

## Wakker prize Small-town Swiss theatre group wins prestigious heritage award

Culture Human interest



The 2018 Wakker Heritage Prize went to the "Nova Fundaziun Origen" theatre and dance group. The group is based in the town of Riom in eastern Switzerland, population 316. (Keystone)

Switzerland's Wakker Prize for heritage preservation has been awarded to the theatre and dance group "Nova Fundaziun Origen", in the eastern Swiss canton of Graubünden, in recognition of its contributions to tourism and job creation.

It marks the first time in the award's history that the honour has gone to a cultural organisation instead of an entire community.

Nova Fundaziun Origen, which means "New Origin Foundation" in the Romansh language spoken in parts of Graubünden, is known for bringing works of theatre, music and dance to the stage that have their origins in biblical stories.

The Swiss Heritage Society, which awards the Wakker Prize every year, announced on Tuesday that it was recognising the organisation for its role in bringing tourism to a remote part of Graubünden and creating jobs, namely through its annual music and theatre festival – called "Origen" – active since 2006.

Nova Fundaziun Origen is at home in the Alpine village of Riom, in canton Graubünden. This video from a past edition of the Origen Festival shows a young European dancer taking part in the event making his way across town and into the barn that has been converted into theatre space.

festival dancer

Video promoting a dance festival

Ein Fehler ist aufgetreten.



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Schau dir dieses Video auf [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) an oder aktiviere JavaScript, falls es in deinem Browser deaktiviert sein sollte.

Riom is located northwest of the Engadin valley in canton Graubünden. The Swiss Heritage Society lauded the organisation for spreading its art and influence far beyond the borders of its valley.

Riom map

Map of Riom, Graubünden

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“What is produced in Riom echoes throughout the whole of Graubünden, Switzerland and far beyond the country’s borders,” the organisation wrote in a statement announcing the prize.

This year, the Swiss Heritage Society exceptionally awarded the Wakker Prize and accompanying CHF20,000 (\$20,341) in prize money to a cultural organisation as part of the nationwide 2018 Year of Cultural Heritage initiative. The accompanying special events taking place throughout the year across Switzerland are tied to the European Year of Cultural Heritage external link , launched by the EU and the Council of Europe.

Previously, the prize had gone to communities such as Rhinefelden along the Rhine River external link , Aarau in northern Switzerland and Sion, the capital city of canton Valais for innovative architectural and development projects. Last year’s winner was the town of Sempbach in canton Lucerne , which was recognised for its careful development of the town centre.

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