

SAXONY



Where Christmas comes to life

JENS WEISSFLOG

*A sausage on a bus instead of presents:
The legendary ski jumper talks about
Advent season in professional sport.*

RING TURNER

*Back to the future:
How a maverick brought
an old craft back to life.*

STOLLEN 2.0

*Science and the web: A blogger from
the Ore Mountains takes Christmas
baking to a whole new level.*

DRESDEN NOSTALGIA

Chock-full of treats and mementos from yesteryear: “Advent on the Neumarkt” next to the Frauenkirche. *Page 4*

FLYYYYYYYYY!

Ski jump legend Jens Weißflog talks about Christmas time among top athletes. *Page 6*

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ALL WRAPPED UP

Highly recommended: celebrities and VIPs from Saxony give advice on Christmas presents. *Page 30*

A warm welcome, dear readers!

Might it be his tracks there at the bottom of the photo? Father Christmas could very well live in a little hut on the Fichtelberg and trudge through the snow every now and then. Because if there is a Christmasland, it just has to be Saxony – and the Ore Mountains in particular. But as heavenly figures tend not to disclose their secrets when journalists and photographers come knocking, we set out on a journey of the Free State for you.

We visited the people who are breathing life into age-old traditions that make the time leading up to Christmas so very special. The people who create unparalleled folk art with their craft skills. Who bake those delicious treats from grandma's days either in the traditional, time-honoured way or with a modern twist. Who play or sing those well-known tunes that move and affect us in Advent. Furthermore, celebrities and VIPs have told us what they love about Christmas in Saxony, and what they like to give as presents.

So, let us take you on a pre-Christmas trip through Saxony. Or why not go there yourself – for example with the aid of our competition on the last page. Merry Christmas!

The editorial team

Due to its unique and varied Christmas traditions, Saxony has its own special vocabulary. In order to help you understand Christmas Saxony better, we marked these words like → **THIS** and explain them in a special glossary on the centre pages. Just browse, read and make a mental note!



Silent night in the glow of the dome

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The last of the sunlight illuminating the dome of the Dresden Frauenkirche is the cue for the → **KURRENDESÄNGER (CHOIR BOYS)** to start singing “Silent Night”. And a few minutes later, when spotlights delay the onset of winter night a little longer, they sing “Alle Jahre wieder”. These two carols perfectly sum up the atmosphere at “Advent on the Neumarkt”. The mood at this Christmas market behind Dresden’s famous landmark is peaceful – because its guests are basking in what the past has to offer. The booths and food stalls are replicas from 1830 to 1920. In those days the world turned a little slower, even with all the stress in the run-up to Christmas. And once you have a taste for Christmas markets, you can carry on walking. Dresden’s old city centre is transformed into a Christmas Mile in Advent, ready to be discovered at ten differently themed Christmas markets. The largest of them with the longest tradition is the central Striezelmarkt, now in its 580th year.

www.dresden.de/weihnachten

Photos: Sebastian Airt/Jörg Schöner



SAXONY



Where Christmas comes to life



En route with two Ore Mountain legends: Since 1897, the historic Fichtelberg railway has been meandering the 17 kilometre stretch from Cranzahl to Oberwiesenthal, where Jens Weißflog lives. The triple Olympic champion ski jumper gets on board at least once a year with his family - privately, at Advent time.



"I look forward to the light"

THE CELEBRATED SKI JUMPER HAS HAD A CHRISTMAS DINNER CONSISTING OF A MEAGRE SAUSAGE ON THE TEAM BUS – BUT NOW JENS WEISSFLOG (50) ENJOYS LIVING OUT THE ORE MOUNTAINS' ADVENT TRADITIONS WITH HIS CHILDREN



Mr Weißflog, we would like to talk to you about Christmas – but, well, we don't actually know if you are the right person to talk to.

How come?

While everyone else was sitting around eating Christmas biscuits, warm and snug, you must have been out on ski jumping training.

I can set your mind at ease on that count – I never had to follow a strict keep-fit regime in Advent. The main training time for a winter sportsman is in the summer. That's when you have to get in shape, and in December it's all about fine-tuning.

But the Four Hills Tournament, one of the highlights of the season, starts right after the Christmas period. That sounds as if you didn't have a serene and peaceful time.

I usually trained just a little on Christmas Eve in the morning and then celebrated Christmas in peace and quiet with my family. It was not until Boxing Day that we would then set out to Oberstdorf – it was all quite relaxed. But there was one Christmas when, at least for a brief moment, I hated the sport. That must have been back in 1987.

So what happened?

We had to go to a competition in St. Moritz, and because the journey to Switzerland was so far we set out at about lunch-time on Christmas Eve. First we were stuck on the motorway, and then we had to wait for ages at the border for our passports – and Christmas dinner that evening was two bread rolls, a sausage and a hard-boiled egg on the bus. It was quite depressing... *...but for a feather-light ski jumper perhaps more suitable than a fatty Christmas goose.*

Oh, I could eat all day. I am the sort of person who never puts on weight – ideal for jumping. At Christmas I don't have to worry if I eat one or two biscuits.

And what else would the ski jumper Jens Weißflog enjoy second helpings of?

A stollen – a German Christmas cake – crammed full of raisins, for example. I love stollen when it is nice, heavy and not too dry. Every year, I get one from my mother, she has been baking it before Christmas for ages. And she puts a bit of chocolate in it too.

In 1977, you went to a sports boarding school. Were you homesick for your mother's stollen?



The steam engine puffs at the front, while the heating blares in the historical carriage (at the top) when the Fichtelberg railway meanders through the snowy Ore Mountains (top right). Jens Weißflog (top left) has stayed loyal to the region since 1977, when, aged 13, he moved to the sports boarding school in Oberwiesenthal.

Actually, I was never really homesick. I enjoyed my boarding school: I was among like-minded people, and many of them could play a decent game of table tennis. *So what was Advent like in the sports boarding school?* Well, there was the odd →SCHWIBBOGEN (CANDLE ARCH) standing around and maybe one or two Christmas incense smoker men dotted here or there letting off the occasional puff of smoke. But apart from the Christmas celebration itself, it was business as usual at the boarding school. The focus was on school and sports. Free time when you would have been able to get into the Christmas mood was not really on the timetable. And if the competition conditions were good the trainers also called over the Christmas period – there was no room for discussion on that.

Since boarding school, you have been living in Oberwiesenthal – the “St. Moritz of the Ore Mountains”.

The town got this nickname because of the excellent reliable snow coverage. But also because this is where once the nobility met up – Dresden’s court society used to go horn sledding here way back when. When this was part of the GDR, before the Berlin Wall came down, it was one of the few Alpine skiing resorts you could travel to, and it remained a place where VIPs and artists would gather – but the press didn’t make such a big deal of this back then.

The town has many other attractions aside from sport – the triple Olympic champion Jens Weißflog.

A lot of people stop me on the street, but after such a long career I know how to deal with this. It usually isn’t a problem – but sometimes if I can’t be bothered to sign autographs for a bus-load of tourists I quickly dive into a side alleyway. It’s what I used to do when cameramen were following me – pulling down my cap to cover my face and I was off. Should it come to a chase, I am probably still fitter than most other people.

Why did you stay here after leaving professional sport?

For a start, my roots are in the Ore Mountains. I come from Pöhl, which is not far from here. And secondly I have been running a hotel since 1996. At first I wanted to lease it to somebody but then I thought of a suitcase for 15 years, may be quite well suited as a hotelier.

And now with Christmas coming up: what are you looking forward to most?

To the light. When evening falls here in the Ore Mountains and you go through the area, the candle arches in the windows, all these lights – there is nothing to compare it with anywhere in the world. Well, there are the Christmas lights in America... but they are a world apart, all bright and bling.

Have you made up for all that Advent cosiness that passed you by now that you have ended your career?

As if! I had my last jump on 15 March 1996 – and we opened the hotel in October... but of course, I go to the Christmas market with my family, get the carvings out of the attic with the children. My daughter especially loves the → RÄUCHERMÄNNER (INCENSE SMOKERS). I think it is important to hand down the traditions of the Ore Mountains. I myself used to play on spoil heaps from ore mining as a child, but for children nowadays, the history of our region is a little more distant.

And how do you celebrate Christmas?

On Christmas Eve we have a champagne reception where we wish all the hotel guests merry Christmas, and then we retire. But already on Boxing Day I visit the coffee klatsch at the hotel and tell them stories from the time when I was a professional ski jumper – people want to see me face to face.



Nowadays Schloss Wackerbarth (top) is a Saxon state vineyard. Archivist Dr Nils Brübach (right) is interested in the man who gave the building his name. www.schloss-wackerbarth.de



The raugrave's recipe

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION: IT SEEMS THE FIRST-EVER MULLED WINE WAS BREWED BY A SAXON NOBLEMAN FACING BANKRUPTCY

Finding the philosopher's stone, that legendary substance that can turn base metals into gold – August raugrave of Wackerbarth would most certainly have had no objections to that. The Saxon country aristocrat had financial woes as he turned to quill and paper on a cold Thursday on December 11, 1834 to instruct his business partner of his latest idea.

“Wackerbarth was a man out of step with his time,” explains Dr Nils Brübach from the Saxon state archive, “a late enlightenment philosopher and alchemist.” Two recipes are noted down in old-fashioned writing on the sheets through which the archivist is carefully leafing. They have nothing to do with creating gold, but rather with attempts to somehow turn a profit out of “gone-off Malvasia wine”. In Wackerbarth's time the Malvasia grape variety must have been cultivated in the castle vine-

yards near Radebeul which the raugrave purchased in 1809 – for which he ran up considerable debts.

The list of ingredients to make the wine less sour is exquisite. The raugrave suggested the following for a “Dresdener jug” which equals 0.93 litres: *4 lots of cinnamon powder, 2 lots of ginger, 1 lot of star anise seeds, 1 lot of pomegranate, 1 lot of cardamom, 1 lot of nutmeg, 1 gran of saffron.* One lot is equivalent to 14.6 grams, one gran is about ½ gram – for the modern palate these are unusually generous amounts. “Heat, mix and sieve and then round it off with honey and sugar,” Wackerbarth continued. He called his creation “spice wine”. The tradition of mixing like this harks back to antiquity, according to Nils Brübach, who found the writings of the raugrave a year ago in the depths of the state archive. “This recipe here is a little different: Wackerbarth was the first

in the middle-German area to also heat the wine – and maybe that makes him the inventor of what we know today as “Glühwein” or mulled wine.

Had the impoverished raugrave Wackerbarth suspected the success hot wine was to become on Christmas markets, he may have pursued the idea with greater enthusiasm. But as it was he declared bankruptcy several times and eventually ended up selling his estate. Nowadays Schloss Wackerbarth is a Saxon state vineyard. Although its noble wines no longer need to be improved with spices, mulled wine is also made there, and it tastes better than the raugrave's version: “Wackerbarth did write “Probatum!” under one of his recipes (tried it!), reports the archivist Brübach. “But what it actually tasted like – well, he doesn't write anything about that.” Maybe the recipe wasn't actually the philosopher's stone after all.

“Oh, that tickles your nose!”

GERMAN PFEFFERKUCHEN, A TYPE OF GINGERBREAD WHICH LITERALLY TRANSLATES AS PEPPER CAKE, HAS BEEN BAKED IN PULSNITZ SINCE 1558. FIND OUT THE SECRET BEHIND THE NAME AND THE RECIPE IN A LOCAL BAKERY



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Does it really have pepper in it? Dominic is not quite sure. On the one hand that would make sense. The pastry he is just stamping a heart out of is dark – so naturally that could come from ground pepper. And Pulsnitz, where Dominic and his classmates are on their school trip, is after all known by the moniker of ‘the Town of the Pfefferkuchen’. But then... putting pepper in a sweet pastry dish? That would be a bit weird.

André, standing next to him and trying to stamp a crown out of his pastry, agrees. Annoyingly the tips of the crown keep falling off. “Looks more like a steak,” comments Dominic, adding a pastry car, a star and a Christmas tree to his collection. Then the boys put their masterpieces on the baking tray – and away with it into the oven!

A few days before, Father Christmas had brought a Pfefferkuchen house into the classroom of the 9- and 10-year-olds in the Rosenthal-Bielatal primary school. Inside it was an invitation for the children to visit the exhibition workshop of the Pfefferkuchen museum in Pulsnitz – and finally to find out why the Christmas biscuits have such a strange name. Now, this secret is revealed by Siegmund Schubert, a dignified man with a grey beard and a sizeable belly. Schubert is standing surrounded by antique equipment and old machines. “What is pepper actually?” he asks. “A spice,” calls out the class as one voice. “Exactly,” says Schubert, “and back in the middle ages people just called any of the

exotic spices that came from the far east ‘pepper’”. And then in Pulsnitz they were granted the privilege of baking Pfefferkuchen, he continues. “That was in 1558. Later on, the Pulsnitzers became purveyors to the court in Saxony. Today there are still eight Pfefferkuchen bakeries in the town.” Of course, their recipes are all secret, but during Schubert’s museum tour the children are allowed to have a sniff of the spices that went into the pastry made some time beforehand. Cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, mace, cardamom, coriander, ginger and allspice. “Oh, that tickles your nose!” calls out Michelle.

In the meantime the Pfefferkuchen biscuits are ready in the bakery. Next they are brushed with potato starch to make them shine, and then it is time to decorate them. “Think about the figures on the Pfefferkuchen house,” calls out the class teacher Ute Dörner. “The ones that had a lot of colour didn’t taste all that good!” But hardly anyone is listening by that point – and the children are busy squirting the icing out of their tubes. Dominic is concentrating hard. He is trying to write “Ich hab dich lieb” (“I love you”) on a heart. Maybe he wants to give it to his mother, only he has run out of space for the word “lieb”. It seems that the start of this declaration was too large. At the other end of the table Michelle is insinuating that her friend Celine, who is decorating a heart in pink, must be in love. “So what?” calls out Celine. And right she is: Christmas is, after all, a celebration of love.

Photos: Sebastian Airtt



You can admire old equipment and baking tools in the Pulsnitz Pfefferkuchen museum (left page and very top right). With humour and patience, Siegmar Schubert explains the history of the Pfefferkuchen town (top centre) and the children listen enthralled (top). Dominic, in the junior part of the Rosenthal-Bielatal primary school, decorates his home-made Pfefferkuchen in the exhibition workshop. www.ernst-rietschel.com/Pfefferkuchen/index.html

1 / DRESS UP WARM. It promises to be a long day for Ray Lätzsch, chairman of the Schneeberg mining fraternity. He has two parades ahead of him, in Zwickau and in Schwarzenberg. The 42-strong fraternity will march with other mining associations in both of them. Lätzsch is to be at their head, and he will be giving speeches too. It is also going to be quite a cold day, so he puts on thick thermal underwear under his traditional costume.



2 / READY TO RUMBLE? The fraternities carry on the miners' tradition, mining master Lätzsch among them, marching in his grandfather's steps who worked in the tunnels. The traditional costume includes a special knife pouch for his mining knife serving as both a tool and as cutlery.



3 / CHEERS! In Zwickau they are sent on their way with sausage to give them strength and mulled wine to warm them. Then Lätzsch gives the command to line up. For the men this means raising the flag - and concentrating! At precisely 2 o'clock, not a minute earlier or later, they are off.





4



5

Long day in yellow trousers

LITTLE LIGHT, NARROW TUNNELS – THE MINERS OF THE ORE MOUNTAINS HAD TO BE TOUGH. THEIR SUCCESSORS ARE TOO, AS THE ADVENT DAY WITH THE SCHNEEBERG MINING FRATERNITY SHOWS. THEIR AGENDA: LOTS OF MARCHING ON LONG PARADES

4 / GLÜCK AUF! As the parade reaches the Zwickau Kornplatz, the square is jam-packed with people. The 379 miners rally around and sing: "Der Steiger kommt!", a traditional German mining song.

5 / DONE IT. Then they are off to the next parade. The bus driver Gerd tells jokes as they travel along. But the message Lätzsch gets on his mobile raises even more laughter - the regional chairman of the mining associations has left his costume at home... He wants to know if the Schneebergers could help him out.

6 / IRONS TO THE READY! The mining fraternity costumes include historical axes and picks. But they are not sharpened, so it is okay to put them on the floor of the bus.

7 / COLOURFUL. The Schneeberg fraternity is the only one not wearing white but yellow trousers. Why? One tentative theory: a long, long time ago the miners suffered the same fate as the regional chairman did today and had to borrow from soldiers - trousers which just happened to be yellow.

Photos: Sebastian Airtt



6



7

8 / THE COLD. By the time the 42 men in the Schneeberg mining fraternity reach the second parade in Schwarzenberg, it is even colder. The thermometer has dropped down to minus 4 o C. The cold air bites at your face and freezes the tip of your nose. But giving up is not an option - it's the last lap!

9 / LAST MARCH. Darkness falls just as the parade starts at the railway station. Good thing the miners have their mining lamps hanging round their necks. The steep road leads up to the old town centre to the Christmas market and a light dusting of snow starts to fall. The cobble stones turn slippery, their toes are even colder now - but the atmosphere is great.

10 / FINALE! What could his colleague be whispering to Ray Lätzsch? He already knows that the town of Schwarzenberg has invited the miners to a "pig feast" after the parade, a large meal with liver sausage and sauerkraut. Lätzsch greets the audience, holds a short speech, then he calls for the last time today: "Saxon miner's parade! Call to prayers, attention!"



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Photos: Sebastian Artt

The Schneeberg mining fraternity has 14 appearances in Advent alone – and there are many more parades in the Ore Mountains. For an overview, go to: www.erzgebirge-tourismus.de

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Our thanks to the Elector

Was the Saxon Elector Johann Friedrich partial to German sausage, folk art and gentle music? It almost seems as if he was. In 1533 he bought the Schwarzenberg castle from another aristocrat, and only one year later the Christmas market in the little town in the Ore Mountains is mentioned in old records for the first time. Back then, it was held on the Sunday before Christmas, but now the Schwarzenberg market welcomes visitors between the second and third Sunday in Advent to the castle courtyard and the historic old part of the town. To get to it you have to tackle a steep street, but there are plenty of opportunities en route to stop for a breather. The sides of the street are lined with groups of man-sized wooden figures depicting scenes from the Ore Mountain history. However, the Elector Johann Friedrich is not among their rank. A pity really. He would have deserved a memorial for this enchanting Christmas market. www.schwarzenberg.de



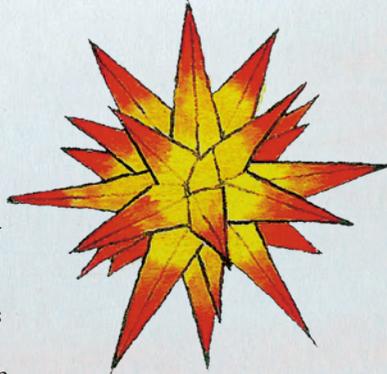
Saxony's Advent vocabulary

WHAT ON EARTH IS A DRESDNER STRIEZEL? OR SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE STARS FROM HERRNHUT? AND IS A KRUIZIANER A LOCAL CURSE? AN OVERVIEW OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SAXON CHRISTMAS WORDS



Cinderella

The celebrated film “Three wishes for Cinderella” was shot at the Moritzburg castle and is inseparable from Saxony. Watching it – it is always shown at Christmas time – has become a modern tradition. You can watch Cinderella live at the Saxon Landesbühnen theatre and the Schauspiel Leipzig.



Herrnhuter stars

Even maths lessons can sometimes have a silver lining. A boarding school teacher back in 1821 gave his pupils a geometry task – to build a star out of paper. After the pupils had finished, they put a light in the star and because it lit up so beautifully, they carried on making one every year in Advent after that. Nowadays the stars are produced in a manufactory in Herrnhut and dispatched all over the world.

D

Dresdner Striezel

The Saxon word for the Dresden stollen cake made with butter and raisins, which has been allowed to bear the EU protective seal as a regional brand since 2010. Eponym of the Dresden Striezelmarkt, which is being held for the 580th time this year.

A Angel

The word “angel” is not, in itself, specifically Saxon – but the angel that the Männelmacher (see “M”) put with the miners is. The Ore Mountain angels carry candles and, unlike biblical archangels, are female. After all, behind every strong miner there is a strong woman.



SAXONY

K

Kräppelchen

Little deep-fried sweet dough balls that just go pop into your mouth. One of the favourite nibbles on Saxon Christmas markets. Too many calories? Who cares – it's only Advent once a year.

Kruzierer

With their voices as clear as a bell, the members of the Dresden choir “Kreuzchor” are not only in Advent singing like angels. Alongside Leipzig's Thomaner choir-boys they are among the most famous German boys choirs and are already looking forward to 2016, when they will be celebrating their 800th jubilee.

Kurrendesänger (travelling singers)

Groups of up to four young singers who go through Saxon towns in Advent (*curre* = *Latin for to run around*) performing Christmas songs. Dressed in black frocks with white collars they make a popular motif for the Männelmacher to carve.



L Lights

In winter it gets dark early. A good thing too because it gives Saxons the chance to do what they enjoy most: putting candle arches in the window and pyramids on the table, or in other words: lighting lots of candles. And then just enjoying the glow.

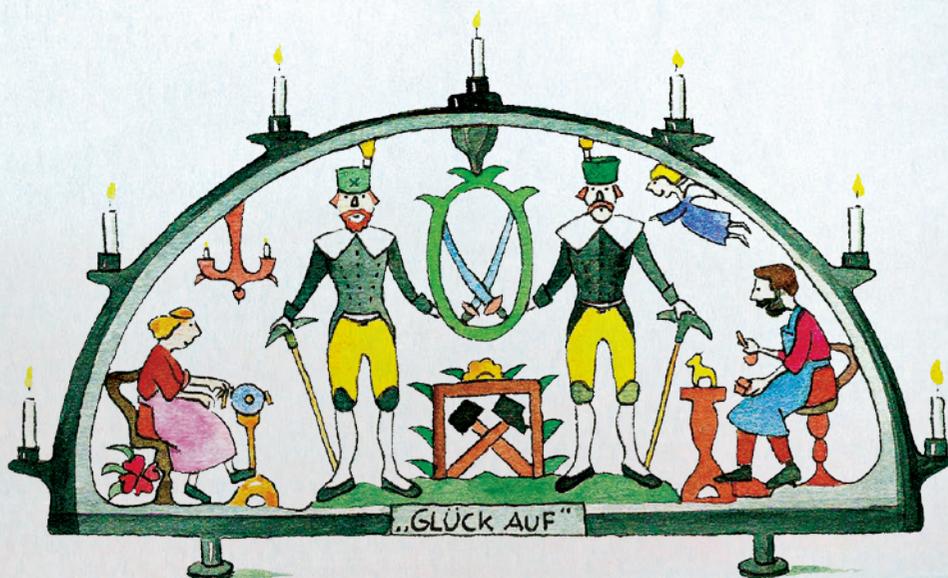


M Männel- macher (little man maker)

A respected profession with a cute name. This is the profession practised by the craft-people who carve or turn the smoking men, angel and miner figures – works of art in their own right. And they usually do it in the Ore Mountains, often in Seiffen.

Mettenschicht

Last shift in the mine before Christmas Eve, which ended on a cheerful note: The overseer knocked, then the miners came together, ate, drank and sang. As that's still fun to do, there is also the Mettenschicht for non-miners.



P Pyramids

The Gizeh ones in Egypt are considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World, even though all they do is just, well, stand. The Ore Mountains' pyramids offer much more: hot air from burning candles moves the propeller, attached to its axis are wooden plates delicately carved, and they spin and spin...

R Räuchermän- ner (incense smokers)

A popular table decoration despite smoking bans: these little figures of men with space inside for a piece of burning incense. The smoke comes out through their open mouths – and it smells much better than tobacco smoke.

S Schwibbogen (candle arches)

These are not just the electric Christmas stuff you can buy on the high street, but real candle arches from the Ore Mountains, usually with scenes of miners under the arch. In the dark mining tunnels, they yearned for light and were pleased to see candle arches lit up in the windows in Advent.

Seiffen toy village

If Seiffen were larger it would be the Christmas capital city of the world. As it is, it is the Christmas capital village. The centre of the Ore Mountain folk art also thrives from producing smoking incense men and nut crackers in the height of summer. In Advent Seiffen is transformed into one single, large Christmas market.

W WO - Christmas Oratorio

The Saxons are always in a hurry and have no time to say long words like the German "Weihnachtsoratorium" (Christmas Oratorio). So, WO is how organ musicians and Kreuzchor and Thomanerchor choirboys abbreviate J. S. Bach's most famous Christmas composition, first performed in 1734.





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From tree trunk to wooden horse:
The Seiffen ring turner Christian
Werner first carves the profile he
wants into the spinning disc of wood
(right) with his chisels (left), then he
cuts the animals off, slice by slice,
from the ring he has made (top centre).
Then carved a little into shape and
lovingly hand painted, they adorn
Werner's hand-built pyramid lights
(very top), for example.
www.reifentiere.de



SAXONY

Coming full circle

CHRISTIAN WERNER HAS BROUGHT AN OLD CRAFT BACK TO LIFE – AND MAKES DELICATE WOODEN FIGURES WITH THIS ASTOUNDING METHOD

Christian Werner stands out. The 46-year-old wears a traditional carpenter's costume made of brown corduroy and white linen, and he likes to wear a colourful pointed hat on his head. He has finely sculpted facial features and balances round John Lennon glasses on his sharp nose. Only the callouses and weals on his fingers show that he earns his money with his hands.

In his workshop in → **SEIFFEN TOYVIL-LAGE** Werner knocks a thick disc of spruce wood onto the axle of his lathe and lets the wood spin. Then he puts his chisels onto the wood – and the finest ribbons of wood fly across the room, as if they were streamers. Here a little wood is removed, there a little notch is carved out, and soon the disc becomes a ring. When Werner lets the lathe run without wood in it, he says: “Everyone thought I was mad. But I wanted to get this wonderful technique back out of the museum.”

Werner's craft is turning wooden rings. When he was a boy his father, a → **MÄNNEL-MACHER**, would occasionally send him to a colleague to pick up pieces for his wooden figures. “The sky above Seiffen is the roof of a very large factory,” explains Werner, “some people only make sheep, others make trees – and then at the end the pieces are all put together” to make the famous → **PYRAMIDS**, for instance. When he sent his son to the ring turner the father often had to wait a long time. The boy sat in the workshop and watched, amazed.

Years later when Christian Werner was a wooden toy maker himself, he found a position in the Seiffen open air museum. An old master who still had a perfect command of the now rare technique of turning wooden rings, lived next door. After a lot of persuasion the old man came to the workshop and gave Werner advice. He learnt that only wood from very straight spruce trees is suitable, they are best when they

grow on the north face of the mountain, and should ideally be felled at full moon. He learnt that once they are felled you have to leave them for a while with their crowns facing the valley, so that the tree can drain its juices and that the wood still should not be dry when you put it on the lathe. But the most important thing than Werner learnt was how to guide the chisel with force and precision. Then he set himself up as self-employed.

But... who needs wooden rings, no matter how artistically they are made? Werner releases the ring from the wood and places the knife as if he is cutting a slice of a very special cake. He then taps the knife with a little hammer, one blow to start with, then he moves the knife along about a centimetre and taps it again. The little chunk of wood that he has cut off the ring is – a little wooden horse! Werner taps off slice after slice, and soon he has a stack of little horses. By turning rings the Seiffen craftsmen were able to produce a large number of toy animals in only a few steps – at the end of the 18th century ring turning was a technical sensation. And anyone who has had the privilege to watch Christian Werner at work has to admit... it still is.

Werner takes the animals up to the first floor where they will be finished off with a few cuts of the knife and then painted. He and his eight employees have 260 different figures in their programme which are sold in sets or put on the pyramid lights they build themselves. What Werner really loves is thinking up new figures. And even if he only uses the old techniques, Werner does not limit himself by only using old designs. Then his colleagues complain: “Can't you just come up with something normal?” Looking at the rolled trunks on Werner's elephants you can get their point – their boss just likes to stand out.

Photos: Sebastian Aitt



Up high on the gallery

KARL POHLANDT (11) SINGS IN
THE DRESDEN KREUZCHOR
CHOIR—ADVENT IS A MARATHON

“When I climbed up the steps of the gallery of the Kreuzkirche in Dresden I was really nervous. There were three thousand people below and I was supposed to just start singing the Christmas carol “Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her” – as a soloist in my first year in the choir! But then my stage fright was just suddenly swept away. I didn’t even notice how high the gallery actually was.

A toy box is to blame for me being in the Dresden Kreuzchor. I wasn’t interested in singing at first, but at our school was this great box of Lego in the room where singing lessons were held – and it drew me there. Now I am in year 6 and have been living in the choir boarding school for a year. I have never felt homesick because I have known the other boys I share a room with since kindergarten.

Advent time is crazy – we have Christmas carol evening, we sing the Oratorio, in the Christmas mass, vespers and in the normal church services. We have a performance every three or four days, and we also have to rehearse about twelve times a week. So you really have to concentrate – everyone knows that we now have to work fast and there is no room for error. On Christmas Eve itself there is a vespers dinner, really posh, with three courses. Then the older pupils sing something for us in the large rehearsal hall, and then there are presents. Everyone gets theirs at the same time. When you have 150 → **KRUZIANER (DRESDEN CHOIR BOYS)** tearing open their presents at the same time, you can imagine the excitement! We go to bed at half past eight as next morning we have to get up at half past four to sing the Christmas mass. Then we are on holiday! At home we get presents again. Last year I got music software. I also play the piano and like to improvise. And when something comes to me I compose a piece using it.”



Karl Pohlandt (very top) has been living in the choir boarding school for more than a year. He finds Christmas time exhausting, but enjoys it as well: lots of rehearsals (right), but also lots of seasonal performances (top).
Schedule: www.kreuzchor.de





The fortress celebration

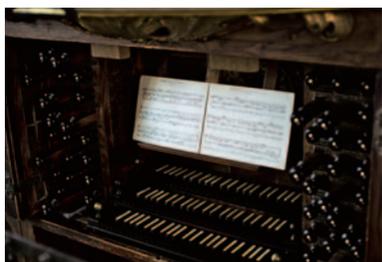
On your way there, you can already tell that the historical and romantic Christmas market on the Königstein fort is a highlight. The mighty bastion looks down over the Dresden Elbe Valley and anyone wanting to conquer it is going to have to climb up steep ramps – or take the lift up there. You notice the minute you arrive that things are a bit different at the market than in the valley down below. The sparks fly as wild journeymen with bushy beards forge iron. There are stone masons hammering away at their chisels, sometimes violently, sometimes delicately. Then in other parts it is more peaceful: some of the tower rooms have magnificently decorated tables. In the casemate rooms, endless corridors where munition used to be stored, → **HERRNHÜTER STARS** light your way. And under their light craftspeople sell their precious wares. In the furthestmost room a woman is sitting on a footstool, embroidering by the light of a candle and telling fairytales. You can sit down with her and listen in. The path back down over the steep ramps back to the real world can wait a while.

www.festung-koenigstein.de

Silbermann's silver sounds

IN FREIBERG CATHEDRAL, ALBRECHT KOCH PLAYS ON A 300-YEAR-OLD ORGAN, STILL ONE OF THE BEST IN THE WORLD

22



Choirmaster and organist Albrecht Koch (38; right) had to get used to the old organ at first. The keyboard and register are comparatively difficult (very top). But Koch loves the instrument because of its sound and its details (top). www.silbermann2014.de



Mr Koch, what challenges does a choirmaster and organist face at Christmas?

Fortunately, the heating in the cathedral only breaks down every few years – playing there at temperatures only just above zero would be extremely difficult. At Advent I have to play the organ very often, but I enjoy it. I am a child of the Ore Mountains and develop an almost naive joy at Christmas time. As a musician I notice that people are more receptive. We never have audiences like we do at Christmas. The people then sit here in the candlelight and wonder that there is still such peace in the world.

Some churchmen are furious when the church is only full at Christmas.

Well, to start with, the cathedral always has a lot of visitors. But I am pleased any time someone sets out and reaches

out for contact. And even if they only come once a year, I play with the same enthusiasm. People have the right to quality. Good music fills everyone's soul – even if they do not understand the details of the counterpoint of the fugue.

And the instrument you use to move your audience is something quite special.

Our cathedral organ in Freiberg is 300 years old this year – and is one of the best in the world today. It has been preserved almost in its original state: When I switch the motor off, which today supplies the blower, and have two or three helpers pedalling the bellows it sounds virtually as it would have done in 1714.

How do you play an instrument like that?

The main task is to bring the old instrument to life in a contemporary setting. Not every piece is suitable for an organ like this. This is why I play a lot of music written at the time the organ was built, for example from Johann Sebastian Bach. But I also try to sprinkle my concerts with a little contemporary music – I see this as little learning task. The instrument challenges me as a musician and teaches me about making music. So the organ is a little like a memory from the era. It very clearly shows me what you could and could not do back then, for example in terms of the tempo or the articulation.

The organ is difficult to play even though it was built by one of the most famous organ builders of all time?

Gottfried Silbermann's organs are unsurpassed in their quality even today. He was a perfect craftsman, almost obsessed. He must have had an excellent ear, great musical talent and must have been a good mathematician and physicist because the proportions and shapes of the pipes have to be calculated exactly so that the organ has a good sound that suits the acoustics of the room. But of course there have been technical advances over the last 300 years. *A perfect craftsman with a feel for music – so what else do we know about Silbermann?*

Very little. There isn't even a picture of him, which makes a lot of people speculate. But we can say that he was a clever businessman. He demanded high prices and calculated pragmatically which orders were worth taking on: he turned down offers from the courts of Prague, St Petersburg and Copenhagen that would have brought him fame – because it would have been too costly to transport his instruments.

So instead he built here in the region.

Silbermann settled in Freiberg to live and work there and concentrated on the local region. And the organ landscape he created is incomparable: 32 of the 44 organs he built are still preserved today. That is a huge number for an organ-builder of his day. He was clever: he managed to achieve a kind of monopoly position.

Silbermann's father was just a simple carpenter – so how did his son reach this position?

He had amazing self-confidence and knew how to expertly market himself. When he applied for the contract to build the organ in Freiberg in 1710 he did not have any work he could show in Saxony, but still in the work agreement dated 1710 it reads: "Mr Gottfried Silbermann, famous organ builder, offers his services." Famous – for what? Influential friends had written letters of recommendation for him and had put out rumours that

he would soon be tied up with other orders. In Freiberg they simply panicked that this alleged talent of the century would be snatched away from under their noses.

And they did not regret their decision. The organ was finished in 1714 and has been famous since then. How are you celebrating this anniversary?

The celebration programme has been running all year, and there are more highlights in December alongside the services and organ music for cathedral tours: on 6th December we are putting on the → **WO – CHRISTMAS ORATORIO** from Bach and on 13th December I am playing a candlelit concert. And then on 20th December there is Bach's "Mass in B Minor" with excellent soloists. You are not going to hear any Christmas hits here, we have more to offer than that. We try to give our visitors – aside from art – a brief moment of feeling at home, in both a spiritual and a divine sense.

If you could give the builder of this instrument something for Christmas, what would it be?

Maybe a bottle of good fruit schnapps? An enormous pub bill he ran up when he met Bach would indicate that he was not averse to a drop or two. Or a cigar? A stump was found during an organ restoration at an inaccessible point. It couldn't have got there after the organ was built – so Silbermann must have smoked.



The Freiberg cathedral's reserved outside (right) manages without a tower.

O come all ye faithful!

THE FREE STATE OF SAXONY HAS
WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS MARKETS
EVERYWHERE. A SELECTION

ZWICKAU Christmas market

The town is bang in the middle between the Ore Mountains and the Vogtland. And the best of both regions is on offer in the old part of Zwickau (top photo).
www.weihnachtsmarkt-zwickau.de

LEIPZIG Christmas market

One of the largest and most beautiful Christmas markets in the whole of Germany has been held in the historical city centre since the 15th century.
www.leipzig.de

FREIBERG Christmarkt

The Mountain parade, → **METTEN-SCHICHT**, nativity scenes in mining tradition: The Christmarkt in the heart of the old silver mining town has dedicated itself to the Ore Mountain customs.
www.freiberg-service.de

TORGAU Fairytale Christmas market

In North Saxony fairytales and sagas are such a big thing that some of them are projected on the façades of the Renaissance buildings in the old part of town in a sophisticated light show.
www.torgauer-weihnachtsmarkt.de



An app is now also available for you to get to know the Saxon Christmasland: **"X-MAS SACHSEN"** is available to download here free-of-charge for android smartphones in the Google Play-store and in the App Store for iPhones.

SCHNEEBERG Christmas market and festival of lights

The market in front of the town hall with the Meißner porcelain bell chimes starts on the first Advent Sunday. The festival of lights one week later is the highlight of Christmas celebrations in the region.
www.schneeberg.de

GÖRLITZ Silesian Christmas market

On December 6th, the Christ Child opens the market in the old trading town and then sings carols with the kids every day.
www.schlesischer-christkindelmarkt-goerlitz.de

BAUTZEN Wenzelsmarkt

The most beautiful market in Oberlausitz, which the locals call "Budyske hodowne wiki". Anyone who can say that properly after a mulled wine can have another.
www.bautzen.de

DRESDEN 580th Striezelmarkt

The legend among Saxon Christmas markets, and one of Germany's oldest and most famous. It has been held in the heart of Dresden since 1434.
www.dresden.de/striezelmarkt



A gift idea.



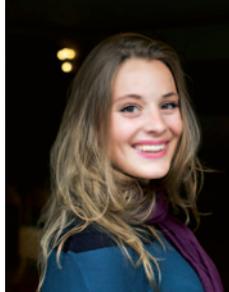
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Advent restaged

ACTRESS RUNA SCHAEFER GIVES ADVICE ON WHERE TO BUY STYLISH PRESENTS IN LEIPZIG, WHERE TO GO OUT AND WHERE TO STAY THE NIGHT

The international hipster community has a new Mecca: Leipzig. Berlin is out, say insiders. And “Hypezig” is in – young, creative, and always reinventing itself. Enough reason to check it out: Runa Pernoda Schaefer, 28, moved to Leipzig a year and a half ago, and has since been on the stage of the Schauspiel Leipzig, the city theatre. At Christmas time she is playing the title role in “Three wishes for Cinderella” – “in a very classic production, but my → **CINDERELLA** is a little more spirited than the original”. Here are her tips for an Advent trip in the culture capital, far away from the Christmas markets and the scent of mulled wine.



2



1

1 / CAFÉ TUNICHTGUT

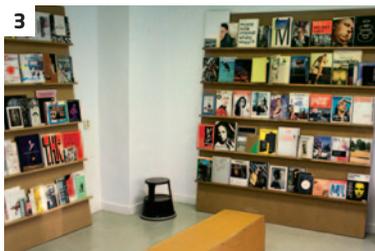
“My favourite – ideal for a drink in cosy atmosphere after a long day of shopping. And if “Silent Night” just isn’t your thing I would recommend “Stoned” just down the road: a wonderful, smoky punk pub.”
Kolonnadenstr. 5/7, 04109 Leipzig,
www.facebook.com/cafe.tunichtgut

2 / DAS ROTE PAKET

“Every day I drive past this design boutique on my way to the theatre. Surprising presents and Christmas decorations that aren’t at all kitschy – often from local designers.”
Gottschedstr. 22, 04109 Leipzig,
www.das-rote-paket.de

3 / MZIN

“If you prefer to give print products as a present, you will find what you are looking for in “mzin”. A trendy shop for art books, magazines as well as music.”
Kolonnadenstr. 20, 04109 Leipzig,
www.mzin.de



3

4 / MEISTERZIMMER

“Leipzig’s most quirky bed and breakfast in the cotton spinning mill, a former industrial site outside the centre. Neo Rauch and other artists have their studios here, and many galleries are based here too – and in between this are the rooms. Very exciting!”
Spinnereistr. 7, 04179 Leipzig,
www.meisterzimmer.de



4



5

5 / PECCATO

“A fashion store on the “Karli”, the Karl-Liebnecht street, where the art culture started. They have a range of crazy pieces and accessories – all good presents for your best friend.”
Karl-Liebnecht-Str. 67, 04275 Leipzig,
www.peccato.de





Follow the light

27

There are two special natural features that make the glow of lights and the market stalls in Altkötzschenbroda all the more enchanting: the romantic houses along the old village green form a picture-perfect backdrop. And because the town Radebeul, which Altkötzschenbroda is a part of, is a wine-growing town, genuine white vine-growers mulled wine is served here. But this seems to be not enough for the folk of Altkötzschenbroda – they have added two things more to the mix: everything at their Christmas market is about music and light. Children play as street musicians between the booths, and there is always a new group on the stage – sometimes peaceful music, sometimes jazz. Illuminated illustrations are put up between the trees and the stands and there is a nativity scene with lighted figures. Every year an artist is responsible for designing the path of lights along the village green. And so Radebeul is aglow in the first three weekends of Advent. www.elbland.de

Photos: Sebastian Aift



Stollen 2.0 from the Ore Mountains

LUTZ GEISSLER CONQUERED THE INTERNET WITH HIS BLOG. NOW HE IS A SUCCESS IN THE OFFLINE WORLD TOO

If you ask Lutz Geißler what he does for a living, he will look at you quite perplexed with his alert brown eyes. “I’m not allowed to call myself a baker – I haven’t trained for it”, he says wiping flour off the work surface. “Recipe developer, gastronomy and bakery advisor, book author and lecturer”, he then suggests. And of course “blogger”, as his internet page www.ploetzblog.de is still the foundation on which this varied career is built. “But how can you pack all that into one job title? No idea!”

So, why not start at the beginning. Lutz Geißler is now just in the process of making the starter dough for his stollen in his small but highly professionally equipped bakery in Sehmatal in the Ore Mountains – but six years ago he was a geology student at the Freiberg Mining Academy and struggling with his 500-page diploma thesis. To switch off, he made some dough in his kitchen for a couple of loaves of bread. Geißler experimented a little, and in order to organise his recipes so that he would not end up with a chaotic mountain of notes, he put them on his website, where before this, he had been putting down his thoughts about geology.

“I just liked seeing how something rises in the oven”, he explains. The understatement suits the 30-year-old. He is a quiet, almost reserved man. And his baking was not quite as inexperienced as he makes it out to be: Geißler wanted to make bread with plenty of natural flavour of its own, so he consistently used only organic products and as little yeast as possible. There is many a baker who is very heavy-handed with yeast to save time and money. But when it comes to baking, Geißler is first and foremost a scientist. Whatever he sets his mind to, he does with a great deal of energy. And when he puts his energy into something, he wants to really get into it.





This is evident when Geißler explains his recipe for the Ore Mountain stollen, the ingredients of which he is getting ready in various bowls. His most important tools are the scales and thermometer, and his conversation is spattered with terms like “protein structures”, “adhesive strands”, “gas formation” and “net weight of the starch molecules”. In summary and in layman’s terms, what Geißler is saying is this: to make sure the yeast rises properly in the fatty stollen he made a starter dough first. And because he does not like dry stollen he experimented a little: “I try to understand the chemical processes that go on in a dough,” he says, “and so I found the solution for a moister stollen in a `boiled flour paste’”. A type of pudding where the flour can hold more liquid than usual, which in turn makes the stollen more moist.

You are not going to find this boiled flour paste in a classic stollen. The mix of spices that Geißler adds to his stollen – cloves, cardamom, star anise, cinnamon and mace – on the other hand are widely available in the region, and with their light gingerbread taste are what distinguishes an Ore Mountain stollen from the → **DRESDNER STRIEZEL**. Geißler uses a mixer to knead his dough, then he forms it into two loaves, which he slits down the middle. Then they go into the top of the three ovens which are stacked on top of each other in the corner.

While the stollen is baking, Geißler explains what happened next. His fan community on the net who were using and commenting on his growing collection of recipes, grew quickly. Soon the blog was only about baking. More and more people were asking Geißler for advice when they were stuck with their baking attempts. And he answered in detail and fast – the thread on the net went back and forth. Soon someone offered the blogger the chance to give courses, then a publisher approached him to write a baking book – and it came to the point when Geißler, who was now working in marble mining, had to make a decision: “Do I want to be a geologist for eight hours a day and then spend every free minute in the bakery? Or should I take a leap of faith and dedicate myself entirely to baking?” Lutz Geißler took a leap of faith. Since July he, his wife and his children are living from what Geißler cooks up in the cellar of his little house.

The core temperature of the stollen cakes is 95 degrees centigrade after one hour, and now they can come out of the oven. Geißler lets them cool down, smothers them in melted butter, and one day later covers them in crystal and icing sugar. Then both loaves are packed and stored in a cool and dry place until Christmas Eve - definitely not to be eaten beforehand. Lutz Geißler, who is now running courses in Berlin and Vienna and whose recipes are being baked all over the world, is a child of the Ore Mountains, through and through. “And as long as they don’t cut off the internet here”, he is sure that “this is where I will stay.”

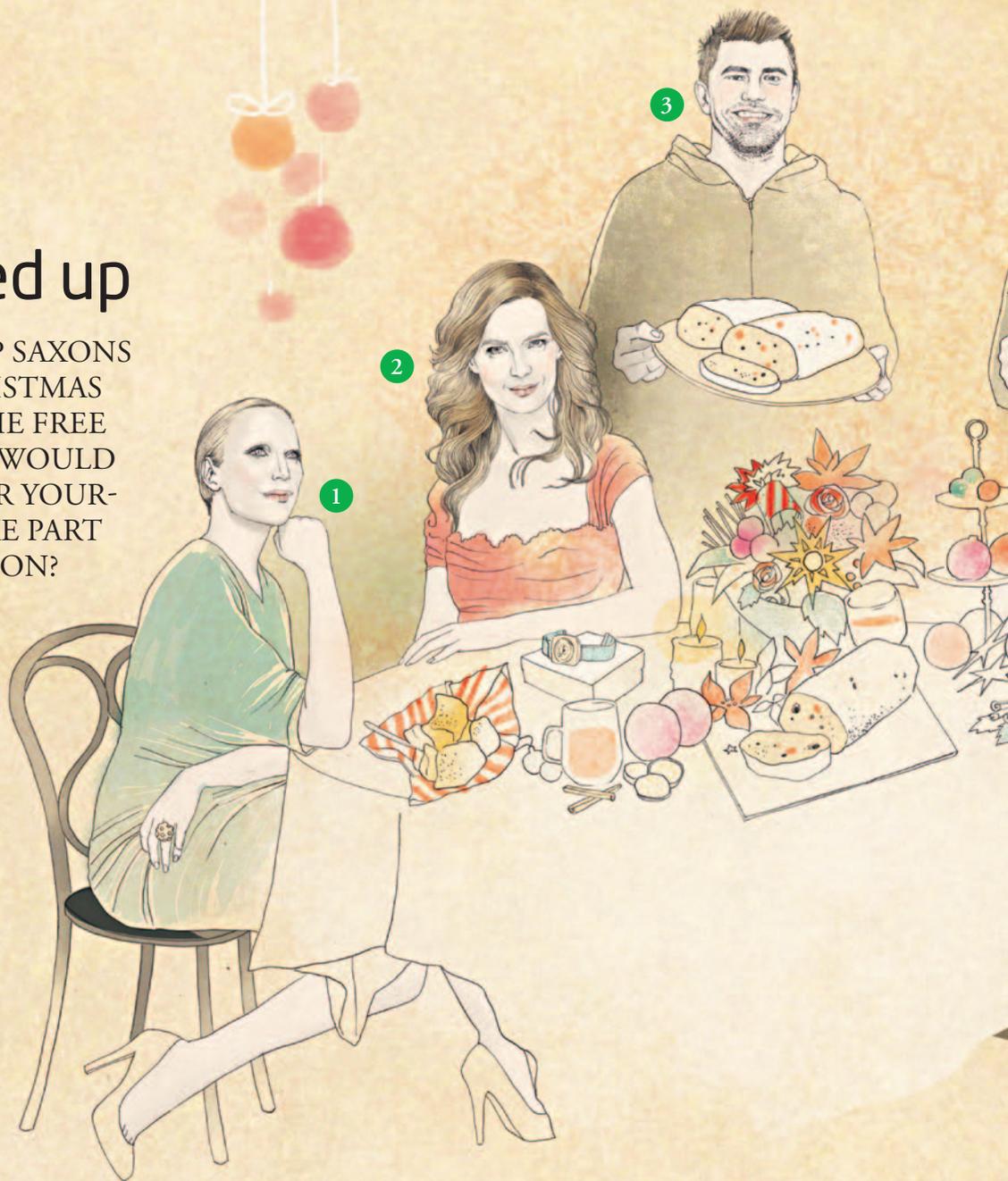
Lutz Geißler’s recipe for Ore Mountain stollen with the boiled flour paste is available exclusively at [www.ploetzblog.de/stollen](http://www ploetzblog.de/stollen)

Photos: Sebastian Airt

When blogger Lutz Geißler (30; very top left) experiments in his bakery in Sehmatal, he only uses the best organic ingredients (left). He gets his inspiration from old books (very top) and kneads his dough with passion and scientific accuracy (very top right). So it hardly comes as a surprise that the Ore Mountain stollen (top) is delicious.

All wrapped up

CELEBRITY AND VIP SAXONS RECOMMEND CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FROM THE FREE STATE. AND IF YOU WOULD LIKE A PRESENT FOR YOURSELF, WHY NOT TAKE PART IN OUR COMPETITION?



1 / NADJA MICHAEL (45), OPERA SINGER

"Every year I browse through Christmas markets all over the world, and again and again I tell my children with excitement about the → **KRÄPPELCHEN** at the Leipzig and Dresden Christmas markets. - "Would you like it with or without sugar, love?"

The little deep-fried sweet dough balls represent the innocence of childhood for me. This year I am rehearsing in New York at the Met. And because I know that Kräppelchen arrive soggy and tasteless if you send them by post (my parents have actually tried sending me some abroad) I would recommend baking delicious, golden Kräppelchen yourself to give as a special present."

2 / KATARINA WITT (48), TWICE OLYMPIA WINNER IN ICE SKATING

"Like every little girl I loved Christmas. The tree with the candles and tinsel strands (which my parents kept and ironed flat every year) decorated the front room. And even though I had usually already found the presents in my mum's linen cupboard, I looked forward to getting and handing out presents.

Nowadays the presents are less important, but spending time with my friends and family is all the more so. But here is some advice from the now-grown-up girl to all men out there: Surprise your wife with a beautiful watch from Glashütte Original! Her eyes will light up brighter than any Christmas star!"

3 / BENJAMIN KIRSTEN (27), GOAL KEEPER FOR DYNAMO DRESDEN FOOTBALL TEAM

I grew up in North Rhine Westfalia because my father Ulf joined Bayer 04 Leverkusen in 1990. For me Christmas started the minute stollen was put on the table - we always got it from home. When I returned to Dresden I tried them all - and my favourite is the stollen from Emil Reimann. And because it keeps well I eat it almost all year round.

At Advent I send box after box of stollen to people who have stood at my side throughout my career. So I still send a stollen parcel to Leverkusen, to the young talent section."

COMPETITION

Spend the weekend when St Nicholas comes (6th December) in Christmasland! If you know what the traditional stollen is called in Dresden and if you are lucky, you and one guest will be travelling with a 2nd class ticket from the Deutsche Bahn railway network to the Ore Mountain winter sport resort Oberwiesenthal, where Jens Weißflog will welcome you for a two night-stay at his hotel. And the ErzgebirgsCard will not only give you free entry to countless museums, castles and exhibition mines, but will also give you a ride on the historical Fichtelberg railway for free. A word of advice: The word you are looking for is hidden in this booklet. Send a stamped postcard with the solution to: Redaktion Weihnachtsland, c/o Ketchum Pleon, Goetheallee 23, 01309 Dresden, Germany. Or email the answer to: gewinnen@so-geht-saechsisch.de

Any natural person with the exception of employees of the Saxon state government and their families may take part.

Personal data are not passed on to third parties and are only used for the purposes stated and are then deleted.

Send by: 14 November 2014. The winner will be notified in writing.

The prize cannot be exchanged for the cash equivalent. All decisions are final.



4 / CHRISTIAN THIELEMANN (55), CHIEF CONDUCTOR OF THE DRESDEN STAATSKAPPELLE ORCHESTRA

"The Saxons love their traditions, and this is never more evident than at Christmas. There are enchanting hand-crafted items at many a little Christmas market, while countless concerts get you into the Christmas spirit. My advice on what to give as a present: Come and visit us, give your nearest and dearest a trip that includes tickets to the opera and concerts - they will discover things that will enrich their lives."

5 / DANIEL VON SACHSEN (39), PRINCE FROM THE HOUSE OF WETTIN

"I collect candle arches with hunting motifs and buy a new → **SCHWIBBOGEN** every year in Seiffen. On the first of Advent we put it in the window. Then there are also pyramids, wooden pictures from the Ore Mountains and - hanging from a hook especially put up for it in the gable - a Herrnhuter star. Last year I gave scarves from the Plauen silk weaving mill as presents. A mural of a mounted procession is woven into them, showing the Saxon regents from our family."

6 / STEPHANIE STUMPH (30), ACTRESS

"I look forward to all huddling together drinking apricot punch at the 'punch tower' at the Striezelmarkt. It is given a new finishing touch every year by the boss Patrick. I would give stollen from the Dresden Patisserie Müller as presents - and if your friends and family are watching their weight, I recommend tickets to the Dresden Theaterkahn theatre so they can burn calories laughing."

WE CREATE WORLD-CLASS STARS.
WITHOUT TALENT SHOWS.

**SIMPLY
SAXONY.**



SACHSEN

SAXONS ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT CULTURE AND THE ARTS: The St. Thomas' Choir of Leipzig and Dresden Kreuzkirche choir are two of the most famous boys' choirs in the world - and both come from Saxony. Our repertoire also includes renowned musical geniuses such as Bach, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Wagner. Music lovers at home and abroad are captivated by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Saxon State Orchestra. This rich tradition also means that Christmas is one of the musical highpoints of the year.

www.simply-saxony.com