

Expat's Voice

VIENNA IN ENGLISH – EIN VERSCHMITZTER BLICK
AUF DIE EIGENHEITEN DER STADT.

The (other) Sound of Music: Austrians like to show off their serious appreciation of **classical music**. But if you want them to erupt into joyful singing, you've got to play them some Austropop. And you may learn some Dialekt.

◆ VON RICHARD ASHER

It was two o'clock on a Friday morning. Last December. I'd followed a herd of colleagues to Bettel-Alm: a weaty underground cavern that has no business in Vienna's genteel 1st district. And with my Austrian colleagues, something was afoot. Eyes closed, they'd linked arms, and appeared to be having a transcendental experience brought on by a song about skiing. Proudly multi-national we may have been, but clearly our annual office party had just split along native/expat lines. It had something to do with the music. The locals looked like they'd known this song – *Schifoan* by Wolfgang Ambros – since the womb. They smiled drunkenly, swayed deliriously, and croaked along.

A few colleagues were not so enthusiastic. "I'm embarrassed to be Austrian right now," said a Styrian friend. In a nation known for high culture – opera, theatre, philharmonic orchestras – some clearly saw this pop genre as a dark secret that belonged right here: underground. But while some deny it and others acknowledge it only after a *Seidl* or two of *Stiegl*, Austropop can teach us much about what makes Austrians tick. It was during that same winter that I met my now-girlfriend in the well-loved Café Hawelka. Over a cup of tea, she informed me that there was a song about a naked man sitting in this very *Kaffeehaus*. Every Austrian knew it, apparently. As we parted ways at Stephansplatz, a link to that Georg Danzer classic pinged into my phone.

The music video, actually filmed on location in Hawelka, was as mad as you'd expect, leaving no doubt about the *Schmäh* at play. The intensely Viennese lyrics, well . . . they gave us a nice little get-to-know-you project. Over the weeks that followed, I got a musical *Dialekt* lesson on every date. We plundered YouTube for Danzer, Ambros and Rainhard Fendrich. The songs seemed mostly about losing your money on holiday (*"Strada del Sole"*), jumping in muddy puddles (*"Hupf in Gatsch"*) and, of course, corpses. Here an unidentified body in a *Gemeindebau* (*"Da Hofs"*); there an entire graveyard-full of them (*"Es lebe der Zentralfriedhof"*).

My girlfriend is one of those English-loving Teutonics who doesn't speak German except when she has to, but she couldn't resist a smile as she "translated" the lyrics into Hochdeutsch for me. German was one thing, Dialekt another. Thus it only seemed right that we celebrated a large part of her January birthday in the Zentralfriedhof, singing along with Ambros in a suitably secluded corner. I'd come a long way. ■■■

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METROPOLE

Tarock-Renaissa



Altes Spiel, neue Blüte: Man kann wieder mehr Varianten sehen. Es gibt zahlreiche Turniere und VHS. Über den Reiz des ältesten Kartenspiels.

Wenn man Tarockspieler fragt, was es ist, das sie an diesem Kartenspiel fasziniert, fällt stets das Wort Variantenreichtum. Gemeint sind die vielen Möglichkeiten, wie man die vier Farben und die zusätzliche fünfte mit den römischen Ziffern einsetzen kann. Mit sehr schlechten Karten lässt sich ein Spiel ebenso gewinnen wie mit ausgezeichneten: Es kommt darauf an, was man aus den zwölf Karten macht, die man in der Hand hält.

Aber auch die Geschichte des Tarocks ist ein Grund, warum um den Erhalt gekämpft wird: Es gilt als das älteste Kartenspiel der Welt, wurde vor rund 500 Jahren in Norditalien entdeckt. In der Dokumentation von Dietmar Schopenhauer geht es nicht nur um Tarock, sondern auch um die Geschichte des Kartenspiels in Wien.