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Music

Mountain blues

Folk music and traditional sound are very fashionable in Switzerland at present. This is reflected by the arrival in the shops of several new CDs. Kornhaus Burgdorf and the Swiss Folk Music Association (GVS) have issued a collection of numbers from the last two decades under the title "Swiss Folk Music down the Years". This provides a very good overview of the works of contemporary Swiss musicians.

The collection includes individual singers and groups, choruses great and small, yodlers, dance bands, home and palm court music, bandellas, wind music and brass bands with hunting horns. It contains a judicious mixture of concert-hall and folk music. Instead of arrangement in categories, there is constant change in mood and structure. But all the music is associated in some way or another with age-old customs, most of which are still in existence.

Musician and film director Cyrill Schläpfer dedicates his new "Ur-Musig" CD "with respect, to the traditional musicians, mountain players close to nature and those rough-hewn and difficult characters still found in places like Appenzell, Muotatal and throughout central Switzerland". This makes it pretty obvious what the CD contains: much yodelling and singing, dancing and playing of every description. As on another CD from the same source, "s'Glüüt", the cattle go to the mountain pastures and in and out of their shippons. And amongst many other instruments we hear the Jew's harp, the Swiss mouth organ, the dulcimer and the fiddle. Not to forget the array of fine voices: joyful or sad, these yodel and "juuz" their hearts away – even if they grate on the ears of some citydwellers – and sometimes spit out scraps of the rawest and most obscure central Swiss dialect you can imagine. But you don't

need to be a super-patriot or afflicted with homesickness to find fascination in Cyrill Schläpfer's latest CDs. They have made him the painter of a musical landscape which is still found amongst the ravines and the wide crevasses of the Swiss Alpine world. Legend, mountain and music go together. This is mountain blues, a true document of Switzerland.

Also produced by Cyrill Schläpfer is Christine Lauterburg's CD "Echo der Zeit" (Echo of the Time). The Bernese yodeller and actress has enlivened natural yodelling with dulcimer chimes and disco sound. The result is a musical pitch which has found both friends and foes amongst its hearers. ■

"Ur-Musig" (double CD, Sfr. 55.–, plus postage), "s'Glüüt" (Sfr. 30.–, plus postage), "Swiss Folk Music down the Years" (4 CDs Sfr. 79.– plus post-

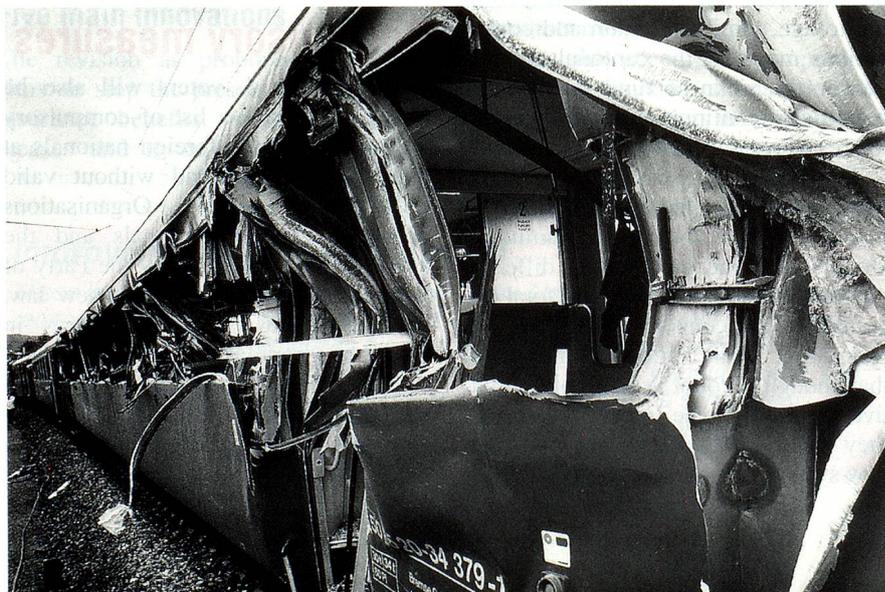


age) and "Echo der Zeit" (Sfr. 30.–, plus postage) may be ordered from: Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH–3000 Berne 16.

Unlucky streak for Swiss Federal Railways

Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) has been having a bad run. A few days after 14 wagons laden with toxic chemicals crashed in Lausanne, the main hall of the station there took fire – for as yet undetermined reasons. In addition, there have recently been more than a dozen accidents involving collisions and one explosion. In Däniken last March a collision between a train and a building crane cost eight lives, with 15 injured. In 1992, a collision between two trains at Oerlikon resulted in one death, with

eight hurt. Following the series of accidents, the Railway Workers' Union has warned against further job cuts. Union President Charly Pasche says that SBB rationalisation has had negative consequences on railway safety. During the last three years, SBB is said to have cut about 3,000 workplaces. But top management has recently announced that the 500 most dangerous signalling points in Switzerland are to be reinforced by a new train control system costing Sfr. 40 million. ■



Point of view

"Switzerland is a mosaic of small states. People are closed in, protected. There is no wide horizon. People lift up their eyes to the mountains and are content".

Charles Dutoit, the Swiss conductor now living in Canada.

Book and fly

Good news for travellers. As of June 1, 1994, Swissair passengers no longer have to reconfirm their return flights. Once a reservation is made, all dates remain valid. This is part of the Swiss airline's efforts to make travelling simpler. But it still recommends that where possible contact addresses should be given both in Switzerland and at destinations. The innovation once again puts Swissair ahead: most other companies require reconfirmation at least 72 hours before the return journey.

Many airlines use Zurich Airport. Thanks to a huge extension, it will be able to take 12% more flight movements by the year 2002. This could mean up to 59% more passengers and 70% more freight. Total cost is estimated at Sfr. 2.1 billion. The project includes a third terminal and an underground railway connecting all three. ■

School reform

Bilingual schools are on the way. Parent pressure has put bilingual education on the agenda in Cantons Valais and Fribourg. At the infant and some other levels, a number of bilingual methods are at present being tested. At Sierre, the first completely bilingual school year in a state school has already started. The course will last seven years.

Schaffhausen is the first canton in eastern Switzerland to try out school-free Saturdays. The test includes an opinion poll which will be scientifically evaluated. ■

No telephoning while driving

A blow to mobile telephone users: The Federal Supreme Court has decided to prohibit the use of telephones while on the move, if a driver has to hold the phone with one hand or between shoulder and neck. Those caught can expect to be fined Sfr. 40.-. ■

Deep trouble on the Zurich restaurant scene

The biggest corruption scandal that has ever hit Switzerland is a matter of some Sfr. 2.4 million. It took about ten years for Raphael Huber, 52, head of the economic department in the Zurich cantonal finance administration, to amass the wherewithal for a luxurious property in the Tuscan countryside. The senior

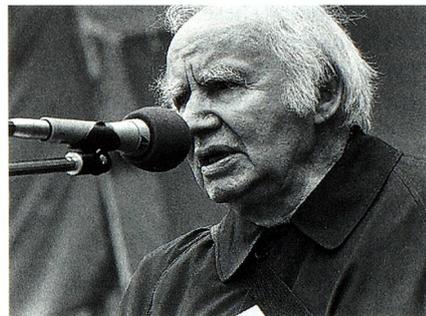
official was responsible for awarding restaurant permits and alcohol licences.

The 'bistro connection' will soon come before the courts. The bribery scandal around Raphael Huber involves not only Rudi Bindella, the owner of numerous restaurants, but also, and more surprisingly, Beat Curti, the big publisher and retailer. The Zurich district prosecutor accuses Curti of material corruption. He is said to have paid Huber a total of Sfr. 111,000.-. The Curti empire includes important newspapers, such as Weltwoche, Bilanz, Beobachter, Sport and Züri-Woche. So far eight people are under investigation. ■

Over seven million people

In late summer, Switzerland crossed the threshold of seven million inhabitants. At the beginning of 1984, the country counted 6.97 million residents, including 1.32 million foreign nationals. Women made up 50.7% of the total. Present population density figures indicate that in Switzerland there are 164 inhabitants for every kilometre of land (in comparison with 92 in Austria, 225 in Germany, 367 in Holland and 19 in Sweden). It is estimated that in the next decade Switzerland's population will reach 7.8 million. ■

Personal



Robert Jungk, the author and future researcher who was particularly appreciated in Switzerland, has died in Salzburg at the age of 81 after a serious illness. After the Nazis came to power in Austria, he emigrated to the United States – to return to Europe in the 1960s. In 1965 he became head of the Institute for Future Research in Vienna and was a passionate opponent of nuclear energy. He claimed to be in favour of a humane and peaceful future and took part in the longstanding controversy about Swiss nuclear power stations.



The day after her 64th birthday Swiss writer **Rosmarie Buri** died of cancer. She was particularly known for two books, "Dumm und Dick" (Stupid and Fat) – which sold 300,000 copies during her lifetime – and "Kuhfladen und Zuckerguss" (Cow Pats and Sugar Icing). Her popularity was explained by the fact that she "spoke the

language of the people" and took as her subject the lot of the despised and rejected.

Hans Zoss, today aged 44, was pastor in Berne for ten years, a UN observer in ex-Yugoslavia for one year and from time to time went to Gabon to run the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Lambarene. On November 1, 1994, he will become director of Thorberg Prison. He has been involved in a number of social projects and sees his new job as "a contribution to society". "For me", he says, "Thorberg is not a problem, since the penal system is part of society's commitment".



A hefty price for forgery and fraud: The Federal Supreme Court has given **Hans W. Kopp** a conditional one-year prison sentence. The husband of former Federal Councillor Elizabeth Kopp has tried to dismiss reports about the dark side of a brilliant career as "total invention". This will now be more difficult. If the Lausanne appeals tribunal had its way though, the public would never have heard about the judgement against the controversial business lawyer. In this particularly explosive case, the court had tried to prohibit the media from mentioning names. ■

*Texts: Alice Baumann
Photos: Keystone*