

Thema: Biohotel Stanglwirt

Autor:



“Those who come are our friends”

## A singing get-together at the Stanglwirt in Going

by Ursula Strohal

The last April afternoon in 2011, a Saturday, pleasantly warm. The car parks at the Stanglwirt in Going are filling up, more and more people are arriving in local costume, lederhosen, dirndl dresses. Instrument cases, hats, a couple of overnight bags. In front of the old inn the air hums with the joyful sound of greetings. Balthasar Hauser and Magdalena, his wife, are hosting their 123<sup>rd</sup> *Sängertreffen* and welcoming the singers and musicians.

“It’s something special every time”, says an impressive elderly man, happy to see friends again. Concluding words, but the arrivals have only just begun.

Joining in this legendary event all the way through for once. Knowing what this *Sängertreffen* is, how it came about, what is special about it and, almost incidentally, whether this musical meeting in Going really does carry on until it’s time for a pint next morning.

It’s still some time until the official start. Time to while away pleasantly on a terrace at the back, in view of a meadowy slope and the Wilde Kaiser. Silence.

A famous place. The “Biohotel” that never closes, towered over by the gable of the centuries-old inn. Anyone stretching out their arms touches state-of-the-art technical comfort and 400-year-old rafters. Those bathing in the grotto swim with the sharks, those dining in the “Alm” chew with the cows. All that is well-known far and wide. VIPs are attracted here: glamour is cold, the cowshed is warm. Paradisiacal the place that simultaneously provides what one needs and what one yearns for. And then the Stanglwirt family start to play, our host makes it

clear that this is a sample of music making at home and not a concert performance. And then everyone is quiet and, listening, equal and no-one is more equal.

Anna Hauser, Balthasar’s mother, was a cheerful woman and a marvellous singer, so it is said. With Lois at her side and Liesi, his sister, they formed a wonderful trio and set an example to other groups. How it all began is described by Georg Anker, former secondary school headmaster and one of Balthasar Hauser’s oldest friends, one of the *Stanglwirts-Buam* and chronicler of the *Sängertreffen*: “Lots of singers used to come to the Stanglwirt to listen to the trio and to sing their own songs. At one of these *Sängertreffen* in the old parlour Anna and Lois

hatched a plan to invite people to a singing get-together and this came about in the spring of 1949.”

Clear voices, pure intonation, two women and one man: in the adjacent room and here and now a group of three singers are tuning up for the evening. The practice is brief and concentrated.

Anna Hauser’s *Sängertreffen* was the first of its kind. At that time singing competitions were held in the Tyrol, strictly superintended by specialists in respect of their “authentic” repertoire, but Lois wanted none of this competing and he prevailed. Henceforth the *Sängertreffen* were held twice a year, in the spring and in the autumn, they became well-known and popular. The

Frauenreuther Dreigesang, Bayern



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Magdalena und Balthasar Hauser mit Andrä Feller, der durch den Abend führte.  
Magdalena and Balthasar Hauser with Andrä Feller who presented the evening.

idea was emulated and soon meetings of singers and musicians were held across the Tyrol and they have developed independently until today. The Tyrolean singers at Going were gradually joined by groups from Salzburg, Bavaria and the South Tyrol. Anker explains how the contacts with the Bavarians came about: "At the beginning of the Fifties the Stanglwirt people went to the 'Jörgele' inn in Innsbruck's old town on one occasion and sang some of their songs. Anderl Ostler, bobsleigh world champion from Garmisch, himself an enthusiastic singer, happened to be there and he was so impressed by the fine sounds produced by the trio that he promised to come to the Stanglwirt *Sängertref-*

*fen* with Bavarian singing groups and to make an appearance himself."

When Anna Hauser died suddenly in 1964, she left two minor children, Maria and Balthasar. They continued with the *Sängertreffen* get-togethers, as their mother would have wished. Balthasar became the successful leading figure at the Stanglwirt and after her marriage Maria became an innkeeper in Carinthia.

It is time. The old inn is full to bursting with people, listeners in the hall, musicians in the small ground-floor parlours and in the "Alm" on the first floor. However do they all find room and make their way through the narrow passage and the staircase?

The Hausers are omnipresent this evening, they mount the small, spruce adorned stage and greet the audience which includes numerous singers and musicians. Balthasar and Magdalena, both keen singers, became acquainted at a musical *Sängertreffen*. She comes from Bavarian Reit im Winkl, her uncles were well-known singers. At first Hauser looked for good groups himself in Austria, then Magdalena took over. She keeps in touch with the musicians, looks through the lists and listens to sample tapes. Folk music is essentially passed on orally. A traditional repertoire dominates the songs, airs and dances, unwritten rules apply, a purity that has its form, but is also strongly geared to feeling. New elements do, of course, appear and are heard, but folk music has to be "sincerely felt" in the traditional manner. This also applies in other ethnologies.

The famous *Alpbacher Bläser & Tanzmusik* open the proceedings, meanwhile joined by a harpist. Peter Moser plays with them this evening, he is a special old friend of the house. A folk music great. He says that the unusual atmosphere of this *Sängertreffen* comes from its long tradition.

They appear in rapid succession: singers in all different formations from different regions of the Alps, the strains of parlour music, delightful airs for wind instruments and lively dance music, the throaty sounds of male voices and the delicate tones of young girls, a blend of generations, friends and friends-to-be, active participants and listeners alike. People of different social and professional backgrounds, united by music, all interest-

Geschwister Derschmidt und die 4kanter Geigenmusik, Oberösterreich



Weidauer Buam, Tirol



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ed to hear unknown songs and airs, interested in each other.

Being allowed to appear here is not taken for granted. One sees the tension in the faces of the singers and musicians who march into the room, particularly the young ones. The older ones know that you do your best, but it is not a concert. It is a meeting of folk musicians who sing and make music not for remuneration, but for their own enjoyment and for the enjoyment of those who come, those of like mind. "Those who come are our friends", says Hauser. The *Schwegler vom Samerberg* make their entry with their obligatory drum-accompanied, high and short melodies, the *Buchwieser-Sextett* display their yodelling talents, *Hermann Huber* is there, that masterly virtuoso on the harmonica, the *Der-schmidt* family and the *Ottensheimer Dreigesang* have come from Upper Austria, so have the *4kanter Geigenmusik*, who present the "Stanglwirtswalzer" which they have composed specially for this 123<sup>rd</sup> Sängertreffen in spring 2011. The *Kohlbichl Ensemble*, likewise from Upper Austria, have thought up something new on their way here ...

The five female *Kaiser Stubenfliegen* sing about what made and makes women's everyday life easier, the *Weidauer Buam* and the *Goinger Weisenbläser* entertain the ear, the Bavarian *Duo Rehm-Altman* is fascinatingly down-to-earth, the yodelling of the *Salzsteirer Sänger* is marvellous and the young *Oberleitner Zwillinge* are highly gifted on their flugelhorns. The attractive young women from the South Tyrol, the *De Cater Sängerinnen*, also sing in Ladin. Then come the *Kärntner Vokalgruppe 3plus* with their delightful harmonies, gentle, intensive and melancholy. They also include a song in Slovene.

Outstanding singers and musicians all, all with their very own touch, their individual talents. Of course they have to "get it over" effectively, of course some temperaments are on the same wavelength as their listeners, but everyone appearing there has in common that their individuality is deeply rooted in the music. Folk musicians look at each other when making music, at least



Oben/Above: Fuschler Dreigesang, Salzburg  
Mitte/Centre: Brixenthaler Musik  
Unten/Below: Die Kärntner 3plus

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Vor und nach den Auftritten wird in den getäfelten Stuben und den offenen Räumen der Alm gemeinsam musiziert.

Before and after the performances there is music making together in the panelled parlours and in the open rooms of the "Alm".



the singers do. As yet they have not all been named: from Bavaria there were the *Drei Winke Gsang*, *Schwarzensteiner Sängerrinnen*, *Frauenreuther Dreigsang*, *Aufhamer Klarinettenmusi*, *Rot-Blau Musi*; from Salzburg the *Fuschler Dreigesang*; from Styria the *Hochfellner Musikanten* and *DreifachZithrig*, from Lower Austria the *St. Christophener Dreigesang*.

Almlied, Ausseer wedding march, polka, a melody expressing joy at the melting snow, a Marian song. All the tunes are rooted in their respective landscapes, they reflect the lives of the people, what moves them, their faith, their festivities. "Listen carefully to all

folk songs", admonished composer *Robert Schumann* in the middle of the 19th century. "They are a treasure house of the loveliest melodies and they open your eyes to the character of the various nations." That is still sensed by the hotel guests from abroad who join in the festivities, very quietly and with eyes wide.

In the Tyrol the cultivation of folk music is closely bound up with research into folk music, there is a tradition of this. In the 1960s the folk music and folk dance researcher *Karl Horak* published a fundamental contribution to Tyrolean folk music in appearance, function and stylistics. Recently, in a

directional publication, *Thomas Nussbaumer*, head of the department for Musical Folklore at the Innsbruck branch of the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg, examined "authentic" folk music and its characteristics, regional styles of music making, the cultivation of folk music and more recent manifestations of folk culture. The latter requires increasing attention, folk music is quickly undergoing changes. Thanks to training at the schools of music, many young people are enjoying their folk music, but they provide it in concert form. Back in 1978 the folk music authority *Walter Deutsch* wrote: "The vocal and instrumental forms that have been handed down orally are gradually losing their hitherto rurally-shaped, social background. The total urbanization of the landscape conditions a transformation in the function of our folk music which today is primarily used for representational purposes, as home music and as music for concerts and for conviviality in town and countryside. Consequently a marked reduction in type can be seen. On the other hand, this changing situation awakens musical needs that are covered by a new growth of songs and pieces of music."

Folk music and its cultivation are decisively changing. The immediate, "unwritten passing on of musical knowledge, skills, practices and 'compositions' over generations, decades and perhaps centuries" (folk music researcher *Gerlinde Haid*) can just still be experienced at carefully run *Sängertreffen* of singers and musicians.

Night has fallen. During the performances in the hall the other groups wait in the small panelled parlours on the ground floor and in the open rooms of the "Alm" upstairs, the oldest part of the building. You have to watch out for steps and ledges, bending beneath the heavy beams, pressing yourself into the embrace of the dark wood. Musicians draw close together. The hosts pass round food and drink, candles flicker on the tables. Two wind players from the Bavarian group play a haunting air. The Carinthians take up the tone, it is quiet, everything bathed in this special sound-intensive part-song. Flugelhorn bring a lighter, less earnest touch, interspersed with the harp, guitar, clarinet, zither, violin, dulcimer, double-bass, trumpets and trombones gleaming magically in the half-dark, and, of course, the accordion. It is getting going.

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Every spring, every autumn. "Because it's our life, like eating and drinking", says Hauser. "It's not a question of money. We can be host and folk music provider. We can give recognition and identity. We get to know nice people and their music, we can give a lot and we get a lot back. The giver is the get-ter."

The atmosphere in the old inn is incomparable, we are amongst ourselves and if you do not know each other that soon changes. The whole house resonates. But only at a few points in the pulsating life on the staircase do the unassuming melodies and mainly simple harmonies flow together. There is no competition, only listening, a musical coming closer, the exchange of songs and tunes and a great delight in sociability. Being entirely yourself and being together, warmth, unaffectedness, a home in music. The composer and music theoretician *Adolf Bernhard Marx* (1795-1866) expressed it to our ears somewhat loftily: "The folk song is the immortality of music".

What marvellous groups were and are closely bound up with the *Sängertreffen* in Going: the *Riedringer Sänger*, and the *Saalfeldner Sängerinnen*, the *Geschwister Hartbichler*, the *Geschwister Oberhöller* from the South Tyrol, the *Schönauer Musikanten*, the *Rodofen Musi*, the *Inntaler Sänger*, the

*Oben/Above: Dreifach Zithrig, Steiermark*  
*Mitte/Centre: Goinger Weisenbläser*  
*Links/Left: De Cater Sängerinnen, Südtirol*  
*Rechts/Right: Kaiser Stubenfliegen, Osttirol*



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Die Stanglwirtsfamilie mit Elisabeth, Maria, Johannes, Balthasar und Magdalena Hauser beschließt traditionellerweise den Abend.

Traditionally, the evening is brought to a close by the Stanglwirt family, Elisabeth, Maria, Johannes, Balthasar and Magdalena Hauser.

Reit im Winkler-Sänger, the Kirchtag Musik, the Stanglwirts-Dirndl, the Fischbachauerinnen, the Simon Geigenmusik, the Roaner Sängertreffen, the Tuxer Sänger, the Mayrhofner Trio, the Mitterhögl Hausmusik.

The cue is heard. "Andrä Feller of Kitzbühel", it says on the programme leaflet for the spring *Sängertreffen*. Another folk music great, leader of the Mitterhögl, producer, composer. He has stepped in as presenter, what luck to see him again with his knowledgeable, unassuming, humorous manner. No easy task to comper such an evening, to stay tuned to those appearing and to the audience, to gather information, to ensure that all goes well, surveying everything on two floors and, if necessary, calming things down occasionally. At first Anna Hauser regularly changed the presenters, but then she found the teacher *Sepp Landmann*, that 'unforgettable' presenter of the *Sängertreffen* between 1957 and 1987." He "soon grew beyond his role as announcer. He became the shaper of these meetings, exerting his influence and sometimes gentle pressure on the songs selected by the individual groups." Then came *Andrä Feller*, followed after 13 years by *Philipp Meikel*, singer, musician and presenter from the Salzburg area. He still "announces" today.

That is what makes these *Sängertreffen* so special: folk music is not cele-

brated here, it celebrates itself. Before an audience who are not a means to an end, but privileged to be here. Or like this: between Alm and hall a breather outside, no people, no music. The sudden sound of yodelling, first one part, then two, a delightful change in register between male chest voice and head voice. Breaking off just before the end, laughter, two brass players appear, place the mouthpiece of their instruments to their lips, simulating playing, returning to the house across the courtyard, dance musicians, members of a wind band, singers. "Yodelling now only serves for the enjoyment of people who love singing, apart from any functional link with certain occasions or circumstances."

There is a reason why a visit to the music making at the Stanglwirt *Sängertreffen* is by invitation only: "The first great onslaught of groups came in the early 1970s after the opening of the 'Stanglalm' on the first floor ... a phenomenon that no one had expected. The number of musicians practically exploded ... with a heavy heart it was decided only to let invited groups appear at the *Sängertreffen*. There was a danger that the meetings would become unmanageable." Hundreds were thronging there, so many musicians could not be catered for.

Traditionally, the final group to appear are the Stanglwirt family. Quite some achievement after all the work as host

to take up one's guitar, zither, dulcimer and accordion. Balthasar making music, his wife Magdalena at his side - she is the soul of the *Sängertreffen* - and with his three youngest children *Maria*, *Elisabeth* and *Johannes*. Daughter *Maria* and *Richard*, the eldest son, are devoted to the family business.

The carousel of musicians goes on for nearly five hours. The atmosphere, the enthusiasm have heated up the room. It empties, people go out into the fresh air. It is raining. The first wave of farewells. Midnight is long past.

Inside things continue. In the small parlours downstairs, up in the Alm. It is hot. In one of the small parlours a couple actually find room to dance. In the passage a man has been waiting for hours with unearthly patience for a friend for whom he is acting as chauffeur. A Tyrolean professional musician, member of one of the great Munich symphony orchestras, has come (without his instrument) in order to sense his roots. A young woman exchanges a song for the address of a clarinet teacher.

Then it is 4 a.m. and the plan to stay up all night is forgotten. Sunday morning: musicians making music, singers singing and innkeepers catering. A circle round the table here, a new duo friendship there, fine female voices in the arbour. The hard core have stayed up, those who live further away have stayed the night. Serenades everywhere, the never-ending thank yous. The farewells started long ago and take hours.

It is not easy to get talking to Balthasar Hauser here. But music is to be the only subject on the agenda. He stays. Something lights up. We know that he calls his new buildings "constructed folk music". What we did not know is that, in addition to the guitar, accordion, tenor horn and trumpet, he also plays the organ. "Taught myself, tried it out with great patience." There is still a great urge to try out here, one senses a deep bond with music that goes beyond simple music making. And one realizes that when Hauser plays his folk music it is only the tip of the iceberg.

Bildnachweis: Die Aufnahmen wurden uns freundlicherweise aus dem Archiv des Hotels Stanglwirt zur Verfügung gestellt bzw. stammen vom Innsbrucker Fotografen Egon Wurm.