

the field of dance, Aarhus also has a variety of companies, schools and networks. The professional companies also work internationally with co-productions and exchanges of both dancers and choreographers. There are five festivals for performing arts in Aarhus, of which the most well known are :Danish+ and ILT. :Danish+ is a biennial international showcase of the best Danish performing arts for children and young people. The ILT, International Living Theatre, also brings a selection of high quality contemporary international dance and performance to Aarhus every two years.

In addition to all these cultural organisations and activities Aarhus has the festival Aarhus Festuge, which gathers all art forms. Aarhus Festuge is one of northern Europe's largest cultural festivals and is recognised both in Denmark and abroad. Since September 1965, Aarhus has transformed streets, clubs, stages, galleries and museums into festival venues for ten days in August–September with over 1,000 events divided across more than 100 different stages and locations.

BERN

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History and general information

Located in the centre of the country, Bern is the seat of the Swiss government and de facto capital of Switzerland, and also the principal town of the Canton of Bern. Despite its relatively small population (133,656 inhabitants in 2011), Bern features a cultural life rich in variety and numerous leisure amenities such as twenty museums, a concert hall for classical music, sixteen cinemas with 37 screens, two major sport stadiums as well as a vast number of galleries. However, the city of Bern stands out due to an enormous range of theatre venues, theatrical performances and a unique concentration of four branches: drama, opera, ballet, symphony orchestra, all under the name Konzert Theater Bern), a lively *Freie Szene* ("free scene") consisting of various independent companies and venues, the international theatre festival AUAWIRLEBEN, the Hochschule der Künste Bern (university of the arts, including acting and singing education), amateur and folk theatre, commercial theatre, the Schweizerische Theatersammlung (Swiss theatre museum and archive), as well as the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft der Universität Bern, the only academic institute of theatre studies in Switzerland.

Bern was founded in 1191 – one hundred years before the formation of Switzerland – on a headland surrounded on three sides by the Aare River. In 1353, the *freie Reichsstadt* Bern joined the Swiss Confederation. Since the successful civil revolution of 1848 that led to the foundation of the modern Swiss state, Bern is de facto capital – de facto because the federation does not foresee a de jure capital (*Bundesstadt*, not *Hauptstadt*).



Bern's Old City. Photo: Bern Tourismus, used with permission.

The city's 2011 population equals 1.56% of the country's population (8 million) and makes Bern the fourth largest city in Switzerland, after Zurich, Geneva and Basel. But it is a Swiss peculiarity that even the closest suburbs and outskirts do not belong to the same municipality as the town itself, which requires for their inhabitants to be counted separately. The core agglomeration of Bern equals about 250,000 people. With 2,436 inhabitants per km² within the administrative district of the town, the capital of Switzerland is a relatively dense city. Its centre is the old town, belonging to the UNESCO World Heritage List and located within a loop of the river.

Bern is said to be one of the greenest capitals of Europe; it is surrounded by the agricultural countryside of the Canton of Bern. The city and most of the canton belong to the German speaking part of Switzerland and lie in the immediate vicinity of the French speaking part of the country. Switzerland namely features four languages and cultures: German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic. Because Bern is centrally located, all other major Swiss cities (Zurich, Basel, Lucerne and Lausanne, with the exception of Geneva) can be reached within approximately one hour by train. In difference to Zurich (banking sector), Basel (pharmaceutical industry) and Geneva (international organisations and watch industry), Bern does not have a constitutive sector of commerce. Instead, the capital of Switzerland is characterised by administration. Most federal ministries, departments and institutions as well as embassies and the headquarters of public services such as Swiss Post and Swiss Federal Railways are based in Bern. The biggest employer is the Federal Administration.

Cultural infrastructure

Bern is the cultural centre of the entire canton and features five main cultural institutions – the Stadttheater, the Symphony Orchestra, the Zentrum Paul Klee (museum of modern art), the Kunstmuseum (museum of art) and the Historisches Museum (museum of history). Of these five institutions, the Zentrum Paul Klee, which was opened in 2005 and predominantly exhibits modern and contemporary art, is the cultural flagship of the city on a national and international scale. Nearly all of these major cultural institutions and most of the smaller cultural venues are located in the city centre. However, a substantial part of users of the cultural offer live in the surrounding municipalities and the entire canton of Bern. In addition to its permanent cultural institutions, Bern has five annual cultural festivals with international outreach: TANZ.IN Bern (contemporary dance), BONE Performance Art Festival Bern (performance art), Buskers Bern (summer street music festival), SHNIT (short film festival) and AUAWIRLEBEN Theatre Festival (mainly independent theatre companies). The latter has been presenting international groups and new theatrical aesthetics since 1982 and functioning as an important point of reference in the theatre life of the city. Moreover, the city also features the Biennale Bern (art and performance festival) and the Musikfestival Bern, which are held every two years alternating with each other. All of these main Bernese cultural institutions and festivals are subsidised primarily by the city and the canton with an approximately equal figure. In total, the city of Bern spends EUR 11,555,000 on theatre every year.¹ This equals EUR 86 per capita.

Theatre infrastructure

Theatre in Bern is characterised by the diversity of theatrical forms and, compared to the size of the city, its enormous theatrical output, which is even more astonishing since numerous theatres in the other Swiss cultural centres – Zurich, Basel, Lausanne and Lucerne – all lie very close. Moreover, in a radius of 50 km, there are further large theatre venues in smaller cities such as Biel, Solothurn, Langenthal, Burgdorf, Thun, Fribourg and Interlaken.

In Bern, no other cultural activity (museums, concerts, etc.) attracts as many people as theatre. This fact is supported by the audience figures throughout Switzerland. In 2008 (the latest figures available), 42% of all people living in Switzerland over 15 years old (almost 3 million people) saw at least one theatre performance in this particular year. A theatre ticket in Bern costs EUR 35 on average, which equals 0.62% of an average monthly salary. In comparison, a regular-priced cinema ticket costs EUR 14.50.

Being one of the five main cultural institutions, the Stadttheater plays an important role in the cultural life of Bern. Maintaining two permanent venues and a steady ensemble of actors and dancers as well as a choir, the Stadttheater engaged 342 staff members

¹ The currency in Switzerland is Swiss Francs. The currency rate in 2010/11 was approx. EUR 1 = CHF 1.20.

and hired 188 guest employees in 2010/11. It produces about 30 new performances per year of four theatre genres (drama, dance, opera and musical). The performances on the repertoire as well as a small amount of guest performances are shown on four different stages in two venues. The Stadttheater building itself, situated in the heart of the old town, features the main stage (740 seats) and a small Studiobühne (50 seats). The second venue, located in the former industrial hall Vidmar situated on the outskirts of the city, features two stages, with 320 and 120 seats respectively.

The *Freie Szene* is the biggest and most heterogeneous theatre form in Bern. It includes a variety of venues of various sizes and equipment and a persistently changing number of permanent and ad hoc theatre companies. At the same time, the *Freie Szene* features a wide range of theatrical types and genres: spoken theatre, devised theatre, *Kleinkunst*, puppet and object theatre, children's and youth theatre and performance art.

There are three essential venues of the *Freie Szene* in Bern:

- Schlachthaus Theater, specialised in devised theatre and children's and youth theatre;
- Dampfzentrale, mainly serving as a platform for contemporary dance and performance; and
- Tojo Theater, featuring performances of all theatre forms and showing also productions of lesser known companies.

In autumn, the Dampfzentrale hosts the renowned international dance festival TANZ.IN Bern and in spring it serves as a venue for the international theatre festival AUAWIRLEBEN – as does Schlachthaus Theater. Both venues are subsidised primarily by the city of Bern and to a much lesser extent by the canton of Bern and some private foundations. In addition to these venues, Tojo Theater is the third important venue of the *Freie Szene*. It is situated in the Kulturzentrum Reitschule close to the train station. Tojo Theater is also subsidised by the city of Bern, but the theatre does not have the financial means to pay the performing groups. It is an architectural specialty of the old town of Bern that the houses have cellars with entrances over stairs directly from the streets. Unique to Bern, some of these cellars have been transformed into theatres – the first one in 1949.

Amateur and folk theatre are found predominantly outside the city and are very common in the canton of Bern. However, some of the amateur and folk theatre companies show their productions in the city. Das Theater an der Effingerstrasse, finally, equipped with 200 seats, creates about eight new plays every season, which are also shown in succession (*ensuite*). It is owned by a private person but is still subsidised with EUR 250,000 per year by the city of Bern.