

WIESBADENER BRIEF 2020



DEAR FRIENDS OF WIESBADEN

A sunny but frosty day in Advent. Once again, I am sitting at my desk working on the Wiesbaden Letter. On the radio I am listening to – looking at the magnificent blue sky - Louis Armstrong singing: “What a wonderful world“. Wonderful world? It is not easy to say that at the end of a year like this. Corona has the whole world in its grip. And we will have to ring in the new year with a plethora of restrictions too. Let me try to filter the positive aspects despite the extraordinary situation in which we find ourselves. And the word positive should be my common theme throughout this letter even if or exactly because the word “positive” has such a negative connotation thanks to corona.

Isn't the photo on this page with the illuminated Kurhaus and Kurpark a joyful sight to behold? The picture was taken by Elias Behling (22) who won the Instagram voting prize at the Wiesbaden Stiftung Zoom photo competition. Elias is doing an apprenticeship as event technician.

And here we are again, back at the virus. Because the lockdowns have paralysed this sector. It is all the more positive what event experts such as Michael Stein, Palast Promotion, have undertaken despite their own problems to help artists. “Wi Kultur“ is an exemplary initiative gathering support through live streams. “Die Kunst zu helfen“ (The Art of Helping) also

stands for creativity. Andrea and Uwe Kemmesies had the idea of allowing visual artists sell their works at selected exhibition venues. A third of the proceeds go to the traditional Kurier campaign “Ihnen leuchtet ein Licht“ (A light Shines on Them). This year, it is also taking care of people in need caused by corona. Many, many creative aid projects could be mentioned here, but the Letter can only be an excerpt of life in Wiesbaden! Life in a pandemic. It is in itself a positive message when apprentices are given a large practice area in the form of impressive lighting on prominent buildings which are a joy to the beholder in times where there is little work. The Mainz-Kastel company, Audiluma Veranstaltungstechnik, initiated the project “Wiesbaden leuchtet“ (Wiesbaden Shines) also with the aim of sending out a ray of hope.

Let us remain with the positive news, with the impact of the Foundation and the Friends of the Foundation. The Citizens' College, which has received several awards and is frequented by local associations, had record participation in 2020 – in digital format. Since its inception ten years ago, some 10 000 volunteers have been successfully trained here. The very popular Leonardo School Award should definitely be presented in summer 2022 even if there might be a post-corona “special edition“ of the team competition, because the school world will not be back to normal in 2021.

What is extremely helpful for all activities to which so many volunteers are committed is the new Foundation Office. With Alrun Schössler at the helm, the tasks are channelled here, and new ideas developed and implemented. The resonance from the general public for the City Tree initiative was enormous – in concert with the urban green space planning office. Quite a few have already donated their tree and thus ensured that the “the future is growing” in the city. A few more Foundation highlights: district historians with the third series, “Leseritter” (knights who read out loud), Foundation network, culture initiative, not least the project for supporting refugee sponsors. “There are already more than 200 sponsorships“, Chairman of the Foundation, Thomas Michel, is delighted to say.

On the positive side, the 50th Sports Ball of the Deutsche Sport-hilfe Foundation could take place in the RheinMain Congress Center (RMCC) before the lockdown. Even Minister for Health, Jens Spahn, still felt like partying back in February as did Federal President, Frank Walter Steinmeier or showbiz greats such as Thomas Gottschalk. Then the empty halls phase commenced at the RMCC, which incidentally had been almost booked out. Who would have thought that instead of trade fairs and conventions a corona test centre would be set up in the loading area. And that a vaccination centre will be located in RMCC?

Here, I would like to quote a local Wiesbaden man who contracted a severe strain of the virus on a business trip to Ischgl in March. Thomas Schreiner, General Manager of Laurent Perrier Deutschland, recovered – that is the positive news. In May, the 63 year-old said in an interview with the Wiesbadener Kurier (WK) newspaper that he had been to hell and back. And that he has no time for people who doubt or ignore the risk posed by corona. Thomas Schreiner said on the phone that he can, after spending time on a Zimmer frame, now “enjoy up to 85 percent of daily life” again today. A story with a happy end.

Let us take a look at some anniversaries: for example, 75 years since the end of WW2 - and 75 years of the state capital of Wiesbaden, decided by the Americans. The Wiesbadener Kurier also appeared for the first time in October 75 years ago – after the colonels James R. Newman, John B. Stanley and James G. Chessnut had announced their “go ahead“. Wiesbaden has been a twin city to the English Tunbridge Wells for 50 years. On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of German reunification, a small delegation travelled to the twin city of Görlitz in the former East Germany.

The construction of the Museum Reinhard Ernst for Abstract Art is still on schedule despite corona. The inauguration is planned for mid-2022, Reinhard Ernst, sponsor of the museum and art collector, confirmed to me. The summer campaign was great, in which adolescents from several schools followed the challenge by the Reinhard & Sonja Ernst Stiftung, future operators of the museum on the Rue, and tried out abstract art with impressive results. Reinhard Ernst emphasises that he wants to cooperate closely with the Museum Wiesbaden. There is a new Director here: Dr. Andreas Henning moved from Dresden’s state art collections where he worked as curator for Italian art to Wiesbaden in March. With him, the house of art and nature has won a very

dedicated, team-oriented new Director, to whom both sustainability and large numbers of visitors are important. Regrettably, he is forced to prove himself in times characterised by closures and restrictions. For this reason, the Jan and Friederike Baechle-Schenkung exhibition cannot be shown yet – an exquisite collection of works predominantly from the 19th century. The permanent art nouveau exhibition was hugely popular as long as the doors were still open. Regrettably, the man who made it all possible was not able to celebrate the first anniversary in June: Ferdinand Wolfgang Neess passed away in January at ninety years of age.

Let us cross the Rue to the State Theatre. The world is upside down here too. There was a lot of uncertainty in the theatre and sharp criticism of the corona regulations on the part of the Artistic Director. The theatre will now remain closed until the end of January. But here too, there is a little positive aspect. A jingling Advent calendar with the actors from the theatre on the balconies.

In addition to many other private cultural venues, the Rheingau Musikfestival (RMF) has been hit particularly hard by the pandemic. It is fighting for survival but will continue to move forward with zest. And so, something completely new is planned for 2021 under the slogan “Aufbruch“ (Awakening): a “Wicker beach chair open air concert” in the Brita Arena!

The RMF was a frequent guest at the Kurhaus, but everything is different here now too. Various live streams, for example from ministries, a political party convention between partitions, but no concerts. But still, the very special Christmas tree made of poinsettia pleases the eye as it has done every year up to now. And that in turn is positive. It would certainly have been very painful for one person that the Kurhaus will be still on New Year’s Eve: Herbert Siebert, whose New Year’s concerts with his Johann Strauss Orchestra have reached cult status. The violinist and conductor passed away at the age of 88. He was, as described by the music critic, Volker Milch, “an institution in the musical life of the region“ and “ambassador of three-four time“. Orchestra members and loyal fans now want to plant a tree in the Kurpark in his memory – as part of the “City Tree“ project.

Before I talk about other citizens of this city, you should know: gastronomy in the Kurhaus will soon change hands. Subject to approval from City Hall, the successful businesswoman, Valeska Benner, will take over the contract from the Munich restaurateur, Kuffler, keep on the tried and tested team – but apparently with new impetus. It goes without saying that the gastronomy and hotel businesses are currently experiencing extremely difficult times despite state assistance.

Let us talk about citizens of this city. Werner Jopp, the long-standing municipal administrator of Sonnenberg, the suburb to which he dedicated the encyclopedia “From A to Z“ shortly before his passing, departed this world. A municipal administrator who has been firmly in office since his district was incorporated into the city celebrated his 75th birthday: Wolfgang Nickel in Naurod. The CDU politician will have been in the city parliament for 40 years when he steps down in 2021.



PARTYING IS STILL ALLOWED Franziska van Almsick and Thomas Gottschalk dance at the 50th Sports Ball in the RheinMain CongressCenter at the beginning of February. And today, there is a major vaccination centre here.



ADVENT LIGHT Wiesbaden lilies and the Christmas tree are lit up in front of City Hall. But unfortunately, there can be no Twinkling Star Christmas Market, which attracts large numbers of tourists in better times.



ABSTRACTION IN A SQUARE Impressive pictures created by school pupils can be admired on the fence in front of the Museum Reinhard.



DESPITE DIFFICULT TIMES – ARRIVED IN WIESBADEN Dr. Andreas Henning, the new Director of the Landesmuseum.



PEACE AT LAST Colonel James R. Newman and the Minister President named by the Americans, Karl Geiler.



A FEAST FOR THE EYES IN THE KURHAUS The Christmas tree with red poinsettias.



THEY RAISE THEIR VOICES Before the actors start the “Jingling Advent Calendar” and come outside every day, they start singing against the pandemic on the theatre and orchestras day of action.



“AMBASSADOR OF THREE-FOUR TIME“ Great sadness for Herbert Siebert. A tree is being planted in the Kurpark in his honour.



FEW SPECTATORS Despite the pandemic, the City Biathlon can take place, transforming Wilhelmstrasse into a “sports venue”.

And he carried out the job of the chairman of the city councillors with ability and empathy. The liberal, Wolfgang Schwarz, eloquent FDP speaker in the municipal parliament for many years celebrated his 90th birthday. By the way: the city council assembly will be elected again in March. Another birthday: a creative mind who accompanied the cultural life of the city for many years celebrated his 90th – the former head of the art's section department of the Wiesbadener Kurier newspaper, Bruno Russ. And a 100 year-old here who is thankful that "my mind is still fit": Christel Gauger. She helped initiate the senior citizens' council in 1976. In 1992, she was co-founder of the senior citizens' academy at the vhs (adult education centre).

I would like to draw attention to a wonderful book by my former colleague, Elke Baade. She has brought off a coup with "Trees of the heart". In the book, which is excellently designed by Dagmar Ronneburg, people from Wiesbaden present "their" favourite tree. An expert also gives their opinion on each tree. In this way, our eyes are opened to the beauty of nature in an entertaining and informative way. Hermann Ufer impressively shows the beholder "The art of seeing nature through different eyes", in his new illustrated book. It has long been Ufer's passion to direct his photographer's lens deep inside the tree trunk structures, creating incredible motifs. An illustrated book about "Wiesbaden's most beautiful times" - views from the 19th century, is also well worth a look. With the support of the Wiesbaden Stiftung, Georg Schmidt-von Rhein, former chairman of the Casino Gesellschaft, published the book. I would also really like to draw attention to the fourth edition of a book that has been a hit for decades. Jürgen Hellers journey of discovery with the giant Ekko, who not only teaches schoolchildren the (hi)story of the city in a marvellous way.

The issue of local traffic: 2020 was the year of the referendum on the CityBahn tram system for Wiesbaden and environs as far as Mainz. The majority of those in City Hall had spoken out in favour of the major project. However, more than 60 percent of the residents voted against the CityBahn at the end of the day. More work thus has to be done on a mobility concept. The so called master plan process for a sustainable inner city has begun in Wiesbaden.

The focus here is on digital transformation and the consequences of corona among other things. Wiesbaden has a city manager now too, Axel Klug, who is currently experiencing difficult times together with the business world - but who has to look to the future... These are difficult times for sport on all levels too. Nevertheless, the City Biathlon could take place with a small number of spectators.

A few more "pleasant things": How nice that the Jewish community is to receive the Culture Award of the city; and that the US American artist, Frank Stella, will receive the Alexej Jawlensky Award in 2022. It is also good that the "Exground" Festival was not cancelled but was screened online instead of in the closed Caligari. It is also good that the Head of Triwicon and Marketing, Martin Michel, emphasises: "The corona crisis is keeping us all on tenterhooks. Nevertheless, we are trying to think positively". He would like to take friends of Wiesbaden on a "nice and cosy" virtual tour, to concerts, museums and to events. "Enjoying culture online" at www.wiesbaden.de/kultur makes this possible!

No Twinkling Star Christmas Market 2020 but our lilies are shining, no lovely memories of festivals. But: some of us now absorb nature more intensely than before; putting us in a positive mood. Then the song "What a wonderful world" is fitting too. The following just happened to me and could be a good omen for 2021. While I am writing to you and just finishing the letter, I can hear soft music. The radio station is taking requests from listeners. Which song is next? A Katie Melua version of "What a wonderful world". The first snow has fallen outside. And I have a warm feeling in my heart...

Stay safe and healthy,
with close ties to Wiesbaden -
and think positive!

Ingeborg Salm-Boost



WIESBADEN NEEDS FRIENDS!

With your membership and your commitment to the Friends of the Wiesbaden Stiftung e. V., you are documenting your solidarity with the city and helping in the practical implementation of our ideas.

Purpose of the foundation

- Promotion of civic commitment
- Art and culture
- Preservation and conservation of historic sights
- Environmental protection and nature conservation
- City history, preservation of regional traditions

Our connection to the Wiesbaden Stiftung?

The idea is clear: What works well large-scale, we can achieve on our projects too. We create synergies: From citizens for citizens – two institutions for everyone.
www.die-wiesbaden-stiftung.de

IMPRESSUM

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