started singing the rock-inflected chorus than the assembled four- to nine-year-olds join in unison: “Jimmy Flitz, Jimmy Flitz ...” Every child in German-speaking Switzerland is familiar with the adventures, sung in dialect, of mouse Jimmy Flitz and his animal friends. Zoss, from Berne, is one of a small number of children’s singer-songwriters in Switzerland – and probably the busiest of them all. Twenty years ago, he gave up his teaching job and decided to work as a children’s entertainer. This courageous move paid off. Through songs, concert tours, audio musical recordings, a Christmas musical and several picture and storybooks, Zoss has created a parallel children’s fantasy world. Cheeky but likeable mouse Jimmy Flitz, who lives in the spire of Berne Cathedral, is Zoss’s most popular character. Characterising Jimmy as a ‘Swiss mouse’ wearing a red-and-white-hooped pullover was a shrewd master stroke. Swiss Post issued a stamp in the mouse’s honour, while the Swiss tourist board Switzerland Tourism adopted Jimmy as its Swiss ‘ambassador’. “But it was on the Aeolian Islands that I noticed,” grins Zoss. Each year, the musician and author spends a few months on the archipelago situated off the north of Sicily. Zoss, a father himself, likes to do his bit for society. His works contain messages about friendship, self-confidence and environmental conservation. Xenegugeli the tousle-haired dinosaur teaches children the alphabet – the digital app is available in five languages. “Make sure you mention the app – your readers might be interested,” suggests Zoss, who has won prizes and collaborated with A-listers from the Swiss music scene. This summer will see Zoss turning 68, but he intends to continue giving concerts. A new Jimmy Flitz storybook is also due to be published. “I love doing what I do – it keeps me young,” he says in a pleasant baritone.

SUSANNE WENGER

Jürg Müller bids farewell to “Swiss Review”

This edition is “Swiss Review” political editor Jürg Müller’s final curtain call. Relying on a deep knowledge of Swiss federal politics, Müller has spent the past seven years providing the Swiss Abroad with his expert and lucid take on the issues, and voting Sundays, that matter – always with the concerns and perspective of the ‘Fifth Switzerland’ in mind. This is no surprise, given his long track record (he was “Swiss Review” editor-in-chief himself in the 1980s). Müller is entering retirement. While we hope he enjoys his newfound freedom, we will certainly miss his input and expertise.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Setback for e-voting

The cantons of Basel-Stadt, Fribourg, Neuchâtel and Thurgau were unable to make the e-voting system available for the popular vote of 19 May 2019. Swiss Post, which developed and operates e-voting in these cantons, decided to withdraw the service, citing “critical errors” in the system’s source code. It identified these errors during tests designed to pinpoint weaknesses in the system. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad reacted to the outage with concern, saying that it amounted to a whole swathe of the Swiss expatriate community being “denied their democratic rights”.

(MUL)

Yes to 1.3-billion-franc cohesion payment

Parliament has approved a new ‘cohesion’ payment worth 1.3 billion Swiss francs over ten years that is once again intended to help reduce economic and social disparities between old and new EU member states. The current uncertainty surrounding the framework agreement between Switzerland and the EU overshadowed the decision, following demands from various politicians for the funding to be released only on the proviso that Brussels make concessions on the deal.

(MUL)

Environmental activist Franz Weber has died

Swiss activist Franz Weber died on 2 April 2019 aged 91. Weber, who launched countless national and international campaigns in his time, was one of the pioneers of nature, animal, landscape and cultural conservation. Two of his major battles included the fight against seal hunting and the protection of Alpine habitats (Second-Home Initiative). For a “Swiss Review” article about Franz Weber, please visit www.ogy.de/franzweber

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