

Craftsmanship

A theater for the ages

With paint, passion and gold leaf, a team of artisans restores an auditorium to Art Nouveau glory

MERANO, ITALY

BY HEIKE BLÜMNER

When visiting an Italian theater, never mention the “V” word.

That instruction came from Markus Scherer, the architect overseeing the interior renovations at the Stadttheater, also known as Teatro Puccini, the municipal theater in the small city of Merano in South Tyrol, a multilingual autonomous Italian province with Austrian roots.

“You are not allowed to say the word ‘violet’ because, for Italians, it brings bad luck to the theater,” he said, pointing at walls freshly painted in the color that shouldn’t be named. “We call it lavender; further down, the tone is aubergine.”

Superstition aside, Mr. Scherer and a team of restoration artisans have used the color and many others to recreate the theater’s original Art Nouveau décor, of which little trace could be found when the two million euro (\$2.26 million) project began in April 2024.

Now they are racing to finish before Aug. 29, when the theater is scheduled to reopen with a gala presentation of Mozart’s “Don Giovanni.”

Tim Rekelhoff, a historic building researcher hired by the State Monument Office of South Tyrol to work on the project, said the theater was one of the few remaining Art Nouveau-decorated houses in Europe: “The abundance of details is so overwhelming that it is impossible to take them in all at once.”

VIBRANT COLORS

Merano is a spa town, surrounded by



ater opened as the Stadttheater, it also is called Teatro Puccini, in honor of the famous composer who spent a night here in 1923.)

But these residents and visitors expected more than small town amusements, and in 1899 local officials responded by announcing an architectural competition for a theater.

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This policy is a danger to all Jews



Thomas L. Friedman

OPINION

Israelis, diaspora Jewry and friends of Israel everywhere need to understand that the way Israel is fighting the war in Gaza today is laying the groundwork for a fundamental recasting of how Israel and Jews will be seen the world over.

It won't be good. Police cars and private security at synagogues and Jewish institutions will increasingly become the norm; Israel, instead of being seen by Jews as a safe haven from antisemitism, will be seen as a new engine generating it; sane Israelis will line up to immigrate to Australia and America rather than beckon their fellow Jews to come Israel's way. That dystopian future is not here yet, but if you don't see its outlines gathering, you are deluding yourself.

The price will be high, if people don't resist Netanyahu's ugly, nihilistic Gaza strategy.

Fortunately, more and more retired and reserve duty Israeli Air Force



Uzhhorod, in the Transcarpathia region of Ukraine, which is the only part of the nation without a nighttime curfew. The region

