The Swiss-Germans in Melbourne: Some Considerations on Musical Traditions and Identity[1]

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Something should be made clear at the very outset: the work described and summarized in the following pages is not intended to stand entirely on its own. It is the initial segment of a larger project to be developed over the next few years. I hoped that this first segment would show potential and, therefore, would encourage the continuation of my project. I think it does, which is why I wish to make my initial findings already available. These findings may, however, be viewed in a somewhat different light later, when the French-Swiss and the Italian-Swiss communities of Melbourne are examined and when the musical attitudes of the Swiss-German community are compared to those of the Austrians and Germans who settled in the city.

Why look for European musical traditions in Melbourne?

According to a recent publication, over 50 different nationalities are represented in Melbourne.[2] That is not hard to believe. It only takes a city tour, listening to the languages spoken by passengers on trains and trams or by people in stores and shopping centers, to realize the extraordinary richness and vitality in languages and cultures of the city environment. One finds a human landscape considerably different from the one offered by American

2 Jack Collins, Letizia Mondello, John Breheney & Tim Childs, *Cosmopolitan Melbourne – Explore the World in One City*, Sydney, Big Box Publishing, 2001.

cities, in which a number of national communities are represented but where
– with the exception of «ethnic neighborhoods» – wherever one goes, the
language heard is always English.[3] In Melbourne, in contrast, language
diversity is part of the city soundscape, even though English constitutes
the dominant ingredient. Such a complex cultural make up as one finds in
Melbourne makes the anthropologist very curious. Immigrant communities
are, in fact, an extremely intriguing phenomenon for the study of cultures,
traditions, and – of course – musical traditions as well.[4]

    Naturally, cultural and national traditions are more often investigated
in the territory in which they developed, and rightly so. However, no less
indicative of their deep-seated attitudes is the study of how such traditions
react to transplantation. That is because immigrant groups often reveal
aspects of their original culture that are not as visible in their land of origin.
In fact, an immigrant community often finds itself in a condition in which
traditional forms of behaviour are challenged by the new environment; the
choice is usually either to abandon or adapt them. It is at moments such as
these when the people themselves become aware of which elements of their
original culture are regarded as essential, (i. e., not amenable to compromise)
and which are open for negotiation. Research in ethnomusicology has often
revealed that music found in the host country is more easily accepted when
there is a strong desire to become part of and adapt to the new environment.
At the same time so-called «marginal survival» is often detected: when
immigrant communities retain culture and behavior patterns (i. e., language,
music, cuisine, etc.) in older forms that do not undergo the evolutionary

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3   One exception is of course the city of Miami, Florida, which has become considerably
     more Hispanic over the past thirty years, to the point – so believes Samuel Huntington –
     that English-speaking Americans may even have difficulty getting by in everyday life
     (Samuel Huntington, *Who We Are: Challenges to American National Identity*, Simon &
     Schuster, 2004).
4   Since the policy for a white Australia was officially abandoned in 1973, Australia has
     become one of the most cosmopolitan countries on earth.
5   «Marginal survival» is not to be confused with the concept of «Rückzugsgebiet». During
     the early XXth century, the *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft* (or «comparative musicology»)
     utilized the term *Rückzugsgebiet*, to indicate territories in which older (or supposed older)
     forms of tonal relationships and polyphony had survived (e. g. singing in parall fifths in
     Iceland, possibly a survival of Medieval Organum, pentatonic melodic structures in the
     traditional music of Eastern Europe, etc.). So-called «marginal survival» occurs in what
     anthropologists call a «defined» population: a group of people somewhat geographically
     self-contained – that of an island would be an extreme example – and where people do
     not generally go outside of their area, except for very short periods of time. Other fac-
     tors besides geographical isolation may help in keeping a population self-contained, for
     instance intermarriage and/or a strong sense of ethnic identity. It is with social groups
     of this kind that one can often find homogeneous, and usually old, musical as well as

process taking place in their land of origin.[5] Of course, no oversimplification is ever possible; every case is a little different and a substantial body of literature exists (in ethnomusicology, sociology, and immigration studies, etc.) that deals with such questions. This extensive literature notwithstanding, our comprehension of migration, from an anthropological and musico-anthropological point of view, remains quite sketchy. The Australian city of Melbourne, with its diverse human landscape, is ideally suited to furthering this understanding.

Music is an especially significant part of human culture.[6] It is hardly possible to overestimate its importance. The experience of migration does not make music any less relevant – quite the opposite. That is why I would like to suggest that musical behaviour should always be considered in any study of immigration, because musical tastes and practices (and how they change over the course of time) are especially revealing and may help gauge how easy or difficult it is for immigrant groups to strike a functional balance between assimilation and co-habitation on the one hand, and the maintenance of a sufficient number of cultural traits that make their national origin still worth identifying with on the other.[7] Each one of us carries along a personal collection of sounds and musics that are part of the fundamental layer of our memory and constitute a significant element of our sense of identity. Musical memories tell us a lot about people, not only because memory is the foundation of identity (if I do not remember who I was, then I do not really know who I am either), but also because memory is an active and selective process (a work in progress) affected by factors capable of gradually re-shaping it in the course of life.[8] Needless to say, such factors have a lot to do with the way people feel about their present self and their past.[9] Memory can also be reshaped by the renewed contact

non-musical traditions (for instance, in a city obsessed with culinary fashions, the fondue never went out of style among Melbourne's Swiss community; the Swiss Club of Melbourne in Flinders Lane, has persisted with the fondue, regardless of whether it is deemed in or out of fashion; this being a Swiss national dish, members would be remiss if they let fickle food trends knock it off the lunch or evening menu).

6   Anthropologists who traditionally deal with religions, power-structure, family relations, etc., often underestimate the central importance of music as a symbol and as a social practice.

7   Marcello Sorce-Keller, «Musica come rappresentazione e affermazione di identità», in Tullia Magrini (ed.), *Universi sonori – Introduzione all'etnomusicologia*, Torino, Einaudi, 2002, pp. 187–210.

8   Memories are not at all like photographs, stored forever in our brain, but rather dynamic configurations susceptible to change according to condition and convictions of recall. Such dynamic configurations can be complemented or replaced by others that are completely invented and yet similar to and as believable as the true ones (Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*, Cambridge Univ. Press 1932).

with the homeland through: (a) successive waves of immigration and communication; (b) deliberate cultural policy of the homeland to keep in touch with its citizens abroad; and (c) the variable ease and frequency of visits home. These are all elements capable of influencing form and content of cultural memory.[10] That «identity» is not a stable condition but rather the result of continuous work on our part can easily be seen in the effort it takes for us to resume our conscious life each morning, because we are reactivating our «identity»; when we overdo it with alcohol and do or say things we would not usually say, our friends tell us afterwards we were not really «ourselves» – because our «identity» was temporarily absent.

In this article I will describe how and with what kind of conscious decisions and activities the Swiss-German community of Melbourne is keeping some musical traditions of its home country alive; in other words, how the past is made to be, to some extent, part of the present. Why the Swiss-German, of all people, should have become the object of this investigation is something that deserves an explanation, because such an explanation will shed additional light on the cultural make up of the city of Melbourne.

Why the Swiss-Germans?

In 1839 the Swiss-born aristocrat Sophie la Trobe (Sophie de Montmollin, prior to her marriage to Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe) arrived in Melbourne, the capital city of the state of Victoria. In her wake many other Swiss came to settle in Victoria. In the same year, three Swiss-French vine dressers from Neuchatel arrived in the region; they were followed by others who planted the first vineyards in the Geelong area. By the 1860s, Lilydale (an area east of Melbourne) was settled by a second group of Swiss-French vine dressers. A third settlement was established much further north in Rutherglen in the 1870s.[11]

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9   It is not uncommon to find people who were so poor and destitute in their home countries that they do not wish to remember much of their past life once they find a new home abroad, especially traditional songs, which may be bound to memories of hard work and starvation.

10 This seems to be an intriguing aspect of the Maltese community in Melbourne, whose members often go back to their original home for up to a couple of years before returning again to Australia.

11 Susanne Wegmann, 1989, op. cit., pp. 14 ff.

Large-scale migration to Australia actually began during the Gold Rush, around 1850, when Victoria attracted, among others, a large number of male Swiss-Italians who were fleeing the Canton Ticino and the Italian-speaking valleys of Graubünden. Descendants of these early settlers still live in Victoria and celebrate their heritage by hosting an annual Swiss-Italian Festa.[12]

The 1891 Census records show 1.317 Swiss-born living in Victoria. Thereafter the population declined, despite the arrival of Swiss-German tradesmen in the early 1900s. In spite of this decline, several organisations were established, including the Swiss Benevolent Society in 1889 and the Helvetia Social Club in 1889. In 1924, the Helvetia Social Club was replaced by the Swiss Club of Victoria, which is still active today. Choirs, folk dancing groups, soccer clubs, rifle associations and yodelling clubs were active as well.

Very few Swiss migrants arrived in the first six decades of the 1900s. Some of those who did, worked for Swiss companies that opened branches in Australia; others were employed by Australian companies interested in skilled Swiss workers. However, unlike citizens of other European nations, there was no significant influx of Swiss until well after World War II (predominantly during the period 1960–1980). Today there are just over 2.000 Swiss-born living in Victoria, plus some 2.300 who are second-generation Swiss-Australians. A large percentage of them are employed as managers, professionals, or highly skilled trades people; one quarter have university degrees or diplomas, which is a significantly higher rate than one can find among the general population. Moreover, as one would expect, the multilingual tradition of Switzerland has helped the Swiss to become quite proficient in English, while often retaining the ability to speak one, two or even three of their national languages.[13]

I chose to begin my project by investigating the Swiss-German community primarily because the community is relatively small, although not insignificant. With a limited amount of time to engage in interviews and attend social events, it was possible to get a representative sample and a good overall sense of the community's characteristics in a few months. It is an

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12 This annual festival, which is usually held during the first weekend of May, celebrates the Swiss-Italian contribution to Daylesford and Victoria with a view to preserving the culture for tomorrow. It features historical displays, art, local wine, food, pasta sauce competitions and a band of dedicated alphorn players and yodellers. Cinemedia also contributes a film festival. Some of the traders who are involved are 4th and 5th generation Swiss-Italians.

13 S. Wegmann, 1989, op. cit., page 19–39.

organized community, made up of people living mostly in the urban area (the city itself and the so-called inner-city-suburbs), who are quite easy to reach. The French-Swiss community, in contrast, is much too small to be the object of a pilot study aiming at further developments, and the Swiss-Italian community is widely spread across the state of Victoria and would have required more time than was available on this occasion. Moreover, as it represents the older layer of migration, most of the Swiss-Italians were born in Australia. Other national communities, such as the Italians or the Greeks, are simply too large and would require a considerable amount of time and financial resources to be adequately surveyed. The Maltese community is similarly small, but its study would have to take into consideration an unusual pattern of behavior: community members who return to Malta for years at a time before returning to Melbourne.

For these practical reasons, I chose to begin my work with the Swiss-German community. I set out to meet people, ask questions, mix in informal conversation and try to steer it to topics of interest for this venture, and also to attend social and musical events organized by the Swiss-German community and by the Swiss Consulate of Melbourne. I was curious to discover the extent to which musical memories, habits and tastes can tell us something about the sense of identity of these Swiss emigrants. In other words, do the Swiss-Germans living in Melbourne remember (and/or like to remember) some of the music they once heard in their land of origin, and do they still practice that music in some way or form, active or passive (e. g., do they own recordings, attend performances of visiting Swiss Folk ensembles, or listen to music on radio, satellite TV, etc.)?

I interviewed some 70 people, attended quite a number of Swiss social events, musical performances, rehearsal sessions, and had casual conversations with many others. Formal interviews were not entirely formal; although a questionnaire had been prepared, it was flexibly followed as it seemed more important to let the interviewee talk about the things he/she felt more strongly about. In several cases I was also invited by Swiss people to visit their homes, and then it was possible to examine family record collections (CDs and LPs) and even notice whether *Kuhglocken* (i. e. «cow bells») or Alphorns were kept as elements of the decor! In sum, it was the combination of all these activities that yielded the information that gives substance to this essay.

Swiss-German Music «Down Under»

The Swiss Club of Victoria is the main meeting place for the Swiss people living in the State of Victoria and, in particular, for the Swiss-German.[14] It is centrally located and therefore turned out to be quite a vantage point. At present the club has some 350 members and is a key organizer of events around the Swiss-Australian calendar, as well as of combined events hosted by the German-speaking community, such as the *Oktoberfest*. Membership to the Club includes a quarterly newsletter, published in English, *Swiss Club News*.

The Swiss Club is a remarkable association whose history is almost one and the same as the history of the Swiss migration to Australia.[15] What makes it especially interesting is that it functions as the focal point around which several other groups revolve, officially independent but in practice veritable sections of the Club. These include special interest groups such as the *Trachtengruppe Schwyzergruess* (exhibiting traditional costumes), which has been part of the Melbourne Swiss Community for many years, and the *GEP Chapter of Australia* (an association of former students of Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology). Four of these groups are musical and therefore play a significant role in the community.

The *Swiss Folkdance Group Alpenrose* was formed in Melbourne in the mid 1940s and has been under the guidance of Sylvia Hochuli since 1994. Since dancing requires music, and the particular music that the members of the *Alpenrose* dance to is the result of very conscious choices made by its director, this organization should be counted among the musical groups. The *Alpenrose*'s repertoire consists of traditional folk dances, ranging from polkas, marches, waltzes, mazurkas and the schottisch. The dances are from most of the cantons of Switzerland and the costumes are from St. Gallen.[16] The group enjoys a busy schedule, performing at Swiss functions, multi-cultural festivals, charitable venues, not necessarily solely in the Melbourne area.

The *Yodel Choir Matterhorn*, was founded in 1969. In this organization, roles are very clearly allocated: Marco Unternährer (President and Second Tenor), Paul Voumard (Choir Leader and First tenor), Urs Zuber (First Yodler), Godi Schmuki (Second Yodler), Bruno Frick (Second Bass), Sepp

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14 The Swiss Club of Victoria is located at 89 Flinders Lane, Melbourne VIC 3000.

15 For more information about it, see «Social organizations», in S. Wegmann, 1989, op. cit., pp. 80–90. A history of the club since its foundation is in preparation.

16 How the dances were learned and adapted, how a certain sense of faithfulness to the tradition is intended and maintained, are interesting questions, but beyond the limited aim of this survey.

Goldiger (Second Tenor), Chris Hostettler (First Tenor), Werner Küffer (First Tenor), Ilya Meyer (2nd bass), Walter Schellenberg (First Bass), Beat Stuber (Second Tenor), Erwin Weinmann (First Bass), Beat Zaugg (Second Tenor). Urs Zuber and Godi Schmuki are pretty much irreplaceable, because they are the only ones in the group who know how to yodel.

The *Swiss Companion Singers* are directed by Tony Hoffmann, a versatile professional musician.[17] Their repertoire is quite interesting because, although the majority of folk or folk-like songs (*Volkstümliche Lieder*) they perform belong to the German tradition (e. g., melodies by F.-F. Huber), others are in French (e. g., arrangements by Abbé Josef Bovet), in Italian and in Raetho-Rumantsch.[18] The arrangements are often by Tony Hoffmann himself, especially when he needs to adapt two-voice settings for four voices. Both the *Yodel Choir Matterhorn* and the *Swiss Companion Singers*, are quite obviously amateur choirs, whose members do not all read music and who, therefore, learn their parts by imitation. These people, also, are not the youngest members of the community, but rather active professionals in their 40s and early 50s, with the addition of a few older ones. They all were born in Switzerland and, for this reason, exactly the perfect target for my investigation.

Different is the case of the *Kapelle Gruetzi Mitenand* (the English Word for *Kapelle* is «band») because of the younger age of some of its members and the specific instrumental training they possess. This band of 8–10 members is lead by John Wanner, a Melbourne-born professional musician, son of a Swiss father. The band plays *Schweizerische Volksmusik* every week at the Swiss Club (when, on the first Thursday of the month, the Club opens its doors to younger members of the community and the evening features Swiss bands, music, and food) and at other venues such as the Austrian Club. It is well known in Switzerland, but much less abroad, that what the general public calls *Volksmusik* is actually a cluster of related styles ranging from rather traditional music (still largely orally transmitted) to a type of popular music with folkish coloration that is extremely popular (although not un-

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17   Tony Hoffmann (originally Toni) is a professional double bass player, active in symphony orchestras as well as in smaller groups, who turned out to be a passionate conductor of the Swiss Companion Singers, in 1990. He played double bass for some twenty years in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He came to Australia when he was 22 years old, with just a suitcase and his instrument.

18   The repertoire is selected by Tony Hoffmann from printed folk song collections. Quite often the versions he gives to his choir do not exactly match what his singers remember from their youth, which can be problematic when putting the choir together. Of course, nothing to be surprised about, songs that live in the oral tradition constantly appear in many variants.

conditionally so) in Switzerland, Austria, Bavaria and, to a degree, Germany at large.

> It may be worth pointing out to the non-Swiss reader that in German-speaking Switzerland *Volksmusik*, as recognized by non-specialists, is a musical genre equally popular in Germany and Austria. It is a type of *Volksmusik* that has little or nothing in common with the folk music that folklorists and ethnomusicologists usually consider as such. It is therefore better referred to as *neue Volksmusik* (which helps understand it as a musical genre quite in touch with modernity: it uses electric guitars, jazz and country style elements, along with the diatonic accordion, *Schwyzerörgely*, and it is disseminated through CDs, TV and radio programs). It is also referred to, more appropriately as *volkstümliche Musik* (folk-like music). All this is in some way comparable with the situation in Serbia and Montenegro where repertoires and genres in indigenous styles are generally referred to as *narodna musika* (i. e., «national», «people's», or «folk» music); modernized, stylized versions of this music, which often incorporate some features imported from the West, or elsewhere, are occasionally referred to as *nove narodne pesme* («new folk songs») or *novokomponovana narodna muzika* («newly composed folk music»). Since March 5, 1981 this type of Germanic *Volksmusik* has been popularized by the TV program *Musikantenstadl*, whose *deus ex machina* is the Austrian singer and showman Karl Moik. This program is intensely disliked by high-brow audiences. It is however so widely known that one would be hard put to find someone in the German-speaking world who has never heard of it. In fact, the program is simultaneously broadcast by Austrian, Swiss-German, and German television stations. It should be added that the program develops in front of a real audience, with people often sitting at tables while they eat and drink beer. Each show takes place in a different Austrian, Swiss, or German city. Singers and groups active in this musical genre (such as Hansi Hinterseer, Maria und Margot Hellwig, Heino, Patrick Lindner, Franzl Lang, die Klostertaler, Stefan Mross, Stefanie Hertel, die Paldauer, etc.) are totally unknown outside of the German-speaking world.

The music consists of simple songs, in terms of harmony (tonic, dominant, diatonic, syllabic, triadic melodies), performed by small bands, whose members dress up in traditional costumes. A variable number of instruments may be present: in addition to electric keyboard and guitars, one can find the more traditional diatonic accordion (*Schwyzerörgely*), the *Hackbrett* (a type of plucked dulcimer), double bass, clarinet and fiddles. Some of the bands are identified as comprising family members. The bands may include singers (also wearing traditional attire, especially if they are women), quite often a soloist or a duo (man and woman, or two women). Some yodel may be included, but it is by no means overdone as Groucho Marx might have wished (every time he met a Swiss he would unfailingly ask: «do you yodel?»). Song texts refer to simple and unproblematic love stories, or describe the beauty of the Alpine landscape and unproblematic village life. This repertoire brings to the fore a strongly idealized common denominator

of simple rural life, the memory of which is cherished in equal measure by the Swiss, the Austrians and the Germans. It is an idealized, largely artificial picture (somewhat akin to the literary Arcadia established in Rome at the end of the XVI century by the poets attending the circle created by Christine of Sweden). And yet it is an idealized picture that the public at large accepts as a representation of the simpler and more genuine way of life their grandparents supposedly enjoyed. The music, with its folkloric accent and tinge, helps construct this shared idyllic Alpine identity.[19] This is precisely the kind of music the *Kapelle Gruetzi Mitenand* offers to the Swiss-German community. It is, however, purely instrumental.

It is rather interesting that not all the members of the *Kapelle Gruetzi Mitenand* are Swiss.[20] Some are Anglo-Australians – which is actually very much in keeping with the Australian tradition of «polyethnic» bands.[21] It is also worth pointing out that swome of them are quite young, and the music performed by the *Kapelle* is newly composed, for the most part by John Wanner. In turn, this is also in keeping with the tradition of the *Schweizerische Volksmusik*, which like other kinds of popular music (e. g. American country music) does have its «classics» and «evergreens», but is otherwise a living tradition in need of a constant supply of new pieces. In other words, the

19 This type of *Volksmusik* also has a literary equivalent in the so-called *Heimatromane*, simple stories of love and family feuds taking place in Alpine villages.

20 Its members are John Wanner (45-year-old high school music teacher, born in Melbourne to Swiss-German father and Italian-Belgian mother), band leader, composer, and arranger for the group, plays clarinet, soprano sax, and occasionally double bass and piano; Paul Winter (27, ex-student of John's, born in Melbourne of Irish/Australian descent) on clarinet/soprano sax; Stuart Byrne (33, born in Australia of British descent) on clarinet/bass clarinet/soprano sax; James Bradley (37, born in Australia of British descent) on clarinet/soprano sax; Claudia Thalmann (21, born in Australia to Swiss-German parents and therefore exposed to *Ländler* music since she was a child) on clarinet and occasionally soprano sax; Christian Thalmann (54, father of Claudia, Swiss born), plays *Schwyzerörgely* and also sings in yodel choirs in Melbourne; Marcus Zihlmann (47, Swiss born), founder of the group, plays both the *Schwyzerörgely*, often yodels/sings with the group; Bryan Anderson (20, born in Australia of British descent) on piano; Briony Kenneth (22, born in Australia of British descent) on double-bass; Tom Webb (retired high school chemistry teacher, born in Australia, also of British descent). The latter is an occasional group member who plays the washboard, and the musical saw and the *Löffli* (a couple of spoons turned into a percussion instrument). Roland Isler (Swiss born) is another occasional member who plays the sticks.

21 See «Polyethnic Bands» in Graeme Smith, *Singing Australian: The History of Folk and Country Music*, Pluto Press, Melbourne 2005. This is common in other parts of the world, too, e. g., in Frankfurt a. M. German musicians often participate in the recording of Turkish popular music that is later sold and disseminated in Turkey.

continuity of the tradition lies in its overall «sound» much more than in the permanence of individual songs. The Brazilian musicologist Mario de Andrade once saw a similar phenomenon in the urban «folk music» of his time: where individual songs underwent such rapid melodic evolution that, while their style was rather stable and permanent, single melodies were not and disappeared in a matter of weeks.[22] Other continuities with Swiss tradition, are the ensemble's (wind instruments, double bass, *Schwyzerörgely*, keyboard), instrumental roles (with the clarinet in a dominant position), triadic melodic patterns, harmonic structure limited to the I, IV (or IIm7), and V degrees of the scale, and the typical abundance of triplets on the melodic surface. As it turns out John Wanner is very well informed about the *Volksmusik* currently in circulation in Switzerland and also about the musical groups and performers of the last few decades, to the point of being able to make rather subtle distinction in musical style and performance practice. Christian Thalmann, by profession engineer and competent performer on the *Schwyzerörgely*, is also equally well informed about style and performance practice.

Together, the four musical groups (*Alpenrose, Yodel Choir Matterhorn, Swiss Companion Singers*, and *Kapelle Gruetzi Mitenand*) provide for a variety of entertainment possibilities, both active and passive, to be enjoyed by the Swiss-German community throughout the year.

Conclusions and ideas for further Study

It is now possible to comment on how the Swiss-German community reacts, *sub speciae musicae*, to the experience of resettling in Australia. As it is a community of perfectly integrated people, fluent in English, who socially and professionally participate fully in the life of their new home, who seldom (if ever at all) express any wish to go back to Europe permanently, their solution seems to be that of restricting the expression of the Swiss layer of their identity to a few particular social occasions.[23] It is on such occasions, if not every week, at least every month, in which the Swiss of Australia become entirely Swiss again, for a few hours, and mostly express this state of mind through the music.[24] No doubt the Swiss-German cuisine

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22 Mario de Andrade (1893–1945), *Ensajo sobre a musica brasileira*, São Paulo, Livraria Martins, 1959.

23 In Melbourne there are some national communities, for instance the Chinese and the Vietnamese, which tend to live a relatively secluded life in a particular neighborhood where a majority of people speak the language.

24 Indeed the music does emphasize the Swiss atmosphere of the occasion, much more than language habits. The Swiss-German of Melbourne are in fact quite inclined to abandon using their native dialects, as soon as an outsider comes along who would not understand.

of the Swiss Club does play an accessory role, but the symbolic import of music is surely much stronger than that of food (even Levi-Strauss, who organized all the chapters of his famous book on food, *The Raw and the Cooked*, following a musical terminology would surely agree). Also to be noted is that «Swiss music» is usually enjoyed live, thanks to the musical groups previously described and, as far as I could ascertain, only seldom at home through CD recordings. Although most of the people I met owned at least a few CDs with «Swiss music», few seemed in any way eager to update and enlarge their home collection. This is not surprising. «Updating» is not usually part of the immigrant mentality, where the past is valued more than the present. This attitude is probably at the heart of the «marginal survival» phenomenon, by which older forms of speech, song, cuisine, etc., are usually better preserved among immigrants than among the people who remain in their homeland. A few CDs in one's home collection serves the purpose, like a memory hook, or like the presence of an Alphorn and/or a *Kuhglocke* among the household goods.

While the presence of such symbolic elements in one's home might appear to mark a fundamentally conservative attitude, this is contradicted by attendance of the events taking place at the Swiss Club, where the music turns out to be «traditional» only up to a point. In other words, a certain amount of modernization in live performance is easily accepted, without even becoming the object of a passing comment. I am referring particularly to the *Kapelle Gruetzi Mitenand*, which performs a type of «Swiss music» that is often made up of new songs. Not only are the songs new, but the music often has a jazzy tinge, reminiscent of the music of the big band era. It is quite easy to understand where this influence comes from, since the leader of the group, John Wanner, is actually primarily a jazz musician capable of arranging pieces for his big band (he is in fact also the leader of the *JW Swing Orchestra*) (sea Musical example p. 144 s.).

«Gruetzi Mitenand» is the name of the group led by John Wanner and, also, the title of this instrumental piece composed by John Wanner himself. Several ligatures are apparent, which shift one accent to the next bar. In the live performance, some extras are occasionally added, like, for instance... The example shows the opening section of the piece. It is noticeable the frequent and consistent deployment of syncopation, of chromatic passing notes, and the affirmative final bar featuring a well known early jazz formula.The jazz elements that John Wanner and his musicians more or less consciously introduce into their *Ländler Musik* (a few shifted accents, chromatic notes and chords) are quite interesting for at least two reasons. First, because commercial *Volksmusik* produced in Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, over the last few decades has also been somewhat influenced by
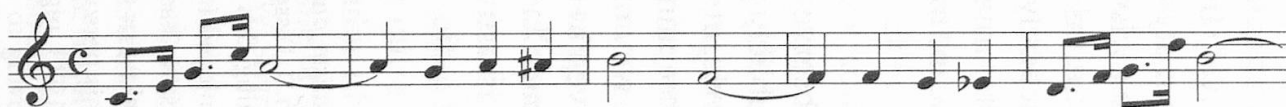
both American jazz and country music. Yet, in the *Kapelle Gruetzi Mitenand*, the jazzy tinge of its performances is certainly more readily apparent than what we find among similar groups active in German-speaking areas. Everybody accepts this at the Swiss Club. No one ever complains, or suggests that the music is not «authentic» enough. And second, this open-minded attitude can be explained in at least two ways: (a) the Swiss-Germans of Melbourne are a community of people culturally adaptable (as proved by the experience of integrating themselves so effectively in their new world); and (b) jazz music of the swing era seems to be a style that most Swiss-Germans enjoy. Actually, with the exception of the Swiss traditional music, this seems to be by far their favorite musical genre (as several interviews revealed). Obviously, none of the interviewees actually lived through the swing era. Instead, as teenagers, the Swiss of Melbourne listened mostly to the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, groups that seem to have disappeared from their current musical horizon.[25]

But let us get back to the Swiss *Volksmusik* and observe how often musical styles and repertoires effectively represent and publicly parade one's sense of identity (to a nation, a social class, group, lifestyle, etc.), and acceptance of a given set of values. For this very reason, the acceptance or rejection of a musical style or repertoire can be a very effective way of marking distance between ourselves and the previous generation, even to the point of provocation (let us think of teenagers and rock'n'roll back in the 1950s). When musical tastes change over the course of time, it is usually a reliable indi-

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25 Doris Schupbach in her Dissertation (*Diglossia, bilingualism and multiple identities: a qualitative study of Swiss-German migrants in Australia*, Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Melbourne, 2005) also collected interviews confirming this attitude: 1. «We soon joined the T. Swiss Club [in New Zealand] and really enjoyed it. Not only because we could talk Swiss but because we all enjoyed similar things, we had a similar background. Before we never really liked Swiss Style music, like yodeling or the Hudigaeggeler. But one tends to become a patriot when living abroad.» (This person was born in 1950 in the canton of Aargau. She was a primary teacher but in 1973 migrated to New Zealand, where she lived and worked as a dairy farmer until moving to Australia in 1998. She lives now in rural Victoria and still works in the farming sector. She is married to a Swiss who migrated with her, and they have two adult children.); and 2. «I suppose another way to preserve the language is via music you know Swiss music and songs in Swiss-German [...] folk music, church music.» (From an interview with a woman who was born in 1936 in the canton of Berne of bilingual [German, French] parents. She trained as a psychiatric nurse and in 1962 went to Papua New Guinea to work there as a missionary [teaching, nursing]. Four years later she came to Australia where she undertook further studies [BA French and Music] and became a teacher. She later returned to university and after her retirement completed a PhD in linguistics. She lives in Melbourne.)

Gruetzi Mitenand

John Wanner
17/2/1998

Musical example: John Wanner, «Gruetzi Mitenand»

cator of profound changes in our way to relating to our past, our present, and to the social groups with which we usually interact – if not indeed a new way of looking at life and the world itself.

In fact, when the people considered by this research were teenagers, the *Schweizerische Volksmusik* did not appeal at all to them (a point made very clear in several interviews). Quite the opposite, they were almost repelled by it, it was entirely «out», precisely because it was the musical genre *their* parents loved and, therefore, definitely not the music expressing «modernity» as they interpreted it. Their form of «modernity» was rather embodied in the Beatles and, after George Harrison fell under the spell of Indian music, maybe even in Ravi Shankar's music. Outright rejection of *Schweizerische Volksmusik* was therefore part and parcel of the generational conflict that began around the 1950s and became an acute and visible social problem in Western society.[26] But now things are quite different to those ex-teenagers, now resettled in Melbourne. Today, when they recall their youth, they see a country, a landscape, and a way of life that they for a number of different reasons (seldom traumatic, fortunately) decided to abandon. At this point listening to the *Schweizerische Volksmusik* becomes not only acceptable but even a veritable pleasure. In other words, the Swiss-German people who live in Melbourne now enjoy listening to music that has a Swiss connotation and is precisely the music they rejected in their youth. And not only do they appreciate this type of music as passive listeners, but often actively as well, by singing, playing an instrument in one of the groups described above. What makes this turn-around of attitude even more remarkable is that most of these people learned to sing or play Swiss music in Australia, rather than in their country of origin.

The Thalmann family, is a perfect example of this process. It is a musical family in which the father, Christian, plays the *Schwyzerörgely* and sings with *The Swiss Companion Singers*; his wife Irma taught herself the Alp-horn and even finds the motivation to practice the instruments almost on daily basis (indeed a strong motivation required, if one considers how very few opportunities, even among the Swiss community, are there to show off one's ability on this instrument). Their daughter Claudia, 21 years old at

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26   In fact, one could go as far as saying that during the 1950s a new sort of human being was invented. It wasn't a child and it wasn't a grown-up and it was called a «teenager». Before this time the concept of a «teenager» didn't really exist: one went straight from being children to being an adult. Children did not have time to be teenagers before the 1950s, because they were too busy leaving school at an early age, working long hours, being poor, and often fighting in wars, becoming just like their parents, and then having their own children (Barson, Michael & Steven Heller, *Teenage confidential: an illustrated history of the American teen*, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1998).

the time of this writing, and Australian born, grew up hearing *Ländler Musik*. She is a regular member of the *Kapelle Gruetzi Mitenand* where she plays the clarinet and the soprano sax. The active presence of a young person like Claudia, which is rather rare at the Swiss Club, is also interesting. In fact, while the Swiss imprinting for the older generation is simply a matter of fact, it is a much more complex issue for younger people like Claudia. For young people born in Australia, the Swiss family heritage is strongly counteracted by a number of other «identities» that are in keen competition with one another and not necessarily inherited, but rather felt and lived day by day: age, sex, peer group, neighborhood, and national (i. e., Australian). For them, the inherited Swiss identity is something to be explored, occasionally tasted and revived, through trips and vacations spent in Switzerland and through a number of emotional and personality factors that are quite difficult to assess.[27] Another such case is that of John Wanner, the leader of the *Kapelle Gruetzi Mitenand*, also born in Australia. Although other choices are available, John Wanner has come to the conclusion that his heart is Swiss and feels quite strongly about his Swiss origin – which only goes to show how often national identity is, at least in part, a matter of choice. After all, in all forms of identification the choice element is relevant. If it were not so, we would know no social deviance. We are carriers of several identity layers, and it is a choice (suggested by circumstances) to bring forward those that make us compatible with people living around us or not.[28]

One might ask whether such patterns of musical behavior are really typical of the Swiss-Germans of Melbourne. In order to find out, a «control group» was examined: a number of Swiss-German who live in different parts of Switzerland and belong to the same age group were also interviewed and asked questions concerning their musical memories, taste, and habits. What such interviews show is that Swiss interest in *Volksmusik* varies considerably, depending on social class and rural or urban lifestyle. Some people still reject it; others do not.[29] In Melbourne, however, interest in Swiss *Volksmusik* cuts across all kinds of social classes as well as rural or urban origins.

27 Especially telling in this respect is the classic study by Ruth Katz, «The Singing of the Baqqashot by Aleppo Jews. A Study in Musical Acculturation», *Acta Musicologica*, Vol. XL (1968), pp. 65–85.

28 National identity can be largely a matter of choice, even in music, in many cases and at all levels. One could think, for instance, of the soviet Composer Aram Katchaturian, born in Tblisi in Georgia, who spent most of his life in Moscow, and nonetheless, considered himself all along an Armenian composer, and who is perceived as such by the Armenians of Yerevan who, significantly, gave his name to the City Theater.

29 The question is amply discussed in Dieter Ringli, op. cit.

It is worth noting that the musical attitudes of the Swiss community in Melbourne are by no means typical of immigrant communities in general. It cannot be standard of immigrant behavior, first of all, because not all communities possess a musical repertoire like the *Schweizerische Volksmusik*, which is part folklore and part commercial popular music. In so far as it is a popular genre, it is known by practically everyone who lives in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Whether one likes it or not, it is impossible not to encounter it, sometime, somewhere. Italian immigrants in Australia, for example, have nothing comparable. There is no form of Italian popular music that has a «folkish» connotation for all Italians, northern or southern. There are a number of traditional regional genres in Italy that are circulated orally and have over the last twenty years or so begun to nourish a few types of popular/rock music, but there is no unique musical «icon» of Italian identity at that level (once, of course, it was opera). Thus, when immigrant Italians (in Australia as well as in the United States) decide to express musically their attachment to their homeland, they perform a variety of music of very diverse origin: popular songs from the time they left, operatic tunes, and even what we would call «folk songs», that is, very seldom the kind of music you can learn to make abroad, unless you learnt it and practiced it already in your home town.[30]

The musical activities that take place within the Swiss-German community constitute an important source of entertainment for everyone, even for the occasional, or not so occasional, outsiders who decide to join and whose presence is easily accepted by everyone, whether they are spouses of Swiss people, curious observers, or even people who just happen to drop in and/or simply have a meal at the restaurant of the Swiss Club on the day that some Swiss musical event is taking place.

Even though the Swiss musical groups do not shy away from performing for the Australian public at large (and, in fact, actually enjoy it), I received the impression there is little «folkloristic» intention in such musical activities. Folklorism takes place in the homeland, in order to attract tourism. Immigrants need to attract no one. Such activities are therefore fundamentally Swiss and for the Swiss, not so much as a means to show and advertise Swiss identity. Swiss identity is not experienced in a confrontational manner, but rather lived as a private, personal, intimate experience; an experience confined to specific moments that do not spill over into other realms of life

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30   This was in fact the variety of music I heard in Brisbane when attending a social event organized by the Italian community. Musical entertainment was provided by the «Corale G. Verdi», the very name of which already tells us much of the story.

in which the Swiss feel totally comfortable as members of the Australian society. There are no nostalgic attitudes to be noticed. In other words, whether or not the *Schweizerische Krankheit* (the Swiss malady), once described by Johannes Hofer ever really existed, it has certainly lost its grip on Swiss emigrants of today! [31] This is quite understandable. The situation of this particular generation of Swiss immigrants to Australia was qualitatively different from that of other national groups. In fact, between 1947 and 1980, the largest number of immigrants (after those from the UK and Ireland) came from Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia. For these immigrants, cultural difference was reinforced by social and economic difference. Many had emigrated from economically depressed areas and entered the Australian labor in the lowest paid and least desirable jobs. Such immigrants often had little formal education and with little or no English they relied on small-scale social structures and organizations of fellow immigrants for social support.

Of course, as one can easily imagine, each immigrant group and national community expresses its sense of original identity in a different way. The question is therefore what makes the Swiss-Germans of Melbourne different and special in comparison to other language and national groups. Such a question cannot be fully answered at this early stage of my project. It is clear, however, that even the most superficial and occasional observation reveals strong differences, some of which are probably related to deep-seated cultural attitudes, and others of which are a consequence of demographic strength that makes some activities possible and others impossible.

The much larger Turkish community in Melbourne, for instance, can afford to organize television programs with competitions in which young people exhibit their talent in performing traditional music. The Armenians organize events at which their national culture is celebrated. Although these events appear secular on the surface and include secular music, they have clear religious overtones (e. g., orthodox priests attend and bless the public and the musicians). During a concert I attended in August 2004, several «folk songs» arranged by Komitas Vartabed and Arax Mansurian were performed. They sounded more like art songs than folk songs. Therese

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31 It was in 1678 that Johannes Hofer described the *Schweizerkrankheit* or «Swiss Home-sickness» (Johannes Hofer, *De Nostalgia, vulgo Heimwehe oder Heimsehnsucht*, 1678). Its symptoms included insomnia, anorexia, and heart arhythmia. Hofer also explained how such homesickness could manifest itself in an acute form when soldiers heard the musical hymns of their home town. Such homesickness could even be fatal if the patient was not allowed to return home. The term «nostalgia» (from the Greek *nóstos*, «return» and *álgos*, «suffering») was coined during the Renaissance by Swiss-German doctors to indicate this very particular pathology manifested by Swiss soldiers abroad.

Say, a Swiss observer, pointed out that Swiss-German folk songs could never be sung with such a serious attitude without sounding ridiculous. And she is probably right: in the German-speaking area an art song can more easily become a folk song than vice versa.[32]

When the Tonga and Cook islanders organize musical and dancing events, the atmosphere is quite different: relaxed, joyous, and informal. The most significant aspects of their traditions are presented as a chain of episodes in which modernized (Westernized) arrangements of music and dance are interspersed with more traditional moments. Everybody, young and old alike, enjoys the celebrations, which although resting largely on the performing ability of very young who were for the most part born in Australia, are also open to everyone else in the audience regardless of how well they can perform. I attended an event organized by the Unitarian Church, which encourages young people not only to learn traditional practices but also, to adapt them to their taste and attitudes. The traditional music of the Cook and Tonga islands was therefore interspersed with «techno» and «hip-hop» episodes, in which the young performers manifested the light and elegant touch that makes their more traditional dancing so enjoyable and pleasant to watch.

The enormous Italian community is capable of supporting newspapers, magazines[33], radio stations[34], as well as retail businesses that sell videos, CDs, and DVDs of Italian popular music. In Melbourne music stores, not necessarily only those located in the Italian neighborhood of Carlton, it is easy to find not only Italian popular music, but also musical sub-genres that only enjoy a regional circulation in Italy, and even music that is by now quite out of fashion and mostly forgotten. For instance, in Italy one would be hard put to find records by the singer and trumpet-player Nini Rosso, who enjoyed some popularity back in the 1960s and 1970s, anywhere; in Melbourne that is no problem at all!

I hope that this is not the end of the story, because all these other realities wait to be studied, ideally in a comparative fashion. The overall picture will be quite colourful – no doubt about it. In fact, if something is obviously

32 One such case is mentioned by Alfred Einstein when he remembers how pleased was Brahms when, browing through a folksong collection, he discovered that one of his *Lieder*, «In stiller Nacht» had in fact become a *Volkslied*! As such it was published in the song collection as a melody by unknown author! (A. Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1947, p. 41).

33 For instance the neswpaper *Il Globo*, and the quarterly *Italy Down Under – The National Magazine of the Italian Australian Affairs and Culture* published in Melbourne.

34 *Rete Italia* 1593 AM.

missing in the rather large literature of immigration studies (sociological, anthropological, ethnomusicological, etc.), it is the comparative dimension. We are now beginning to know something about the ways in which Swiss-Germans of Melbourne relate to the music of their homeland. Next, we need to ask how do the French-Swiss or the Italian-Swiss relate to the music they identify with their homelands? Are there any similarities or differences? And how different are the Swiss immigrants in Australia, in their musical likes and dislikes from Australians of other origins? Casual observation suggests that the differences are remarkable, but serious study is needed in order to find out the details.

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