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A Folk Music Television Show Sentimentalizes Rural Germany (2006)

Two journalists describe the last on-stage appearance of folk music television show host Karl Moik. His sentimental portrayals of rural Germany evoked nostalgia for a better, simpler life and helped him achieve immense popularity among the older generation.

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### **We dance Hopsasa**

*Karl Moik celebrates his farewell from the “Musikantenstadt” with pumpkin seeds. Jan Kühnemund and Tim Holthöfer report from the Weser-Ems Hall in Oldenburg.*

There he is: Karl Moik surrounded by loved ones. “Die 3 Zwidern,” Tony Marshall, Hias Mayer, Claudia Jund, and of course, Herlinde, the champion yodler. When will it finally start?

“Good seats,” an elderly lady in the third row comments happily. “But for 56 Euro they should be.” She says she’s here because of [Argentine-Austrian singer] Semino Rossi and proudly dangles a key chain and jute bag bearing the face of the “King of Romance.” The five-Euro bag, she says, is worth only fifty cents – she’s very level-headed about that. “But for Semino . . .” Underneath a sparkling blazer she’s wearing a t-shirt with his autograph.

The show starts right on time, the orchestra, dressed in folklore costume, comes onto the stage, “as you’re used to, everything is presented live and without playback.” Rhythmic applause sets in as though someone had pushed a button; it’s just like on television. Except for the volume! For those who can still hear it’s too quiet, for those with hearing aids, too loud.

The orchestra plays snappy tunes. Karl Moik descends the show staircase with a stuffed animal and sings a song for his dachshund.

“Beautiful melodies, lively melodies, and a few gags,” he promises for the evening. The jokes pack a punch. “Hansi is twelve-months pregnant and has no money to give birth” is how he introduces the trumpet player of “Die 3 Zwidern.”

Karl Moik does most of the jokes with the jokster Hias Mayer. Their punch lines are a good value for the money. The audience takes pleasure in the tried-and-true. Do you know the one about the wrong-way driver who was passed by someone?

Karl Moik has barely turned his back to the audience when his smile disappears. He is a frugal entertainer.

The varied program is striking for the brevity of the songs. Twenty hit songs in an hour – no room for boredom to arise.

“Die 3 Zwidern” yodel about their homeland and the beautiful Tyrolean countryside. “Well, let’s stay happy now with our *Stimmungsmedley* [i.e, mood medley].” The audience rocks back and forth and sings all the hallohiahos, humbahumbatätärätäs and glorygloryhallelujahs at their top of their voices. “Que sera sera, is this not *wunderbar*, and now all together!”

“Herlinde is a super person,” enthuses Karl Moik. “She can yodel and is a proud mom.” She is a four-time Austrian yodeling champion and sings about “Dopes on the slopes” – or something like that. Her smile is a sight to be seen: it’s tattooed on!

During the imminent intermission there will be “Stadl Bread” from a large Oldenburg bakery. Karl Moik lets two women bakers speak: “We have 46 branches around Oldenburg, Bremen, and Wesermarch.” – “And how many stores do you have?” – “46.” – “Wow, that’s a lot. All here in Oldenburg?”

Karl Moik likes the women bakers, they’re single. “And what’s in the bread?” – “Natural sourdough, sunflower seeds . . .” – “Stop! Sunflower seeds, what does that tell us?” – “No idea, I only know something about pumpkin seeds.” – “Yes, precisely, pumpkin seeds. Buy the bread and there’ll be some action tonight. Or just take it along to remember this lovely Stadl evening.”

Karl Moik knows about the purchasing power of the older generation. He has a DVD and a CD, “something real nice and Christmas is coming soon.” They’re available in the foyer during intermission, along with recordings by the performing artists and the “Stadl Bread” from Mayer Bakery, “One for two Euro, three for three – no, two for three, actually – three for five Euro.”

“Fabulous, all these people,” Claudia Jund calls out into the audience.

“Dance with me into the morning, and I’ll stay with you today” she whispers into the ears of older gentlemen.

And now Semino Rossi! “His unique, expressive voice sends velvety shivers over the ladies’ skin.” Here the program is right. While he’s singing, female audience members hand him stuffed animals, flowers, and pralines. He thanks them in his way: “I give you all the roses of this world in the name of tenderness.”

Then “the guy for joy, high spirits, cheerfulness”: Herbert Anton Hilger – better known as Tony Marshall. “Gosh, wow nice to finally be back in Oldenburg. You wish for an audience like this every night, this is unbelievable.”

“Lovely maid, do you have time for me today, hjahojaho. Please say yes, and I’ll be here only for you, ho-jahojaho. We sing tralala and dance hopsasa, let us be happy and enjoy life.”

“Let us be content and drink beer and schnaps and wine. Let us drink, drink another one, because it makes you forget your worries.” – That’s how Tony Marshall sees it.

“A day like today is the best medicine for you” he belts out to the pensioners. “We’ll go all night until tomorrow morning. When the others go off to work, we say good night.”

After two-and-a-half hours it’s all over. Four more shows, then Karl Moik intends to end a career that has spanned decades. His audience will miss him.

Source: Jan Kühnemund and Tim Holhöfer, “Wir tanzen Hopsasa,” [“We Dance Hopsasa”], ZEIT online, November 16, 2006.