

Traditional Elements in Austrian Popular Music: Three Case Studies

Christa Bruckner-Haring

Institute for Jazz and Popular Music Research
University of Music and Performing Arts Graz
c.bruckner-haring@kug.ac.at

Elisabeth Kappel

Institute for Jazz and Popular Music Research
University of Music and Performing Arts Graz
e.kappel@kug.ac.at

Resumo

As tradições da música popular desempenharam um papel importante na cultura austríaca e continuam a ser cultivadas em vários contextos da vida quotidiana. A partir dos anos noventa, os músicos pop começaram a integrar frequentemente elementos da música alpina em estilos de música popular anglo-americana. Uma primeira vaga de músicos como Hubert von Goisern, Ausseer Hardbradler e Global Kryner alcançou sucesso nacional ao integrar elementos tradicionais na sua música; desde então, essas hibridações proliferaram no trabalho de músicos e grupos como Die Seer, Global Kryner, Trackshittaz, o holstunarmusigbigbandclub e o «Volks-Rock'n'Roller» Andreas Gabalier.

O principal objectivo deste artigo é analisar de que forma os artistas pop austríacos contemporâneos cultivam identidades musicais individuais, combinando elementos tradicionais com música popular. Para investigar este fenómeno musical, analisámos a estrutura, o ritmo, a melodia e a harmonia, de forma a identificar os elementos musicais centrais das primeiras canções de sucesso de Hubert von Goisern, dos holstunarmusigbigbandclub e de Andreas Gabalier, considerando que: estes artistas influenciaram significativamente a música popular contemporânea com diferentes abordagens musicais. Além disso, foram consideradas entrevistas, os *sites* dos artistas, artigos de jornais e a concepção da imagem dos músicos para compreender os seus formas de auto-apresentação.

Os resultados fornecem uma visão sobre um aspecto central e influente da música popular austríaca contemporânea, contribuindo para a compreensão da música popular como um fenómeno musical, cultural e social.

Palavras-chave

Música popular; Música tradicional; Tradição; Cultura austríaca; Identidade musical; Elementos alpinos.

Abstract

Folk music traditions have always played an important role in Austrian culture and are still cultivated in various aspects of everyday life. Starting in the 1990s, pop musicians began combining elements of Alpine music with Anglo-American popular music styles more frequently. An initial wave of musicians such as Hubert von Goisern, the Ausseer Hardbradler and Global Kryner achieved national success by integrating traditional elements in their music; since then, such hybridizations have proliferated in the work of

musicians and ensembles like Die Seer, Global Kryner, Trackshittaz, the holstuonarmusigbigbandclub and ‘Volks-Rock’n’Roller’ Andreas Gabalier.

The principal aim of this paper is to examine how contemporary Austrian pop artists successfully cultivate individual musical identities by combining traditional elements with popular music. To investigate this musical phenomenon, we analyze the structure, rhythm, melody and harmony to pinpoint central musical elements of the first hit songs by Hubert von Goisern, the holstuonarmusigbigbandclub and Andreas Gabalier, respectively: artists who have significantly influenced the contemporary popular music scene with different musical approaches. In addition, interviews, the artists’ websites, journalistic articles and the musicians’ outward appearance are considered to analyze their methods of self-presentation.

The results provide insight into a central and influential aspect of contemporary Austrian popular music, contributing to an understanding of popular music as a musical, cultural and social phenomenon.

Keywords

Popular music; Folk music; Tradition; Austrian culture; Musical identity; Alpine elements.

Introduction

MUSIC PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE IN AUSTRIAN LIFE: the country both sees and projects itself as a culture steeped in musical history and famous for its music tradition. This strong identification with music led to the country stylizing itself as a ‘land of music’, a phrase still prevalent today (see KRAUS 1989 and VOCELKA 2002). As Edward Larkey states, ‘national representation is reserved for high ‘art’ and ‘culture’’ (LARKEY 1993, 309)—in other words, for ‘serious’ music, generally defined in Austria as the legacy of classical musicians and composers like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Haydn, or Anton Bruckner. Austrian folk music, by contrast, ‘enjoys the reputation of ‘constructing the people’ of Austria through music manifesting an idealized, rural and pristine life’ (LARKEY 1993, 309); it is thus an important factor in the construction of cultural identity. Folk music traditions (songs, instrumental music and dances) have always played an important role in Austrian culture and are still cultivated in various aspects of everyday life (HAID 2006). Connections between Alpine traditional music and North American popular music can be traced back to the first half of the nineteenth century: dances, melodies and yodels of the Rainer Family from the Ziller Valley (Tyrol), who were extremely successful in the USA, influenced various performers of minstrel shows from the 1840s on. The impact of their popular Tyrolese melodies and yodelers is still audible in today’s country music (HUPFAUF 2016, 9-10). In the age of globalization, particularly since the late twentieth century, traditional local Alpine¹ musical influences have increasingly been merged with international, mostly North American popular music styles and genres. These deliberate hybridizations have resulted in new musical practices in the Austrian music scene.

The use of (national and regional) traditional music elements in popular music—for example, covers of folk songs, original compositions with folk characteristics or traditional instruments in pop

¹ The Alpine cultural region includes Austria, Bavaria, Switzerland, South Tyrol (Italy) and Northern Slovenia.

arrangements—has increased worldwide since the second half of the twentieth century (see, for example, PEGG 2001; STAVĚLOVÁ - BUCKLAND 2018). Many widely successful pieces and albums attest to this global musical phenomenon, with examples including influential US-guitarist Dick Dale's 1962 surf rock version of the Eastern Mediterranean folk song 'Misirlou', made hugely popular through the 1994 movie *Pulp Fiction*; Paul Simon's 1986 album *Graceland*, which has sold over sixteen million copies; as well as various (nationally and regionally) popular sub-genres, such as the so-called 'Yu-Rock', later 'Ex-Yu-Rock', with bands like Bijelo dugme ('white button') and their 1984 hit song 'Lipe cvatu' ('lime blossom').² Often, specific terms have been used to describe such folklore revival trends, for example the Estonian term *pärimusmuusika* ('folk music'), used for 'both old rural music styles and their modern adaptations' (KÖMMUS 2019, 118; SÄRG - JOHANSON 2020)³ or *nykykansanmusiikki* for 'contemporary folk music' in Finland, with currently prominent artists like award-winning singer-songwriter Ida Elina, the popular band Frigg, named after a goddess of Nordic mythology, or the Finnish progressive metal band Amorphis.⁴

The fusion of Alpine music elements with rock and pop in Austria dates back to the early 1970s, but initial experiments remained marginal.⁵ Since the 1990s, however, artists such as Hubert von Goisern, the Ausseer Hardbradler and Global Kryner have achieved wider success integrating traditional elements into popular music, triggering a sort of folk music revival in Austria.⁶ Harald Huber points to the regiopolitical impact of the fall of the Iron Curtain (1989) and Austria's accession to the EU a few years later as reasons for this revival: 'New legitimation patterns and orientation models [...] in response to the development of new globalization tendencies' were needed (HUBER H. 2001, 213-4).⁷ This trend is often labeled 'Neue [österreichische] Volksmusik' ('new [Austrian] folk music', HOHL 1997) or simply 'Volxmusik' (see for example SEILER 1995b, 12; HUBER H. 2001, 165; SCHNEDL 2008).

Following this initial wave of popularity, the integration of various music traditions in popular music styles seems to be resurgent in Austria and the neighboring German-speaking countries since the mid-2000s. Numerous festivals that focus on reinterpretations of traditional folk music are among the drivers of this trend, including (in chronological order): Woodstock der Blasmusik (since 2011) and its

² Since the 1980s, the term 'world music' has been used to market 'ethnic' music of the world, 'describ[ing] the local, folk, or roots music of a particular cultural group, society, or nation' (FORSS 2014).

³ Popular artists of this musical area were for example singers Silvi Vreit or Üllar Jörberg (SÄRG - JOHANSON 2020).

⁴ See <<https://idaelina.com/biography/>>, <<https://frigg.fi/en>> and <<https://amorphis.net/>>.

⁵ For example, singer Wilfried [Scheutz]: 'Mary, Oh Mary' and 'Ziwui, Ziwui', 1973; 'Kufsteinlied', 1981.

⁶ According to Harald Huber, this 'new kind of folk rock developed [between 1987 and 1995] in Austria, Switzerland and southern Germany (Bavaria)' (HUBER H. 2001, 57).

⁷ 'Neue Legitimationsmuster und Orientierungsmodelle [...] als Reaktion auf die Entwicklung neuer Globalisierungstendenzen'. Unless otherwise noted, the English translation is provided by the authors.

spin-offs Brass Palmas (since 2018) and Winter-Woodstock der Blasmusik (since 2020/2022),⁸ AlpRock (since 2012), Spielberg Musikfestival (since 2015), bodenständig (since 2016) and Brasssteinfestival (since 2019).⁹ It is noteworthy that these festivals appeal largely to younger people.¹⁰

Current Popular Music Scene and Genre Terms

The current popular music scene in Austria features great stylistic diversity. The SR Archive of Austrian Popular Music (SRA), which presents a ‘very “broad” interpretation of the term pop, but without collection and research activities in the areas of operetta, Schlager, folk music and classical music’¹¹, lists over 21,000 bands in Austria: Out of 102 genre categories, the three leading genres are ‘rock’, ‘pop’ and ‘electronic music’ (with a combined 6338 bands; see Figure 1). In comparison, the music sector investigated here—combinations of traditional musical elements with popular music—occupies a smaller, but still remarkable share: the genre ‘folk music’—to which most of these fusion artists belong—is in 11th place (615 bands), whereas the categories ‘Wienerlied’ (178 bands) and ‘crossover’ (124 bands) rank within the top 30 (see Figure 1). Furthermore, genres like ‘folklore’ (48th place, 55 bands) and ‘polka’ (81th place, 8 bands) can also be included in this musical field.

An analysis of the Austrian popular music charts of the last decades shows a rising percentage of local artists (see Figure 2): already in the 2010s, over a third of top-50 albums (34 %) were by Austrian acts. In the top-100 singles chart lists, the percentage is lower (11 %), but still increasing.

A closer look at the Austrian artists in these charts shows that the chart-winning acts in the albums category mainly sing in dialect and German (see Figure 3); most popular artists rarely (in the 2010s, never) use a foreign language.

The study *Dialekt und Popmusik in Österreich* investigates the rise of songs in Austrian dialects: Partenhauser sees the Austrian attachment to tradition in a fusion with international music styles as ‘the new recipe for success of current Austrian bands’, since combinations of tradition and modernity appeal to the younger generation (PARTENHAUSER 2012, 3).

⁸ In 2020 and 2021, the festival was cancelled due to Covid-19, so the first Winter-Woodstock der Blasmusik was held in spring 2022 (see WINTERWOODSTOCK).

⁹ Other examples include, in Switzerland: Alpentöne (since 1999); in Germany: Heimatsound Festival (since 2013), Brass Wiesn (since 2013), Volxmusic Festival Ravensburg (2014-6) and Musikprob Brassfestival (since 2016). For further information, see the respective websites: <<https://www.woodstockderblasmusik.at>>, <<https://www.brasspalmas.com>>, <<https://www.winterwoodstock.at>>, <<https://www.bodenständig.at>>, <https://www.facebook.com/SpielbergMusikfestival/?locale=de_DE>, <<https://www.facebook.com/brasssteinfestival/>>, <<https://www.alpentoene.ch>>, <<https://www.passions.theater.de/heimatsound-festival/infos>>, <<https://brasswiesn.de>>, <https://www.facebook.com/volxmusicfestival/?locale=de_DE>, <<https://musikprob.party>>.

¹⁰ See for example STEINBRECHER - ACHHORNER (2020), 120, regarding Woodstock der Blasmusik. See the observations of Irmgard BONTINCK (1983).

¹¹ ‘sehr ‘breite’ Auslegung des Begriffs Pop, aber ohne Sammlungs- und Forschungstätigkeit im Bereich Operette, Schlager, Volksmusik und Klassik’. See <<https://sra.at/page/geschichte>>.

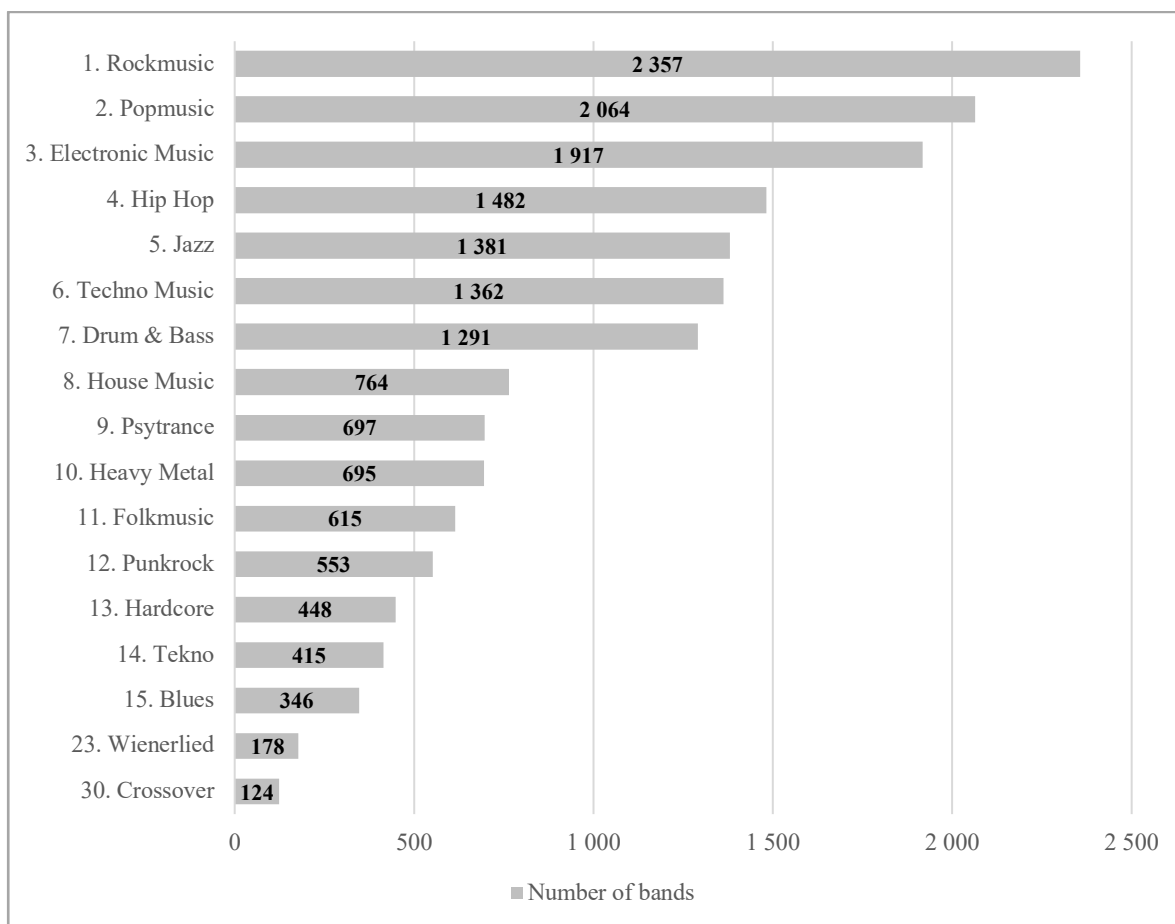


Figure 1. SRA ranking of popular music genres by number of bands in Austria¹²

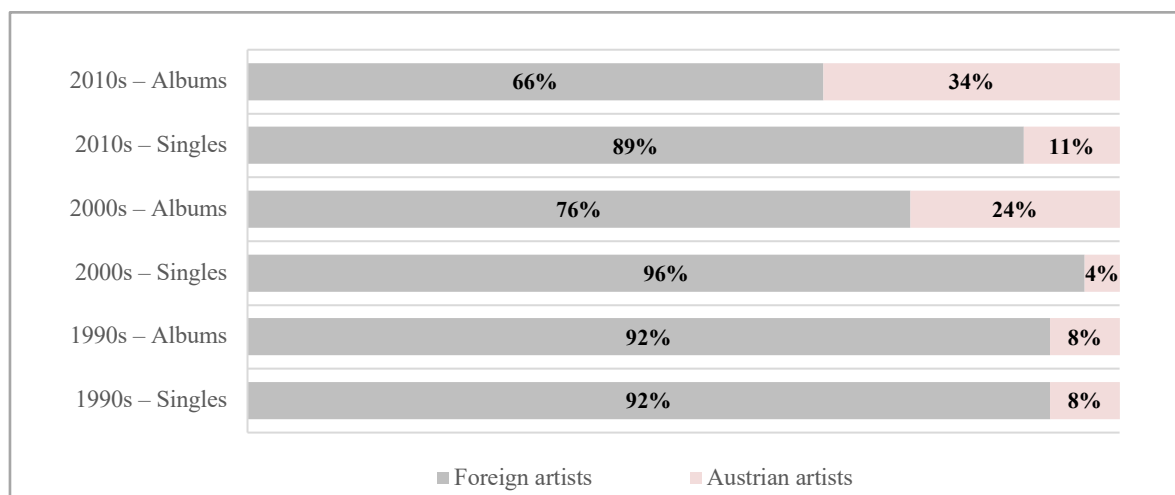


Figure 2. Austrian charts overview of Austrian and foreign artists¹³

¹² Data based on <<https://sra.at/bands/genre>> (accessed 27 February 2025). According to its website, the SRA offers an almost complete documentation of Austrian pop music from the past decades (<<https://sra.at/page/info>>).

¹³ Analysis based on <<https://austriancharts.at/bestall.asp>> and <https://austriancharts.at/bestall_a.asp> (accessed 27 February 2025).

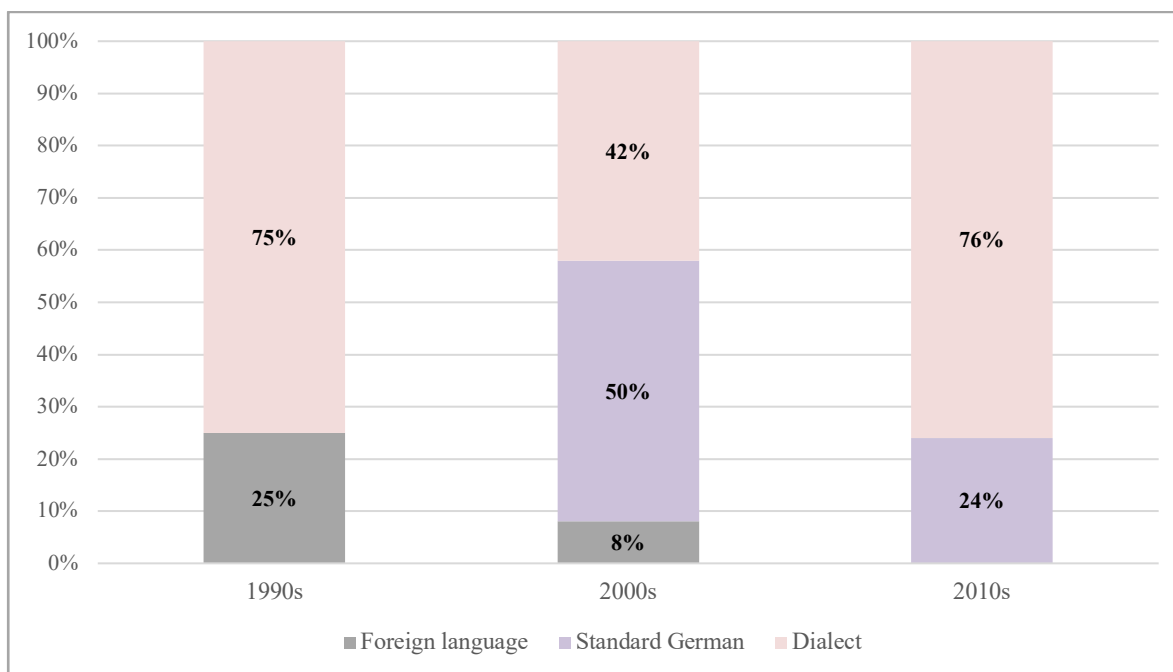


Figure 3. Languages used by Austrian acts in charts¹⁴

The different approaches in artists' respective styles and sounds are reflected in the corresponding genre terms: 'Neue Volksmusik' (also 'Volxmusik'¹⁵), primarily coined in connection with Hubert von Goisern, is likely one of the most common terms for this 'metagenre'.¹⁶ The term is a creation of the music industry and has been widely criticized—some find it too generic to describe the broad spectrum of the genre (WEBER 2014, 61; 77); others see it as paradoxical, arguing that 'folk' implies the past and tradition, whereas 'new' suggests the opposite.¹⁷ It is often rejected by the performers themselves as well,¹⁸ though some artists do use the term *Volk* (or sonic wordplay versions) to show their affinity to tradition.¹⁹ On Spotify, there are several playlists for Neue Volksmusik and Volxmusik (also 'Folksmusik'), which, however, tend to feature more Volkstümlicher Schlager. Other common terms are 'Alpenrock' ('Alpine rock') and 'Austrian Folk Rock' (OSWALD 2005b; HUBER H. 2001). These, notably, exclude non-Alpine Austrian traditions, such as the Wienerlied, and other musical genres like jazz. Genres with elements of traditional music are generally seen as related to 'world music'

¹⁴ Analysis based on <<https://austriancharts.at/bestall.asp>> and <https://austriancharts.at/bestall_a.asp> (accessed 27 February 2025).

¹⁵ SAFER (1999); SCHNEIDL (2008).

¹⁶ See for example HUBER M. (1998; 2001; 2002; 2014), WEBER (2014).

¹⁷ See for example the website of the Alpentöne festival: <<https://www.alpentoe.ch/page/philosophie>> (accessed 08 March 2023).

¹⁸ For example, the group Attwenger (SEILER 1995a, 7).

¹⁹ Examples include music groups like folkshilfe, folksmilch, voixBRASS, VoixSound, VoixxBradler, Volxrock, voXXclub, Volksbluat, VolxBand, volXpop and Volxpower.

(HUBER H. 2001, 169), or as a subgenre or continuation of the ‘Austropop’ trend of the 1970s and 1980s, the latter simply a ‘sub-segment of rock and pop music produced and performed in Austria’ (PFEILER 1995, 22).²⁰

‘World music’, a term used since the 1960s, is imprecise and has multiple meanings. It is often used ‘as a way for music labels to categorize all of the music styles and genres that didn’t otherwise fit into the categories that they had already created’ (BEASTER-JONES 2014; see also for example BAUMANN 2008; FORSS 2014). According to Jocelyne Guilbault, ‘In strictly musical terms, world music is usually described as the blending of modern and traditional musics’ (GUILBAULT 2001, 177). The corresponding German term ‘Weltmusik’ is also used for music combining regional and international elements (BOISITS 2004).

The term ‘Austropop’ first appeared in the early 1970s and is also a creation of the music industry.²¹ According to Heide Pfeiler, it first appeared in writing in 1973 (PFEILER 1995, 22-3; KUNZ 2011, 39). According to Larkey, ‘there is no clear agreement on its [Austropop’s] primary characteristics, be they purely musical, associated with the lyric theme and content, the sound structure, or geographical location of the singers/songwriters’ (LARKEY 1993, 150), but its ‘primary tradition rests upon that of the acoustically produced, live-performed music of the Liedermacher’ such as Stefanie Werger, Ludwig Hirsch, Rainhard Fendrich and STS (LARKEY 1993, 215). Austropop fans appreciate the genre’s positive representation of their homeland, which makes it an important part of Austrian music tradition and identity. While many international genres such as English-language pop or French chansons are popular, ‘songs like ‘Schifoan’ belong only to us and will never be fully understood by people from other nations’ (HAVAS 2008, 5).²² Since the 2000s, various projects have focused on developing a history of Austropop (see also FÜRKNRANZ 2020), for example the documentary series *Weltberühmt in Österreich—50 Jahre Austropop* (DOLEZAL 2006-8; 2011), books like ARNBOM (2022), DOLEZAL (2016), HAVAS (2008), and FUCHS (1996), as well as sheet music editions such as *Best of Austropop* (DOLEZAL 2008).

Another genre of popular music employing elements of Alpine traditions is so-called ‘Volkstümliche Musik’ (‘folksy/folk-like music’), which is generally considered a commercialized version of ‘authentic’ folk music (Eckhart Höfig cit. in MENDÍVIL 2015, 172).²³ The term ‘volkstümlich’ references the connection to Volksmusik and ‘Volkslied’ (‘folk song’); however, it also serves to distinguish the style ‘from ‘traditional’, ‘authentic’ or ‘genuine’ folk music’ (OSWALD

²⁰ ‘Teilbereich der in Österreich produzierten und musizierten Rock- und Popmusik’.

²¹ There is a wealth of scholarly work on the topic of Austropop, see, for example, HUBER M. (2020), JAUKE (2024), SPREITZHOFFER (1998), SMUDITS (1995).

²² Compare also DOEHRING - GINKEL (2024) regarding the songs ‘I am from Austria’ by Rainhard Fendrich and ‘Fürstenfeld’ by STS.

²³ ‘kommerzialisierter Volksmusik’.

2006).²⁴ Originally, Volkstümliche Musik mostly referred to instrumental folk music (especially wind music); since the 1960s, it has stood for music that is *similar* to folk music, that is, pseudo-folkloric songs (WICKE 2021), designed for a wide audience (BRÖCKER 1998; OSWALD 2006). Particularly since the early 1980s, Volkstümliche Musik has been highly successful in Austria, evidenced by the large number of folksy bands throughout the country, regional radio programming and music television shows such as the long-running *Musikantenstadt* (since 1981). The term Volksmusik has also been used to describe this kind of music.²⁵ In contrast to the tendencies subsumed under Neue Volksmusik, Volkstümliche Musik largely belongs to the highly popular ‘Schlager’ (‘hits’) music.²⁶

The *Österreichisches Musiklexikon* distinguishes between ‘Volkstümliche Musik’ and ‘Volkstümlicher Schlager’, defining the latter as a ‘fusion of Volkstümliche Musik and Schlager’, influenced by Schlager in terms of production and song structure, while the folk element is primarily conveyed through instrumentation (OSWALD 2005a). There is no precise definition for the term Schlager either (MENDÍVIL 2015, 155),²⁷ but Austrian music in this category, though stylistically diverse, generally consists of catchy songs with (simple) German lyrics that deal mostly with themes of romantic love and home (*Heimat*). Moreover, Schlager music is often highly commercialized. Though Schlager and Volkstümliche Musik share several characteristics, they usually appeal to different target groups (MENDÍVIL 2015, 137-66, and 173; MAREK 2006). Lately, due to the music of artists such as Andreas Gabalier or Melissa Nachenweng, this genre has become significantly more popular among the younger generation (age 16 to 29) (DOBLER 2021).

‘Volksmusik’ usually refers to ‘echte’ (‘authentic’) traditional folk music originating in rural areas. Much like this German term, which encompasses both traditional (Alpine) folk music and Schlager-related Volkstümliche Musik, the English term ‘folk music’ also covers both ‘traditional folk music’ (often referred to as ‘traditional music’) and ‘contemporary folk music’ (PEGG 2001). The term ‘Alpenländische Volksmusik’ (‘Alpine folk music’) was coined in Austria and refers to the Alpine regions of Austria, Southern Germany (Bavaria) and Eastern Switzerland (HAID 2002).

Lately, categories such as Weltmusik or Global have been more prevalent than Neue Volksmusik. For example, in the emerging talent program of the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (BMEIA), The New Austrian Sound of Music (NASOM), the category ‘Neue Volksmusik/Weltmusik’ was used in the funding period 2012/2013, but it was later first renamed to ‘Weltmusik’ (2014/2015–2022/2023) and then to ‘Global’ (since 2025/2026). This is also reflected

²⁴ ‘Abgrenzung zur ‘traditionellen’, ‘authentischen’ bzw. ‘echten’ Volksmusik’. See also BRÖCKER (1998).

²⁵ E.g., an annual song contest for Volkstümliche Musik was called ‘Grand Prix der Volksmusik’ (1986-2010). See also GLANZ (1992, 158-9).

²⁶ Sven Gächter, for example, defines Volkstümliche Musik as ‘Recycling der Gattung Volkslied im Geiste des Schlagers’ (GÄCHTER 1993, 31; ‘recycling of the genre of folk song in the spirit of the Schlager’).

²⁷ According to Julio Mendívil, Schlager is whatever is accepted as such by the community (MENDÍVIL 2015, 169).

in the database of the Austrian Music Information Center (mica),²⁸ which uses the *Neue Volksmusik* as a subgenre for only a few musicians, while categorizing other key figures of this music scene mainly under the genres ‘Global’ and/or ‘Volksmusik/Volkstümliche Musik’. The closely affiliated platform Austrian Music Export²⁹ lists the categories ‘Folk’ and ‘Global’. At the SRA, which works with finely divided categories, the artists analyzed in this study are assigned to various terms, including ‘Folklore/Pop-Folk’, ‘Popmusic’, ‘Folkmusic/World Music’, ‘Folklore/Pop-Folk’, ‘Folkmusic/National Folk’, and ‘Popmusic/Austro-Pop’.³⁰

In sum, there are usually no uniform definitions, or they are so broad that very different things are grouped together. Often, the categorizations are contradictory, and it is not always easy to classify performers. As a result, the same artists are often put into different categories.³¹ The genre terms outlined above might be a useful tool for journalists, record companies or audiences; however, artists themselves often reject these categorizations. For this study with its focus on specific musical elements, generalizing terms are hardly relevant. In scholarly debates, concepts and notions of ‘traditional’ and ‘folk’ have been intensely discussed since the late twentieth century.³² Frequently, ‘traditional music’ has been used as a synonym of ‘folk music’³³, including in the Austrian context: both are generally understood as music of the people, originating from the traditions and cultures of various communities, passed down orally from generation to generation, with often unknown composers (HAID 2006; PEGG 2001; BRÖCKER 1998). In Austria, folk music dynasties (for example the Derschmidt family and the Dengg family) have played a crucial role for the ‘social location and cultural sustainability of traditional music’ (MORGENSTERN 2021, 15). Comparing the concepts of ‘popular’ and ‘traditional’ reveals various overlapping areas and blurred boundaries—both within the music itself and within popular music studies and ethnomusicology. This includes ‘revival

²⁸ <<https://db.musicaustria.at/>>.

²⁹ <<https://www.musicexport.at/>> bzw. <<https://www.musicexport.at/artists/>>.

³⁰ See <<https://sra.at/bands/genre>>; the subcategories can be found by clicking on the individual genres, or on <<https://sra.at/>> by searching for specific people or bands and checking the respective subpages.

³¹ On the platform Austropop.at, which was active until December 2024, ‘Musik aus Österreich’ (‘Music from Austria’) is divided into the following four main categories: ‘Austropop / Rock’, ‘Wienerlied’, ‘Weltmusik / New Age’, and ‘Schlager / Volksmusik’. The latter category is subdivided into ‘Schlager’, ‘Volksmusik’ (meaning *Volkstümliche Musik*), ‘Echte Volksmusik’ (traditional folk music), and ‘Neue Volksmusik’. However, some performers are listed in more than one category. For example, the band *Folkshilfe* is listed under ‘Volksmusik’, ‘Neue Volksmusik’, and ‘Weltmusik’, while Herbert Pixner appears under ‘Volksmusik’ and ‘Echte Volksmusik’. *Da Blechhauf’n* is listed under ‘Volksmusik’ and ‘Neue Volksmusik’, and Hubert von Goisern appears under both ‘Austropop / Rock’ and ‘Neue Volksmusik’ (<<https://www.austropop.at/musik/musik-aus-oesterreich/>>).

³² In these debates, tradition is often associated with Hobsbawm’s idea of ‘invented traditions’ (HOBBSAWM 1983, 1) as distinct from ‘customs’, which dominate ‘so-called ‘traditional’ societies’ (ibid, 2), and interestingly, not to be confused with ‘the strength and adaptability of genuine traditions’ (ibid., 8). For further (critical) discussions of the term ‘traditional music’, see for example BAUMANN (1991) and ELSCHEK (1993).

³³ For example, the renowned International Folk Music Council (IFMC, founded 1947) was renamed International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) in 1981; in 2023 the council was renamed again to International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance (see <<http://www.ictmusic.org/>>). For further studies on (Austrian) folk music, see for example BOHLMAN (1988), SUPPAN (1984), HAID (2013), MORGENSTERN (2014) and GELBART (2007).

movements of traditional music sharing repertoires and some stylistic features with their chosen reference culture, and many contextual functions and strategies of dissemination' (MORGENSTERN 2021, 21).

Overall, the concept of 'traditional music' is—despite critical voices—well established and understood by most stakeholders in the Austrian music scene. In recent debates, scholars such as Ulrich Morgenstern (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna) have acted as strong advocates for the term and concept of 'traditional music', since it 'can help to give us a better understanding of meaningful manifestations of music, based in a local community and shared by more than one generation, and not easily replaced by something fundamentally new' (MORGENSTERN 2021, 25). This notion certainly applies to the main aims of this study.

Focus of Analysis

This study examines the integration of traditional music elements in contemporary popular music in Austria, focusing on the following research questions: How can traditional music (elements) be successfully transferred into the present? Which aspects, themes and topics are used, and how do they appear in Austrian popular music?

According to Larkey, the three primary aspects of identity in Austrian popular music are 'the sound, the lyrics and the vocalists' (LARKEY 1993, 215). We examine all three factors, focusing on:

- a) the artists' image and self-presentation,
- b) themes and topics,
- c) music creation and the resulting sound.

First, we consider each artists' self-presentation to understand how they construct their images and artistic identities. Through textual analysis of scholarly and journalistic texts, interviews and artist portraits, as well as the performers' homepages and visual appearances, we look at how they use symbolic elements of Alpine culture in the selected musical pieces, including traditional Alpine dress such as lederhosen and dirndl skirts.

Regarding themes and topics, we examine the songs' lyrics, including their respective dialects.³⁴ The use of distinctive regional Austrian dialects emerges as a common stylistic feature among the

³⁴ According to Ulrike Thumberger, dialects continue to 'play a major role in daily life and people's sense of self' in Austria (THUMBERGER 2014, 1). In Austrian popular music, dialects have been used since the mid-1960s, probably beginning with the Worried Men Skiffle Group in songs like 'Glaubst i bin bled' ('Do You Think I'm an Idiot', 1967) (PFEILER 1995, 24-6 and 133-7). However, it was not until the 1970s that 'dialect was [recognized] as an adequate vehicle for socially critical content and political statements [...] thus gaining acceptance for the first time as a rock language' (PFEILER 1995, 133). (Original: 'Der Dialekt als adäquates Ausdrucksmittel für sozialkritische Inhalte und politische Stellungnahmen wurde in den 70er Jahren [...] erkannt und erfuhr dadurch seine erste Akzeptanz als Rocksprache.') In Austropop, lyrics in dialect have been used increasingly since the end of the 1970s (PFEILER 1995, 27).

various subgenres of the music examined here. The use of dialect is generally seen as central identity feature (LARKEY 1993, 304), intended to demonstrate authenticity (HUBER H. 2001, 211). Volkstümliche Musik, by contrast, tends to favor a ‘careful portioning of the dialect in the lyrics, with the clearly recognizable goal of addressing the widest possible audience’ (GLANZ 1992, 163).³⁵

However, our focus is the analysis of sound: we examine how selected performers use musical elements and instruments of traditional Alpine music in the creation of their individual artistic identities. Based on our own transcriptions,³⁶ we conduct in-depth analyses of the songs, using established music analysis methods from the field of jazz research (RAWLINS - BAHHA 2005; JAFFE 1996; MULHOLLAND - HOJNACKI 2013; SIKORA 2012).

Austrian traditional music is diverse and varies by region. Typical characteristics of Austrian ‘traditional music’ or ‘folk music’ (German: *Volksmusik*), however, are simple structures with repetitive verses and choruses that make the music accessible to a wide audience. Forms include singing styles like yodeling, a technique characterized by rapid changes between chest and head voice; traditional dances (e.g., the Ländler and the Polka); the use of predominantly triadic melodies in triple meter or two-four meter featuring large ranges and rich polyphony; brass band music, which is often played at festivals and celebrations; and the use of mainly acoustic instruments such as the zither and the Steirische Harmonika (engl. Styrian accordion)³⁷ (DEUTSCH 2021; HAID 2006; 2002; SUPPAN 2001; 1994; PEGG 2001, BRÖCKER 1998).

To gain a deeper understanding of the examined musical approach and its cultural implications, we selected three artists from Austria’s popular music scene and their respective hit songs for our case studies: Hubert von Goisern, holstunarmusigbigbandclub (hmbc), and Andreas Gabalier. These artists were chosen due to their different musical orientations and approaches; all three have topped the Austrian charts for considerable periods, enjoy wide popularity (in the national musical landscape and beyond) and have influenced the domestic scene with their original compositions. The songs we analyze were the artists’ breakthrough hits, which defined their respective musical approaches and careers. They form a representative selection that exemplifies a wide range of influences and styles and illustrates various defining features and tendencies of the musical phenomenon at issue here. They furthermore were central for the development of this field of music in Austria: ‘Koa Hiataamadl’ (1992) by Hubert von Goisern was chosen for its pioneering role, ‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppernou’ (2010) by hmbc was particularly influential due to its distribution via social media, and ‘I sing a Liad

³⁵ ‘fein abgestimmte Positionierung des Dialekts in den Texten, mit dem klar erkennbaren Ziel, ein breitestmögliches Publikum anzusprechen’.

³⁶ Transcriptions by Christa Bruckner-Haring.

³⁷ The Styrian accordion is one of the most common instruments in Austrian folk music and originates in that tradition. Other frequently used instruments include the alphorn, Maultrommel (jaw harp) and Hackbrett (dulcimer). ‘Classical’ instruments, such as violin, guitar, double bass, harp, and various brass instruments, are also common.

für di' (2010) by Andreas Gabalier, a song that stayed in the Austrian charts longer than any song before it, set the stage for numerous extremely successful songs and musicians.³⁸

The case studies provide insight into the music of three key figures of Austria's music scene, each of whom has developed an individual approach and made a significant contribution to a prominent area of contemporary Austrian popular music.

Hubert von Goisern

Upper Austrian native Hubert von Goisern (born Hubert Achleitner)³⁹ is one of Austria's most successful and influential folk and pop musicians and is often cited as the initiator of Neue Volksmusik (HUBER 2018). When he decided to become a professional musician at the age of 27, he took up his grandfather's Styrian accordion, for him the 'epitome of the eternal past' (see Hubert von Goisern's homepage, HVG 2023).

Von Goisern charted two hit singles in the early 1990s—'Koa Hiataamadl' ('no sheperdess') and 'Heast as nit' ('can't you hear it?')—winning him a reputation as the inventor of 'Alpenrock'⁴⁰ and as the reformer and 'rescuer' of Alpine folk music: 'His *Hiataamadl* ('sheperdess') broke through the conventions of Alpine folk music and brought tradition into the present' (HVG 2014). Von Goisern himself views music from his home region as the root of his work; his style integrates this basis with elements of rock, pop, reggae, jazz, soul, punk and country. Together with his band, Alpinkatzen ('Alpine cats'), he released two successful albums using this musical approach, *Aufgeigen stått niederschiassen* ('fiddle boldly instead of shooting down', 1992) and *Omunduntn* ('up and down', 1994). Further albums devoted to folk songs are *Trad* (2001) and *Trad II* (2003). He has stated that his aim has been to create music that makes 'old people turn over in their graves, but that the young can relate to', as the (old-fashioned) folk music milieu repelled him (HVG 2017).⁴¹

The identification with his regional culture is clearly of paramount importance: the Styrian accordion has become his trademark instrument, a symbol of his 'reinvention' of the music he grew up with and is featured prominently on many of his album covers through 2011 (*EntwederUndOder* ['either and or']).

From the 1990s on, his music has emphasized the dialect of his native region 'In order to enjoy the sound to the full[;] however, you need vowels, which are much more strongly represented in

³⁸ At the time of our analysis, the most successful artists in this area were male. More recently, rising star Melissa Naschenweng has achieved great popularity; her approach is similar to Gabalier's.

³⁹ Achleitner adopted the stage name Hubert von Goisern—derived from (and obviously in homage to) his Upper Austrian hometown, Bad Goisern am Hallstättersee.

⁴⁰ The (Zillertaler) Schürzenjäger also claim to be the inventors of Alpenrock (GLANZ 1999, 275; OSWALD 2005b).

⁴¹ 'sich die Alten im Grab herumdrehen und die Jungen einen Zugang finden'.

dialect. In addition, the dialect is a more direct form of expression' (STN 2001). He does not see dialect as an obstacle to being understood in other countries, since—in his view—the language of music is understood everywhere (see for example STN 2001, STZ 2003, and HVG 2007-9). Additionally, Chantal Dorn maintains that singing standard German would be inauthentic: 'Neither is it HvG when he sings in High German. That would be much too dramatic. The message does not come across as easily' (DORN 2001). When asked about his clothing, he says: 'I do like clothes where you can identify a definite regional identity; I prefer linen clothes^[42]—but since this *Tracht* [traditional costume] boom broke out, I've hung up my [lederhosen]' (cit. in UNTERHOFER 1993).⁴³ Von Goisern's stated goal for his music is to 'contribute[] a little to Austrians finding an identity' (OÖN 1992a). He believes that Austria's 'cultural identity' should be preserved; this idea gained importance during the period leading up to Austria's joining the European Union, becoming a further driver to his success (cit. in LEOPOLD 1992).

Extensive travels during his professional career also influenced his music, particularly the albums *Inexil* ('in exile', 1998, with Tibetan influences) and *Gombe* (1998, with East African elements). Some albums, including *Fön* ('hair dryer', 2000) and *EntwederUndOder* (2011), also contain original compositions.⁴⁴

Among von Goisern's major concerns are connecting people with music and using it as a medium of cultural, social and political critique, advocating a tolerant society and an inclusive view of culture. He used his popularity from the beginning to criticize the right-wing Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), particularly—in the early 1990s—the party's charismatic leader, Jörg Haider (HEIDE 1993a, 1993b). Von Goisern was often asked about Haider, also a Bad Goisern native. When the party later used his music ('Heast as nit') at a campaign event, von Goisern published an open letter to their leader, Heinz-Christian Strache, forbidding the use of his music by the FPÖ (see HVG 2006; cf. STADLBAUER 2006). A similar episode took place in 2016 with FPÖ presidential candidate Norbert Hofer (see HVG 2016; cf. FLIEHER 2016).

With his reinterpretation of folk music, von Goisern attempts to distinguish himself from *Volkstümliche Musik*: In the early 1990s, he saw his work as 'separate from the acoustic garbage of *Volkstümliche Musik* due to his personal claim to quality' (cit. in HOHL 1997, 82)⁴⁵, which illustrates

⁴² Hubert von Goisern's linen garment can be seen, for example, on the album cover of *Aufgeigen stätt niederschlassen* (1992).

⁴³ 'Ich mag gern Kleidung, an der man eine regionale Identität sehr wohl erkennt, am liebsten trag' ich Leinengewand, aber seit dieser Trachtenboom ausgebrochen ist, habe ich meine Lederne an den Nagel gehängt.'

⁴⁴ A complete discography can be found at the end of this paper. Hubert von Goisern's music has received various national music awards in different categories, such as pop/rock and jazz/blues/folk; he also received an Amadeus Austrian Music Honorary Award for music transcending genre and bringing people together.

⁴⁵ 'vom akustischen Müll der volkstümlichen Musik durch seinen persönlichen Qualitätsanspruch getrennt'.

his social distinction strategy. He simply wants to make ‘Music for the people. Music of the people’ (HvG 2014).

‘Koa Hiataamadl’

‘Koa Hiataamadl’ (‘Shepherdess’⁴⁶) was von Goisern’s first big hit with the newly formed Alpinkatzen, released in 1992 on the album *Aufgeigen stätt niederschlassen* (track 1). The instrumentation of ‘Koa Hiataamadl’ consists of von Goisern (lead-vcl, el-g, styr accor), Sabine Kapfinger, also known as ‘Alpine Zabine’ (vcl), Reinhard Stranzinger (g), Stefan Engel (keyb), Wolfgang Spannberger (el-b), and Wolfgang Maier (d). The album title translates roughly as ‘jamming out instead of shooting down’⁴⁷ and was interpreted as ‘that [it] is not Hubert von Goisern’s point to stalk up on the rich hunting grounds of the *Musikantenstadt*’ (OÖN 1992b).

A look at the album’s cover assists in the understanding of the title: It depicts a hunter (Stranzinger), holding an electric guitar instead of a rifle and surprising a Styrian accordion player (von Goisern) in the mountains.⁴⁸ rock/pop meets/bursts upon tradition. Regarding the clothing, von Goisern—the only one with a folk music instrument—is dressed in ‘modern’ white (but in ‘traditional’ linen); the background musicians all carry ‘modern’ instruments but wear traditional lederhosen. Some supporters of traditional folk music disliked this new folk-rock style, but the song was very popular in general, particularly with younger listeners.⁴⁹ As a local Bavarian newspaper described it: ‘While many *Trachtler* and folk music lovers are surely horrified at the rock sounds of this live band, young people eat it up’ (SCHUSSER 1993).⁵⁰

The original ‘Hiataamadl’ is a well-known traditional couples’ dance, a polka from ca. 1890 native to Austria and Bavaria.⁵¹ The melody and lyrics appear in many variants (see for example the version

⁴⁶ While ‘No shepherdess’ is a more accurate translation, the song title is translated as ‘Shepherdess’ on Hubert von Goisern’s homepage (see HvG n.d.b).

⁴⁷ Harald Huber translates the title as ‘Fiddle up, don’t shoot down’ (HUBER H. 2001, 157): in the vernacular, the verb ‘to play the violin’ is also used for musical ‘jamming’.

⁴⁸ The whole painting can be seen on the maxi-single cover art of *Koa Hiataamadl* (1992) and (in a mirror image) *Wildschütz Röp* (1993; ‘Wildschütz’ is another word for hunter or poacher, ‘Röp’ is a German phonetic rendering of ‘rap’). By the way, the apparent template of this painting can be found on the compilations *Schräg dahoam* 1-3 (1993-2002; with the same record label), on which Hubert von Goisern is also represented.

⁴⁹ This is also evidenced by many cover versions in different arrangements, e.g. by Die jungen Klostertaler (1994), B-Funk Family (2002) and Zdob si Zdub & Sportfreunde Stiller (2009).

⁵⁰ *Trachtler* are people who wear traditional costumes. (Original: ‘Während es vielen Trachtlern und Volksmusikliebhabern sicher die ‘Haare’ aufstellt bei den Rockklängen dieser Showband, haben gerade junge Leute einen ‘Narren’ daran gefressen.’)

⁵¹ See for example SCHUSSER (1993), who assumes that the ‘Hirtamadl’ [sic] is known in almost every village in Upper Bavaria. Von Goisern was now and then accused of co-opting the ‘Hiataamadl’, that it was not an original composition (‘eigenständige schöpferische Komposition’, SCHUSSER [1993]). Von Goisern countered that he had simply borrowed the chorus, ‘but the verses and the whole concept are mine’ (‘aber die Strophen und das ganze Konzept sind von mir’). The record company had mistakenly listed only him as the author, but the authors’ rights are equally divided between ‘Volkslied’ and ‘Hubert von Goisern’ (OÖN 1993).

from 1935 in Figure 4). Mainly due to the popular success of von Goisern's version, the song is nowadays widely known (also to people without a folk music background) and is sung, for example, in kindergartens and schools.⁵² Von Goisern's arrangement⁵³ uses parts of the melody from the traditional song, but adds original sections such as the yodeling and instrumental parts (see Table 2). The lyrics, written and performed in dialect, are traditionally based and supplemented by new verses from von Goisern (and Wolfgang Staribacher;⁵⁴ see Table 1).

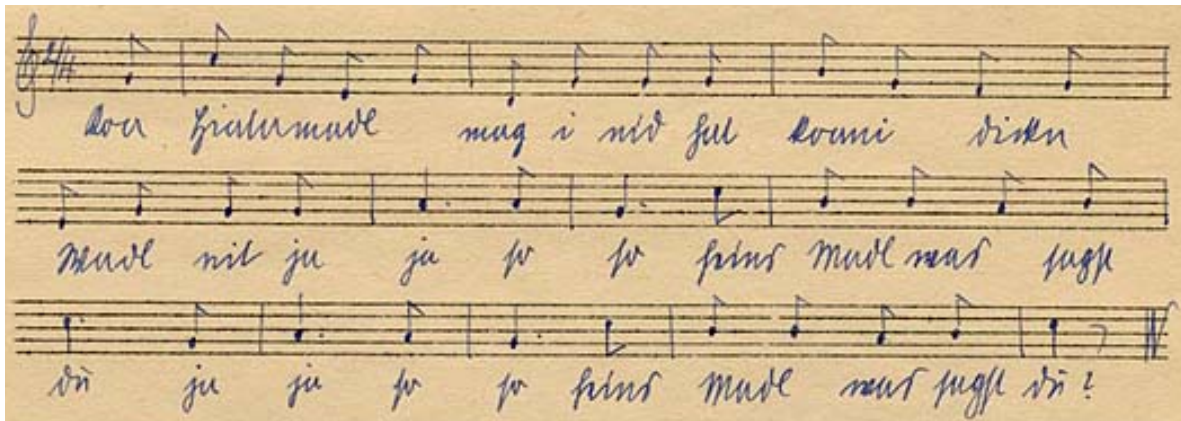


Figure 4. ‘Koa Hiataamadl’ (1935) (Tiroler Volksliedarchiv / Tiroler Landesmuseen, Sign. III/1 (Nr. 1) <<https://www.volkslied.at/project/koa-hiataamadl-mag-i-nid-s-hiataamadl/>>)⁵⁵

In the lyrics of von Goisern's extended version (see Table 1), the singer is looking for a (sexual) partner but finds an Alpine shepherdess undesirable in comparison to a city girl, who has more curves. In his content analysis, Tremml determines sexual selection—choosing the right girl—as the song's main topic (TREMML 2008, 191). In addition to describing the outward appearances of his dream girl, in the last section before the final yodeler, the content abruptly changes, as he sings about typical Alpine elements such as the ‘Landlertanz’ (‘country dances’) and the ‘Almenkranz’ (‘alpine wreaths’).

⁵² Authors' personal experience.

⁵³ Von Goisern's former partner Wolfgang Staribacher is also indicated as author of the music and lyrics.

⁵⁴ Staribacher collaborated with von Goisern as co-composer, lyricist, and producer on *Aufgeigen stätt niederschiasen*. YouTube contains a live performance with Staribacher from 1991 in the Circus Krone in Munich, which differs somewhat from the later published version in terms of instrumentation (accordion; no electric guitar) and the middle part of the form; see <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0V5Ebyjgls>> and <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UDJPQbvgiY>> (accessed 8 March 2023).

⁵⁵ Notated on 8 December 1935 in Alpbach (Tyrol); version by Geschwister Moser (see Tiroler Volksliedarchiv). Lyrics: ‘Koa Hiataamadl mag i nid / hat koani dickn Wadl nit / ja ja so so / feins Madl was sagst du / ja ja so so / feins Madl was sagst du?’

Section	Lyrics ⁵⁶	Translation (German) ⁵⁷	Translation (English) ⁵⁸
A	Jâ mei, jâ mei, wenn i mir um a Diandl schau, dann woaf i scho genau rund muaß sei und a wengerl resch, u mei.	Ja, oh ja, wenn ich mich nach einem Mädchen umsche, dann weiß ich schon genau: rund muss sie sein, und ein wenig knusprig, jawohl.	Oh my, oh my, when I look at a girl then I know for sure that she's got to be round and a bit tasty, oh my.
A	Mei, jâ mei, de meist'n Menscha ⁵⁹ hãm a Gstell zaundürr und måger wiadawäll. Mei, jâ mei, a solch' oane de kunnt's nia sei.	Ja, oh ja, die meisten Menschen [Frauen] haben ein Gestell [Körper] zaundürr und mager wie es nur geht. Ja, oh ja, (eine) so eine könnte es (für mich) nie sein.	My, oh my, most of the girls are beanpoles, scrawny and scraggy as you like it. My, oh my, I could never have one like that.
B	Koa Hiataamadl måg i nit, hât koane dickn Wadln nit, i måg a Diandl ⁶⁰ aus da Stadt, wås dicke Wadln hât.	(K)ein Hirtenmädchen mag ich nicht hat keine dicken Waden nicht, ich mag ein Mädchen aus der Stadt, das dicke Waden hat.	I don't like a shepherd girl, (she) doesn't have fat legs, I like a girl from the city who has fat legs.
A	Mei, jâ mei, die Moni mit de rot'n ⁶¹ Hoar is schena nu wia voriges Jahr. Hât a gråd nit wenig auf da Wâag.	Ja, oh ja, die Moni mit den roten Haaren ist schöner noch als voriges Jahr. (Sie) bringt auch nicht gerade wenig auf die Waage.	My, oh my, Moni with the red hair is prettier now than last year. Has just not little on the scales.
A	Mei—u mei, de Annamiarl kenn i schon, da renn i liaba glei davon, Is nix dran, hint'n und voran. ⁶²	Ja, oh ja, die Annamarie kenn ich schon, da renne ich lieber gleich davon, denn (an ihr) ist nichts dran, weder hinten noch vorne.	My, oh my, I know Anne-Marie already, and would rather run away from her. There's nothing on her, not behind and not from the front.
B	Koa Hiataamadl måg i nit ...	(K)ein Hirtenmädchen mag ich nicht ...	I don't like a shepherd girl ...
D	Schen san de Landlertanz, schen san de Almenkranz, drob'n auf'n Huat baid' ⁶³ schen quigizen tuat.	Schön sind die Landlertänze, schön sind die Alm(blum)enkränze, oben auf dem Hut, wenn es schön quietscht.	Beautiful are the country dances, beautiful are the Alpine wreaths up on your hat when the accordion plays beautifully.

Table 1. Lyrics of 'Koa Hiataamadl'

⁵⁶ Lyrics from the booklet. The sung lyrics differ occasionally, in pronunciation as well as in some expressions (marked in Table 1), from the published lyrics. Four phrases/words of the original lyrics are footnoted and translated to standard German (or explained): 'und a wengerl resch' = 'und ein wenig knusprig' ('bold'); 'wiadawäll' = 'wie's nur geht' ('as you like'); 'baid' schen quigizen tuat' = 'wenn es schön quietschen tut' ('when it squeaks so pretty'); 'Landlertanz' = 'Brauchtumstanz' ('country dance').

⁵⁷ Translation by the authors.

⁵⁸ English translation from Hubert von Goisern's homepage (see HvG n.d.b).

⁵⁹ In the official recording, von Goisern sings 'Weiba' ('women').

⁶⁰ Official recording: 'Madl' (also 'girl').

⁶¹ Official recording: 'greanan' (English: 'green').

⁶² Official recording: 'net hint' und net voran'.

⁶³ Official recording: 'beid's' ('both') or 'bâld' ('soon').

Von Goisern plays the piece in a much slower tempo than traditional dances (71 bpm)—it would be impossible to dance a polka to his version. In addition to the standard rock instrumentation (see above), the Styrian accordion holds a central position as a symbol of traditional Alpine culture, functioning as dominant accompanying instrument throughout the piece. The song's prelude is a spoken introduction that implements sounds and reverb effects meant to evoke the impression that the vocalist is in the mountains during a thunderstorm. The introduction ends with the electric guitar and the drums heralding a rock-like arrangement.

Section	Bars	Notes
Prelude		shouted
Introduction	8	instrumental (rock); D major (I–V)
A	8	verse (I–V–IV)
A	8	
B	8	chorus (I–V)
B	8	
C	8	yodeling; G major (I–V)
A	8	D major
A	8	
B	8	
B	8	
D	8	A major
E	8	yodeling; D major (I–V)
E	8	
E	8	yodeling (call–response)
E'	8	instrumental (fade out)

Table 2. Structure of ‘Koa Hiataamadl’

Von Goisern's arrangement is set in a 2/4 polka meter; D major is the primary key, with changing temporary tonic in the yodeling sections C and D (C: G major and D: A major). The whole piece is representative of his Alpenrock style, which is a hybridization of traditional elements and rock, even in the instrumentation: the accompanying Styrian accordion provides the harmonic basis and plays fill-ins. The rhythm section, especially electric guitar and drums, plays in the style common for (early) rock (guitar slides, sounds and effects; simple 4/4 drum beat). The electric bass mostly plays the root alternating with the fifth, often in a *tresillo* rhythm (♩.♩.♩) (see also Example 3, bars 5 and 7).

The traditional ‘Hiataamadl’ melody (see Figure 4) is used in von Goisern's chorus in typically Alpine fashion, based mainly on the triads and diatonic notes of the tonic and dominant (section B, see Example 1). Moreover, the chorus is sung in a traditional style with the second voice higher than the main voice (*Überschlag*), supported by the Styrian accordion.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ In Austrian folk songs, in addition to the lead vocals, the second voice is usually an upper voice (‘Überschlag’) in thirds or sixths, mostly parallel (or occasionally in contrary motion) to the lead (see e.g. FUCHS n.d.).

1 D A7 D

Koa Hia - ta - ma - dl måg i nit, håt koa - ne dic - kn Wa - dln nit, i

Example 1. ‘Koa Hiatamadl’, section B, bb. 1-4

The melody lines of the verse (section A) fit generally into this style as well, but the verse is delivered in a rock-influenced, rather expressive vocal style, with slight deviations in intonation, shouts and *portamenti*. The first beat of each bar is accentuated by both the singer and the bass; the harmonies are only extended by the subdominant, audible also in the off-beat accompaniment of the accordion (see Example 2).

A

vcl D A G D

Jã mei, jã mei, wenn i mir uma Dian-dl schau, dann woaß i scho ge-nau

styr accor

el-b

Example 2. ‘Koa Hiatamadl’, section A1, bb. 1-4

Section C contains a typical traditional yodeling song without lyrics, using only syllables—a characteristic element of Alpine folk music. In the final yodeling section E, in D major, von Goisern sings together with the female vocalist Zabine, partly in an alternating call and response pattern (see Example 3).

5 D A7 D

Zabine

Tri-dl-di_ jo-la-ra-u ri-dl-di_ jo-la-ra-u di-dl-di_ jo-la-ra-u-ri_ Hu-

von Goisern

Hu-li - je-i-di, ja - ho.

el-b

Example 3. ‘Koa Hiatamadl’, section E3, bb. 5-8

The vocal density of the yodeling sections increases with each repetition. In the final section E, the accordion ends the piece with an improvisation, imitating yodeling lines. Altogether, the arrangement, the sound, and the style of dress depicted on the cover represent von Goisern's fusion of tradition and rock.

holstuonarmusigbigbandclub

The holstuonarmusigbigbandclub (abbreviated 'hmbc') is a band from the westernmost Austrian state, Vorarlberg. The name derives from the *Holstuonar*, Alpine farmers who came together in the evening to make music. The group was founded around 2002 and consisted initially of five members, all educated classical or jazz musicians.⁶⁵

The group's first two albums, *Querschlager* ('ricochet' or 'troublemaker', 2007) and *free sin* ('be free' or 'freedom', 2008), consisted entirely of covers mostly of well-known German-language songs and international pop songs. In 2010, the band gained international popularity with their original song 'Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou' and subsequently released several albums of original compositions: *Lieble* ('darling', 2011), the live CD *grüesele live* ('very live', 2012), and *hearad* ('hear hear', 2014). In 2015, lead singer and composer Philipp Lingg left the band and Ossi Weber and Stefan Hörtnagl joined it. The band released one more live album in 2016, *Crazy live*, and then separated shortly afterwards.

The holstuonarmusigbigbandclub considered itself a mixture of (traditional) dance music group, boy band, jazz/funk band and brass band.⁶⁶ In addition to brass instruments, alphorn and accordion, the instruments played also included Styrian accordion (though not prominently). Traditional folk music elements are a central characteristic of their music, as is their native Vorarlberg dialect: it was natural and important to the band to sing in the language they grew up with (HMBC 2012d; LINGG 2019). They understood language as a 'playground' (HMBC 2011d; 2012a; 2012d): typical was the mixture of their native dialect (from the Bregenz Forest region of Vorarlberg), standard German and English. Lingg referred to it as 'diadenglisch' (HMBC 2014).⁶⁷

The band members all grew up surrounded by (and playing) folk music, but each also contributed his own influences and tastes to the band's distinctive sound. They did not want to be classified by one specific genre or style (HMBC 2009; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2011d; 2011e; 2012b), and named (in addition to folk music) funk, reggae and jazz as elements of their musical style (HMBC 2012a).

⁶⁵ The five founding members are Johannes Bär (hrn, tu, tb, vcl, didg, beatbox), Stefan Bär (tu, hrn, vcl), Philipp Lingg (vcl, g, accor), Bartholomäus Natter (tp, flhrn, vcl, beatbox) and Andreas Broger (sax, cl, fl, vcl). Philipp Lingg left the group in 2015 and was replaced by Ossi Weber (vcl, g) and Stefan Hörtnagl (styr accor, sax).

⁶⁶ See <<http://www.hmbc.at/de/band/info>> (accessed 6 February 2023).

⁶⁷ The linguistic mixture is possibly influenced by the Austrian musician Falco (see e.g. the lyrics of 'Der Kommissar', 1982).

Avoiding convention was of great importance to the band (HMBC 2012a; 2012c): Their first hit (‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’) initially became famous through its YouTube video, almost two years after its composition. Their second single—‘Vorreasso, vorkouft, as louft’ (‘critized harshly, sold, it’s running smoothly’, from *Lieble* (2011)—not only represents a significant musical departure from the first; it also contains a clear lyrical message, taken from their own experience: that they had no intention of ‘selling themselves’ to big labels. To maintain their independence, the group relied mainly on social media platforms such as YouTube for promoting their music videos, alongside live concerts and iTunes for additional promotion. Their social distinction strategy consisted of avoiding involvement with a big record label; their aim was to have fun creating and performing their music (HMBC 2012a; 2012c; 2014). They spell this out in the lyrics of ‘Vorreasso, vorkouft, as louft’, where they also openly satirize the ‘powerful’ Volkstümliche Musik:

Lyrics ⁶⁸	Translation ⁶⁹
Mit ein bisschen Playback mit ein bisschen Showdräck tha whole world is ruled by you [...] Was wir machen, ist unser Risi-Bisi Keine Plattenboss kein Manager der uns sagt das ist Trend ja kein Schleimi kein Heini kein Reini. Ich danke den Menschen die klatschen den Menschen die lachen und die die ehrlich sind und uns zuzwinkern. Ich danke den Menschen, die klatschen, den Menschen, die lachen und die die ehrlich sind zu uns.	With a little playback with a little show dreck the whole world is ruled by you [...] What we do is our Risi-Bisi ⁷⁰ No record boss no manager who tells us That’s the trend; no Schleimi no Heini no Reini. I thank the people who clap, the people who laugh and those who are honest and wink at us. I thank the people who clap, the people who laugh and those who are honest with us.

Table 3. Excerpt from the lyrics of ‘Vorreasso, vorkouft, as louft’

hmbc members often wore traditional Alpine clothing—knee-length leather knickerbockers and Alpine hats with a traditional chamois tuft, for instance, combined with casual pants and shirts.

‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’

The song ‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’ (‘From Mellau to Schoppornau’) was first released in the summer of 2010 and marked hmbc’s international breakthrough: Philipp Lingg’s composition quickly

⁶⁸ Lyrics from the band’s homepage, see <<http://www.hmbc.at/de/medien/songtexte/vorreasso-vorkouft-as-louft>> (accessed 6 February 2023).

⁶⁹ English translation by the authors.

⁷⁰ Risi-Bisi (from Italian ‘risi e bisì’) is a rice dish with peas.

reached number two on the Austrian single charts, was crowned ‘favorite song of the year’ by a German radio station, and was awarded the Amadeus Award for ‘song of the year’ in 2012.⁷¹ With the help of its video (directed by Nikolaus Küng), the song became internationally popular, reaching over one million clicks within four months (currently more than 9 million clicks⁷²). In 2011 it was released as track 4 on the album *Liabile* (2011), performed by Philipp Lingg (lead vcl, g), Johannes Bär (tu), Ossi Weber (vcl), Stefan Hörtnagl (vcl) and Bartholomäus Natter (beatbox).

The song is played in alla breve time at a tempo of half note = 66 bpm; the key is C major. The overall structure is fairly simple (see Table 4): after an introduction, a two-part song form (verse—A, chorus—B) is used. Sections A and B consist of 16 bars; however, after each verse (A), a short transition to the chorus by the tuba is added. The piece ends with a coda played by the guitar.

Section	Bars	Notes
Introduction	16	instrumental; bb. 1-8: guitar; bb. 5-7: vocals (u-u); b. 8: start of beatboxing with off-beat accentuation on 2 and 4; bb. 9-16: plus tuba
A	18 (16+2)	verse; bb. 17-8: interlude with a break, followed by tuba transition
B	16	chorus; harmonized melody (vocal three-part voicing)
A	17 (16+1)	verse; b. 17: one-bar interlude
B	16	chorus; harmonized melody (vocal three-part voicing)
A	18 (16+2)	verse; one-bar interlude with a short tuba transition
B	16	chorus; harmonized melody bb. 1-4: vomiting sound, higher volume bb. 9-16: superimposition of two main melodic phrases, increasing volume
B	18 (16+2)	chorus; bb. 1-8: continuation of overlapping melodic phrases bb. 9-16: lead vocal and guitar only bb. 17-8: short vocal ending, leading to the outro
Coda	4	guitar solo

Table 4. Structure of ‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’

‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’ relates the lead vocalist’s drunken trek from Mellau to his home in Schoppornau (a distance of about 12 kilometers), at the end of a long night out. The humorous (and loosely autobiographical) lyrics are written and performed in a Vorarlberg dialect, according to Lingg Low Alemannic (see Table 5) (HMBC 2011b).⁷³

⁷¹ ‘Liebling des Jahres’, Bayern 3; ‘Song des Jahres’ at the Amadeus Austrian Music Awards. (Incidentally, Hubert von Goisern’s ‘Brenna tuats guat’ and Andreas Gabalier’s ‘Sweet little Rehlein’ were also among the nominees this year.) ‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’ was composed in 2009, one of the first songs written by the band. The song remained in the Austria top 40 for 38 weeks (see AUSTRIANCHARTS 2023).

⁷² See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmI2m06YFfc>> (accessed 7 February 2023).

⁷³ For a detailed analysis on the song’s dialect characteristics and phonetic specifics see THUMBERGER (2014, 19-24).

Section	Lyrics ⁷⁴	Translation (German) ⁷⁵	Translation (English) ⁷⁶
A	<p>Samstag Zaubod a dor Egg, i beo wiedor amaul halb varreckt. Oas, zwo, drü, vier, fünf, seggs, siebo Gläsle sand oas zviel gsin, i gloub i ka nix daföar. No an letschta Blick uf mine Rolex Uhr— häb oa Oug zua, dass i jau do Zwölfar sea. A Glück kea, Glück kea und scho hat ar mi gseah.</p> <p>Guni seyt itz züod fädo i toar nämle zuo min Lädo.</p>	<p>Samstag abends in Egg bin ich wieder mal halb verreckt.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Gläser sind eines zu viel gewesen, ich glaub' ich kann nix dafür.</p> <p>Noch ein letzter Blick auf meine Rolex-Uhr – ein Aug zu, dass ich noch den 12er seh'.</p> <p>Glück gehabt, Glück gehabt, doch schon hat er mich gesehen. Der Guni sagt: 'Jetzt geh endlich nach Hause, ich mach nämlich meinen Laden zu!'</p>	<p>Saturday evening in Egg I am half dead again. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 glasses were one too many, I don't think I can help it. One last look at my Rolex watch – one eye closed so I can still see the 12. Lucky me, lucky me, but now he has seen me. Guni says: 'Go home now, I'm closing my bar!'</p>
B	<p>Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou bean i gloufo, d'Füaß himmor weh tau. Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou bean i gloufo, d'Füaß himmor weh tau. Weh tau, we tau, we tau, d'Füaß himmor weh tau.</p> <p>Weh tau, we tau, we tau, d'Füaß himmor weh tau.</p>	<p>Von Mellau bis nach Schoppornau bin ich gegangen, die Füße haben mir weh getan. Von Mellau bis nach Schoppornau bin ich gegangen, die Füße haben mir weh getan. Weh getan, weh getan, weh getan, die Füße haben mir weh getan. Weh getan, weh getan, weh getan, die Füße haben mir weh getan.</p>	<p>From Mellau to Schoppornau I walked, my feet were hurting.</p> <p>From Mellau to Schoppornau I walked, my feet were hurting.</p> <p>Hurting, hurting, hurting, my feet were hurting. Hurting, hurting, hurting, my feet were hurting.</p>
A	<p>Usse ussom Tritsch, abe vor a Kässtadl, Hond usse, wato bis an Karro kunt.</p> <p>Oas, zwo, drü, vier, fünf, sechs, siebo Stunda han i gwatot und zmaul kunt an rota Renault Clio dauhear. Deanna huckt an dütscha Koch, ar seyt: 'Ich kann Dich mitnehmen bis nach Mellau, von da an musst</p>	<p>Raus aus dem Tritsch, runter vor den Kässtadl, Hand raus, warten bis ein Auto kommt.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Stunden hab' ich gewartet, und auf einmal kommt ein roter Renault Clio daher. Drinne sitzt ein deutscher Koch, er sagt: 'Ich kann dich mitnehmen bis nach Mellau, von da musst du</p>	<p>Out of the Tritsch, down in front of the Kässtadl, hand out, waiting until a car comes. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 hours I waited, and suddenly a red Renault Clio comes along. Inside sits a German cook, he says: 'I can take you as far as Mellau, from there you are on your own, and now get in and</p>

⁷⁴ Lyrics from the band's homepage, see <<http://www.hmbc.at/de/medien/songtexte/vo-mello-bis-ge-schoppornou>> (accessed 8 March 2023).

⁷⁵ Translated by Elisabeth Sturm, provided by the holstunarmusigbigbandclub, see <<http://www.hmbc.at/de/medien/songtexte-uebersetzungen/von-mellau-bis-nach-schoppornau>> (accessed 6 February 2023).

⁷⁶ English translation by the authors.

	du schauen, wie du selber weiterkommst, und jetzt steig ein, und mach das Fenster auf, es stinkt! Ja reg di ned uf Zefix!	schauen, wie du selber weiterkommst, und jetzt steig ein, und mach das Fenster auf, es stinkt! Ja, reg dich nicht auf zefix!	open the window, it stinks!’ Yes, don’t get upset, <i>zefix!</i> ⁷⁷
B	Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou ...	Von Mellau bis nach Schoppornau ...	From Mellau to Schoppornau ...
A	Blausa kea an Füaßo, Blausa kea im Kopf, so bean i ietrolat i üsa Gadoschopf. Oas, zwo, drü, halbeviere wiad as gsin sin, d’Mama ischt scho ufret gsin. Si seyt: ‘Ey Buob wau bischt scho wieder gsin? Allad umanandsufo das kann as doch nüd sin, das kann as doch nüd sin, ey Vator saig ou amaul eatz!’ ‘Ja lassa macho, ar wiat scho weasso was ar tuot.’	Blasen gehabt an den Füßen, Blasen auch im Kopf, so bin ich reingestolpert in unseren Gadoschopf. 1, 2, 3, halb4 wird es gewesen sein, die Mama war schon wach. Sie sagt: ‘Ach, Junge, wo warst du schon wieder? Immer um die Häuser ziehen, das kann es doch nicht sein, geh, Vater, sag doch auch mal was!’ ‘Ja lass ihn machen. Er wird schon wissen was er tut.’	Had blisters on the feet, and bubbles in the head, this is how I stumbled onto our porch. 1, 2, 3, 3:30 it might have been, Mama was already awake. She says: ‘Hey, boy, where were you this time? Always out drinking, that’s not right, go on, Papa, say something too!’ ‘Well, let him be. He knows what he’s doing.’
B	Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou ...	Von Mellau bis nach Schoppornau ...	From Mellau to Schoppornau ...

Table 5. Lyrics of ‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’

The release of ‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’ exposed the band to a measure of public criticism: they were accused of glorifying the use of alcohol and also criticized for their use of profanity.⁷⁸

The overall character of the song is closely linked to its content: it is performed in a triplet feeling in a rather slow tempo—about walking speed for an inebriated person. The bass line, played by the tuba, also helps paint the picture of this nighttime walk; the frequent syncopations could be interpreted as stumbles. The percussive sounds of the beatboxing are set on beat two and four, also accentuating the offbeat. The guitar is the only harmony instrument (see Example 4), playing an accompanying riff that adds to the reggae-like feel. The entire piece is based on one simple triadic harmonic progression over four bars (I–III–IV–V) that is continuously repeated.

⁷⁷ An Alemannic curse, short for *Kruzifix!* (‘crucifix’).

⁷⁸ See <<https://www.vol.at/vorreasso-vorkouft-as-louft--andnbsp-hmbc-praesentieren-neues-video/news-20110427-07293127>> (accessed 7 February 2023).

Example 4. ‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’, introduction, bb. 9-12

The melody lines match the lyrical content, consisting of various diatonic motives in C major. The particular appeal of the melody is achieved through a unique combination of amusing lyrics (that are nonetheless dense and difficult for non-Vorarlbergers to follow, see Table 5) with uncomplicated melody lines over repetitive harmonies and a variety of simple, syncopated rhythms (see Example 5).

Example 5. ‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’, section A1, bb. 5-8

However, the three-part harmonized melody of the chorus includes harmonic extensions common in jazz (e.g., Em7/b13sus9, F9; see Example 6); these phrases also contain many syncopations and more complex rhythms. In addition, Lingg’s generally soul-influenced vocal style also adds to the jazz-like sound.

Example 6. ‘Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou’, section B1, bb. 5-8

With this song, hmbc succeeded in creating a highly original fusion: a combination of traditional marching band sounds, jazz-influenced harmonies and vocal lines, humorous dialect lyrics, a relaxed but grooving accompaniment, and various off-beat accentuations. Asked in an interview about the specific sound of the piece, Lingg answered: ‘I hate categorizations, but perhaps it really is fusion or crossover’ (SKOCEK 2010, 45).⁷⁹

Andreas Gabalier

Andreas Gabalier grew up in Graz, Styria. He learned to play the piano as a child and Western guitar in his teenage years. In 2007, while studying law in Graz, he bought a Styrian accordion,⁸⁰ taught himself to play it and started composing music to his own poems.

In 2009, Gabalier surprisingly finished second in the preliminary round for the ‘Grand Prix der Volksmusik’, a Volkstümliche Musik competition, with his song ‘So liab hob i di’ (‘I love you this much’). He made his national breakthrough shortly afterwards on the folk music show *Musikantenstadl*, and released his first album, *Da komm’ ich her* (‘that’s where I come from’, in 2009). Gabalier’s second album *Herzwerk* (‘heart work’, 2010) spent 82 weeks in the top 10 of the Austrian album charts (the second longest stint on this chart ever)⁸¹, and its hit single ‘I sing a Liad für di’ (‘I sing a song for you’) spent a record 132 weeks on the Austrian singles chart (see AUSTRIANCHARTS).⁸² A number of his songs are among the best-selling German-language hits in Germany as well.⁸³

At the beginning of the year 2011, Gabalier premiered a new image as ‘Volks-Rock’n’Roller’ (‘Folk/People’s Rock ’n’ Roller’), including a 1960s Elvis Presley-style pompadour. A few months later, his album *VolksRock’n’Roller* was released. In the Austrian annual album charts for 2011, Gabalier’s first three albums were numbers one, three and four—a feat that no other artist had achieved before. His fourth album *Home Sweet Home* (2013) was equally successful.⁸⁴ Since 2012, Gabalier has received numerous awards in the categories Schlager and Volkstümliche Musik in Austria and Germany. In Austria, he is one of the most-awarded (male) artists ever.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ ‘Ich hasse Kategorisierungen, aber vielleicht ist das wirklich Fusion oder Crossover’.

⁸⁰ In 2011 he says his passion for mountaineering was the reason for the purchase (GABALIER 2011a); later, he states that Hubert von Goisern was his inspiration (SCHÜTZ 2013).

⁸¹ The record is held by Helene Fischer’s album *Farbenspiel* (‘play of colours’) with 110 weeks (see CHARTSURFER 2024).

⁸² See also the ‘Ewige Bestenliste—Alben’ of the Austrian Charts, on which six of his albums can be found, two of them among the top 10 (*Da komm’ ich her* and *Herzwerk*).

⁸³ ‘Hulapalu’ (*Mountain Man*, 2015), ‘I sing a Liad für di’ (*Herzwerk*, 2010) and ‘Amoi seg’ma uns wieder’ (‘One day we will see each other again’, *Da komm’ ich her*, 2009) with more than 1,000,000, 450,000 and 300,000 units sold respectively, rank among the best-selling German-language hits and folk-music songs since 1975.

⁸⁴ The album *Home Sweet Home* returned him to No. 1 on the Austrian album chart after an absence of over a year.

⁸⁵ Gabalier has sold over 5,500,000 records to date (according to his record awards) and has received many Austrian and German awards in categories ranging from pop to Volksmusik, Volkstümliche Musik and Schlager.

Gabalier identifies with traditional values to an unusual extent, giving particular prominence to *Heimat* (homeland) and even claiming to ‘represent’ the term (GABALIER 2015).⁸⁶ He advocates teaching young people traditional values and emphasizes his own authenticity: ‘The nice thing is, I never have to pretend I’m something I’m not for the public’ (GABALIER 2020).⁸⁷ He is also credited with inspiring a boom in traditional Austrian *Tracht* clothing (see DOEHRING - GINKEL 2024, 89; DUNKEL - KOPANSKI 2024, 157; GABALIER 2020; GABALIER 2013; EGLE 2013).⁸⁸

The titles of his albums and songs also continually reference *Heimat*,⁸⁹ but the music itself uses fewer traditional elements than one might expect. The initially obligatory Styrian accordion has been increasingly relegated to the role of accessory. The lyrics, particularly in his later songs, reference Austrian dialect without fully committing to it: he uses standard German with a scattering of dialect words, a combination easily understood throughout the German-speaking countries. On balance, mostly superficial features symbolize his traditional stance, for instance stylized yodeling—‘hollero!’ (‘Fesche Madln’ [‘pretty girls’], *Da komm’ ich her*, 2009) and ‘hodiiodiodie!’ (‘Hulapalu’, *Mountain Man*, 2015). Stage costumes and props complete the image: short lederhosen, Bavarian long stockings, red-checked handkerchiefs and sunglasses,⁹⁰ and a microphone stand that looks like an antler. The combination of these clichés with catchy pop music and Schlager has lent him enormous commercial success.⁹¹

Andreas Gabalier often finds himself at the center of public debate due to his ideological views and controversial statements, including xenophobic and antifeminist comments (DUNKEL - KOPANSKI 2024, 143). Positioning himself as a conservative who espouses traditional family and gender roles (DUNKEL - KOPANSKI 2024, 156; BENKESER - BARTOS 2019), he for example refused to sing the updated version of the Austrian national anthem that includes both women and men (see e.g. Dunkel - KOPANSKI 2024, 141 and 156; GABALIER 2014). In general, Gabalier has made no secret of his opinions on women’s role in society⁹²: in the video to his song ‘Mountain Man’ (*Mountain Man*, 2015), he appears as a superhero saving a young girl. His attitudes even led to a legal dispute over whether he could be barred from performing at the prestigious Wiener Konzerthaus (LEYRER 2017). However, during the Covid-

⁸⁶ ‘der Begriff Heimat, für den ich auch stehe’. See also WIETSCHORKE (2020).

⁸⁷ ‘Das Schöne ist, dass ich mich für die Öffentlichkeit nie verstellen musste.’

⁸⁸ Gabalier agrees: ‘I absolutely take credit for this whole Tracht trend.’ (GABALIER 2016c) (Original: ‘Diesen ganzen Trachtenboom nehme ich sehr wohl auch auf meine Kappe.’)

⁸⁹ The reason for this may be that songs about ‘Heimat’ are particularly successful in Volkstümliche Musik (BEHR 2017).

⁹⁰ The red-checked pattern of Gabalier’s accessories is not strictly speaking traditional (it is most likely known from the tablecloths and napkins used in wine taverns and mountain inns), but it is familiar. He has used this style of handkerchief since the beginning of his career (GABALIER 2009).

⁹¹ Melissa Naschenweng has successfully co-opted Gabalier’s concept on her own albums *Kunterbunt* (2017), *Wirbelwind* (2019), *LederHosenRock* (2020) und *Glück* (2022). Naschenweng describes her musical style as ‘LederHosenRock’; a combination of Schlager and rock’n’roll, sung in Austrian dialect. See e.g. <<https://www.musikmagazin.at/bands/melissa-naschenweng/>> and <<https://melissa-naschenweng.at/>>.

⁹² Women’s (or rather mothers’) place is at home (GABALIER 2016a).

19 pandemic, Gabalier temporarily adopted a more inclusive attitude (DUNKEL - KOPANSKI 2024, 143 and 159-61). Critics accuse Gabalier of supporting right-wing populism (DUNKEL - KOPANSKI 2024; DOEHRING - GINKEL 2024; RHEINDORF - LEHNER 2019, RÖHLIG 2019, LGR 2018) and conveying homophobic and sexist messages; supporters, by contrast, appreciate him as an authentic artist who advocates for patriotism and traditional values. Dunkel and Kopanski note that ‘The extent to which Gabalier actually performs populism, or aspects of right-wing discourse, is in fact rarely addressed in public and merits further attention’ (DUNKEL - KOPANSKI 2024, 155), adding that his ‘positioning clearly draws on a populist style of performance: he poses as the people’s spokesperson, deriving authority from his deeply-felt allegiance to his rural home’ (DUNKEL - KOPANSKI 2024, 156). In sum, Andreas Gabalier is a polarizing figure in the Austrian and German-speaking music scene.

Gabalier’s target audience is broad, youthful and international. In 2017, the press photos on his homepage depicted him as a rock or film star, driving a convertible, and as a DJ with a giant audience. At the same time, he often emphasizes traditional values—for example, he claims to prefer being at home in the mountains, spending time with his family (GABALIER 2011a, 2016b, 2020). This strategy enables Gabalier to simultaneously embody an outstanding artist and a voice of the people (DUNKEL - KOPANSKI 2024, 158).

In his music, he also references Hubert von Goisern: Gabalier likely sees his song ‘Bergbauernbuaam’ (*Herzwerk*, 2010; ‘Alpine farmer boys’) as a counterpart to von Goisern’s ‘Hiatamadl’—both begin with thunderstorm sounds. In the lyrics of ‘Dahoam’ (*Herzwerk*, 2010; ‘At home’), which enumerate traditional Alpine foods, Gabalier also mentions a song by or about a shepherd girl and Alpine farmer boys (original: ‘Ein Lied vom Hiatamadl und den Bergbauernbuaam’).

As a self-designated Volks-Rock’n’Roller, Gabalier describes his music as a mixture of traditional folk music, Schlager, Austropop and Rock’n’roll; he sometimes sings in English as well, thus bolstering his ‘traditional music in dialect’ with an ‘international attitude’ (GABALIER 2011b and GABALIER 2020).⁹³

‘I sing a Liad für di’

‘I sing a Liad für di’ (‘I sing a song for you’) was composed by Andreas Gabalier and released on the 2010 album *Herzwerk* (track 10). Besides Gabalier’s lead vocals and Styrian accordion, the instrumentation includes electric and acoustic guitars, keyboard, electric bass and drums. The instrumentation—and the fact that the backing musicians are not named—is typical of the Schlager genre, where the vocalist is paramount and often performs to a prerecorded band. The song is in 4/4 meter, with a tempo of 126 bpm. Its structure includes a chorus in the tonic of F major and verses in

⁹³ ‘traditionelle Musik in der Mundart [...] mit internationaler Attitude’.

C major; after a bridge (section C) in Bb major, Gabalier makes a whole-tone transposition to G major for the final chorus (see Table 6).

Section	Bars	Notes
Introduction	8	guitar; F (I–V)
A	8	chorus (I–V)
B	8	verse; C (I–V)
B	8	
A	8	chorus; F (I–V)
B	8	verse; C
B	8	
A	8	chorus; F
Interlude	8	instrumental (brass, g, styr accor) (I–V), ‘mariachi’ elements
C	8	Bb (I–V); ‘mariachi’ and guitar fill-ins
A	8	↑WT; G
A	8	

Table 6. Structure of ‘I sing a Liad für di’

The lyrics (see Table 7) are about falling in love with a girl; the song begins with the chorus, where the singer asks the girl to go dancing and immediately falls in love with her. Interestingly, two official videos (both of which, like the lyrics, are without a real plot) were released to accompany the song: the first video, released in 2010, shows Gabalier dancing in front of a white studio background (intercut with concert footage), wearing a red-checked shirt with staghorn buttons and black jeans, without his Styrian accordion⁹⁴. A newer, more professional video from 2014 shows Gabalier in a city, first enjoying a rustic picnic (he slices up an apple and a loaf of bread with his pocketknife) on the grass, then in a Hamburg subway station, dressed in short lederhosen, long stockings, a modern T-shirt, an Elvis quiff and holding (but not playing) a Styrian accordion.⁹⁵

The song begins with a power chord in the electric guitar, bent downward in bottleneck style. This ushers in an instrumental introduction led by the acoustic guitar: the first six bars are a mixture of metric superimposition and syncopation; the following two bars feature a simple, folksy, un-syncopated figure in sixths (see Example 7). During the piece, fill-ins are mainly played by the guitar in a in a musical style reminiscent of flamenco (see Example 9), later by brass instruments as well. The accompaniment by bass and drums is rudimentary, a regular beat accentuating all four quarter notes; their playing remains more or less the same throughout. The Styrian accordion is the only traditional instrument and

⁹⁴ See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=US8mPmN-vro>> (accessed 8 March 2023).

⁹⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0_UYW5Y4cM> (accessed 8 March 2023).

is used for background accompaniment during the whole piece, playing off-beat harmonies. The resulting sound resembles contemporary Austrian Schlager arrangements.

Section	Lyrics ⁹⁶	Translation (German) ⁹⁷	Translation (English) ⁹⁸
A	I sing' a Liad für di und daunn frågst du mi: Mågst mit mir taunz'n geh'n, i glaub', i steh' auf di. I sing' a Liad für di und kaunn die Sternderl segn, i hâb mi verknoit in di.	Ich singe ein Lied für dich und dann fragst du mich: Möchtest du mit mir tanzen gehen, ich glaube, ich stehe auf dich [ich mag dich sehr]. Ich singe ein Lied für dich und kann die Sternchen sehen, ich habe mich in dich verknallt [verliebt].	I sing a song for you and then you ask me if I'd like to go dancing with you, I think I like you. I sing a song for you and I can see the stars, I've got a crush on you.
B	I hâb a Engerl g'segn über die Strâß'n geh'n, es hât so liab g'lâcht in ana Saumstâgnâcht. Hât jâ zu mir g'sâgt und i hâb mi g'frâgt, wâs so a Engerle wui måg.	Ich habe ein Engelchen gesehen über die Straße gehen, es hat so lieb gelacht in einer Samstagnacht. (Es) hat ja zu mir gesagt und ich habe mich gefragt, was so ein Engelchen wohl mag.	I saw an angel crossing the street, she laughed so prettily on a Saturday night. She said yes to me, and I asked myself what an angel like that would like.
B	In die leuchtend'n Aug'n muaß ma einischau'n, wei a Engerl in da Nâcht sovü liaber lâcht. Bei da Haund hât's mi g'schnappt und i hâb's ertappt, weil's ka Flügerl hât, des klappt. ⁹⁹	In die leuchtenden Augen muss man hineinsehen, weil ein Engelchen in der Nacht so viel lieber lacht. Bei der Hand hat es mich genommen und ich habe es ertappt, weil es kein Flügelchen hat, das klappt [mit dem man fliegen kann].	You have to look into those sparkling eyes because an angel laughs much more prettily at night. She grabbed me by the hand and I saw through her because she doesn't have wings that work.
A	I sing' a Liad für di ...	Ich singe ein Lied für dich ...	I sing a song for you ...
B	Nâch dem erst'n Hallo hâst mi g'hâbt sowieso, a Engerl und a Teiferl, des is amol a so. Hâst mir a Busserl geb'n, i hâb mi nimmer länger g'frâgt, wâs so a Engerle wui måg.	Nach dem ersten Hallo hast du mich schon gehabt [erobert], ein Engelchen und ein Teufelchen, das ist nun einmal so. Hast mir ein Küsschen gegeben, ich habe mich nicht mehr gefragt, was so ein Engelchen wohl mag.	After the first hello you had me anyway, an angel and a devil, that's just how it is. You gave me a kiss and I didn't ask any longer what an angel like that would like.

⁹⁶ Lyrics transcribed (album *Herzwerk*, track 10) by the authors.

⁹⁷ Translation by the authors.

⁹⁸ Translation by the authors.

⁹⁹ The German phrase 'etwas klappt nicht' (in the sense of 'gelingen') is normally used only for intangibles and not as a substitute for 'something does not work'.

B	Haund in Haund zagt sie mir daunn die Himm'lstir, jetzt woar mir kloar, dass des ka Engerl woar. Hätt' i g'wusst, wås passiert, wär' i net so verwirrt, wenn so a Engerl ohne Flügerl fliagt.	Hand in Hand zeigt sie mir dann die Himmelstüre, jetzt war mir klar, dass das kein Engelchen war. Hätte ich gewusst, was passiert, wäre ich nicht so verwirrt, wenn so ein Engelchen ohne Flügelchen fliegt.	Hand in hand she shows me the gates of heaven, now I knew it wasn't an angel. Had I known what would happen, I wouldn't have been so confused when such an angel flies without wings.
A	I sing a Liad für di ...	Ich singe ein Lied für dich ...	I sing a song for you ...
C	Ah uhlalala, so a schöner Täg, uhlalala, wei i a Engerl hâb. Uhlalala, so a schöne Nâcht, da Himm'l hât mir a Engerl 'brâcht.	Ah uhlalala, so ein schöner Tag, uhlalala, weil ich ein Engelchen habe. Uhlalala, so eine schöne Nacht, der Himmel hat mir ein Engelchen gebracht.	Oolalala, such a beautiful day, oolalala 'cause I have an angel. Oolalala, such a beautiful night, heaven has brought me an angel.
A	I sing a Liad für di ...	Ich singe ein Lied für dich ...	I sing a song for you ...

Table 7. Lyrics of 'I sing a Liad für di'

The musical score for the introduction (bb. 1-8) is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (G) and a guitar accompaniment (styr accor). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The vocal line begins with a melodic phrase in the first register, followed by a yodel-like movement to the second register. The guitar accompaniment provides a simple harmonic support with chords F and C7.

Example 7. 'I sing a Liad für di', introduction, bb. 1-8

The harmonies are very simple, as is common in folk music: only the first and the fifth degree in the respective keys are used. The melodies contain mainly diatonic and triad-based notes, occasionally including yodel-like movements with a change of vocal register (as in the main hook, 'I sing a Liad für di', see Example 8) or 'es hât so liab g'lâcht in ana Saumstâgnâcht' (see Example 9).

The musical score for section A (bb. 4-5) is presented in a single system. It features a vocal line (G) in 4/4 time. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The vocal line shows a yodel-like movement with a change of register. The lyrics are: 'i glaub', i steh' auf di. I sing' a Liad für di und kaunn die'.

Example 8. 'I sing a Liad für di', section A, bb. 4-5

g

vcl

es hát so liab g'lächt in a-na Sams-täg-nächt. Hát jä

Example 9. 'I sing a Liad für di', section B, bb. 3-4

As a contrasting element in the interlude (temporary tonic Bb major), the sound of the brass arrangement is reminiscent of a Mexican mariachi band (see Example 10).

Example 10. 'I sing a Liad für di', interlude, bb. 1-3

In the last three sections, all of the aforementioned characteristics can be heard: Gabalier as lead vocalist with the typical accompaniment, but with call-and-response fill-ins by the guitar and the trumpets in the background. The whole-tone transposition before the last two choruses emphasizes the finale (and is also a commonly used Schlager device). In terms of traditional musical aspects, then, Gabalier's first hit relies heavily on the Styrian accordion and folk-like melodic phrases.

Concluding Remarks

Austria is home to a popular music scene with many genres and styles, including various musical hybridizations. Among the increasing number of native bands in the Austrian charts, many successfully combine elements of traditional (Alpine) music with international pop music—a trend that has grown since the 1990s. Even though musicians rarely enjoy being categorized, these styles are often lumped together under the headings 'Neue Volksmusik', 'Crossover', 'Volxmusik', or similar labels created by the music industry and media. However, the meaning of the term 'folk'—which is used interchangeably with 'tradition'—has changed over time: some contemporary musicians use it to emphasize their 'nativist' image as artists deeply rooted in their homeland and culture. Our case studies have revealed various similarities but also considerable differences: the artists considered here exemplify a range of approaches to creating both their music and images or identities, and they represent a variety of values.

The three artists have taken widely different approaches regarding their image and self-presentation: Hubert von Goisern's musical approach and goal is to embrace musical influences from all over the world—especially regions that he himself has traveled—in the context of traditional Austrian music. He positions himself as a global artist who transcends regional boundaries and has often used his music to bridge cultural divides, promoting a message of cultural exchange, mutual respect, and opposition to far-right ideologies. Unlike artists who focus solely on entertainment, von Goisern's lyrics and public statements often address social issues, which makes his critical perspective a key aspect of his artistic identity.

hmbe's identity as a group is thoroughly globalist, multicultural and rooted in twentieth-first-century globalized society; their music is borderless, open to any influence they choose to include. At the same time, hmbe emphasize Austrian cultural identity and heritage: with all band members deeply rooted and actively engaging in Alpine folk music, their presentation and musical style is particularly credible and authentic—it reflects the traditions of their home while embracing global influences. Unlike von Goisern and Gabalier, hmbe have not made public statements on politics and society, but they have underlined their (musical) autonomy.

Andreas Gabalier cultivates an image of a musician with deep roots in his homeland, portraying himself as a humble, down-to-earth individual who values family and tradition. By wearing lederhosen and performing in settings that evoke traditional Austrian culture, he emphasizes national identity and heritage. The controversies surrounding his views on gender roles and national identity, while divisive, have bolstered his image among certain segments of the population who share his views, thereby strengthening his core fan base while also generating media attention. Leveraging these strategies, Gabalier has carved out a distinct niche in the music industry that reinforces his identity as a representative of Austrian cultural traditions.

Despite their different images and values, however, all three artists use (often stereotypical) Alpine images and topographies as well as traditional costumes in their performances, album covers and music videos, thus exhibiting strong connections to their native culture. According to the 2023 Austrian youth study, which surveyed people between sixteen and twenty-nine, traditional values are very important to the so-called 'Generation Gabalier' (DOBLAUER 2021): The study detects a return of conservatism since 2019, with family and a circle of friends cited as the most important social institutions. During the pandemic, national pride rose considerably: 82 % of respondents said they were 'proud to be Austrian' (LAMEI - KARACAM et al. 2023, 181-3). Participants listed physical and mental health—unsurprisingly after the pandemic years—as well as a secure job and time for their personal interests as their most important wishes for the future (LAMEI - KARACAM et al. 2023, 194-6).

As for the use of language, all three artists sing in their respective native dialects: Von Goisern frequently sings in his native (Upper-)Austrian dialect, which adds an authentic regional flavor to his music and helps preserve Austria's linguistic heritage.

hmbe's original songs are usually performed in the members' native Vorarlbergian/Alemannic dialect and contain humorous elements and references to their native region and to Austria, adding another layer of genuine regional essence. Moreover, in most of their songs, they combine their local dialect with English and Standard German, resulting in a unique linguistic hybridization.

Gabaliier also sings in dialect to add another layer of authenticity to his performances, which sets him apart from other artists in the Schlager field. Particularly in his later songs, however, Gabaliier uses a semblance of Austrian dialect: he enriches Standard German with dialect words, so he is also understood in Northern Germany.

Partly due to successful performers like those in our case studies, dialects are firmly and successfully anchored in today's Austrian popular music scene, and they are appreciated as stylistically versatile and modern means of expression. The high proportion of dialect songs by current Austrian artists—also seen in this year's nominations in the cross-genre categories of the renowned Austrian Music Awards¹⁰⁰—shows that dialect is no longer a niche phenomenon but is used in a variety of musical styles.

The topics of the three selected songs vary, even though von Goisern's and Gabaliier's lyrics revolve around girls and love in the broadest sense; hmbe's song is about walking home after a night out—a topic many (particularly young) people can identify with. It is generally important for audiences to feel connected to song content, and this connection is also strengthened by the use of a common language and dialect. In addition, all three performers use symbols and (stereotypical) references to Austria in their lyrics, adding to the closeness with their audiences and to their local success.

Our music analyses of three representative songs reveal different ways of combining traditional elements with popular music styles: Von Goisern's 'Koa Hiataamadl' is based on a traditional song and mixed with various rock elements. In his arrangement, von Goisern makes explicit reference to Alpine musical traditions, including its simple harmonic progressions, arpeggiated melodic lines and other diatonic material, yodeling passages and instruments such as the Styrian accordion. In sum, von Goisern mainly aims to modernize Austrian folk music, celebrating both tradition and innovation.

¹⁰⁰ In both cross-genre categories, 'Ö3 Song of the Year' and 'Songwriter of the Year', only German-language songs were nominated, and three out of five are in dialect (award ceremony on March 7, 2025). Nominated for Ö3 Song of the Year: 'Feiawerk' ('fireworks', Granada), 'Immer da' ('always there', NESS), 'Owa vom Gas' ('ease off the gas', folkshilfe feat. Paul Pizzera), 'Verwandtschaftstreffen' ('family reunion', RIAN), 'Zirkusprinz' ('circus prince', Pizzera & Jaus); nominated for Songwriter of the Year: 'Tiefer' ('deeper', Ankathie Koi), 'Kim Vorbei' ('come over', Anna Buchegger), 'Ferdl' ('Ferdy', Billie Steirisch), 'Ohne Di' ('without you', folkshilfe), 'Verwandtschaftstreffen' (RIAN).

The second piece, hmbc's 'Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou', is representative of the band's unique artistic approach: they combine their traditional music with the sounds of folk and brass band music in an innovative way, using elements of jazz, reggae, soul, and pop. Based on a repetitive, simple harmonic progression, the arrangement (e.g. the use of tuba) is influenced by Austrian marching bands, whereas as the triplet rhythm, the syncopations and the vocal style are drawn more from jazz. The special appeal of hmbc's brass pop sound stems from their fusion of unusual arrangements and instrumentations with catchy vocals in well-structured, humorous performances.

Gabalier's typical blend of Volkstümliche Musik, rock, pop, country, Schlager, and traditional music, alongside universal and emotionally resonant topics like love, home, and nostalgia, appeals to a broad audience. His hit 'I sing a Liad für di' is typical of his musical approach: it has a catchy melody and simple structure, into which he inserts yodeling passages; alongside the Styrian accordion, however, there are also comparatively 'exotic' musical elements like mariachi trumpets and Spanish-influenced guitar, possibly to add an international flair to the music. The results can sometimes be described as artificial, but nonetheless, this musical approach has succeeded in establishing Gabalier's image as an 'authentic Volks-Rock'n'Roller'.

A common factor of the three artists' musical hybridizations is the use of traditional composition, arrangement and singing techniques such as yodeling passages, and of traditional instruments, such as the often-featured Styrian accordion, alongside non-traditional (electronic) instruments.

In sum, the analyzed artists each represent special fusions of old and new, of tradition and modernity. The selected examples show a strong reliance on images, symbols and musical elements that evoke specific Austrian regions and/or traditions to create a feeling of belonging, to suggest a return back to one's roots, and in some cases even to restore the 'good old times': however, each musician aims to create an individual artistic identity based on traditional regional (folk music) elements. While this use of traditional components is a common factor among the performers examined here, they create their music and identity in significantly different ways, thus contributing to a diverse and flourishing contemporary popular music scene in Austria. It will be interesting to see whether the popularity of this music will continue to rise in the next few years.

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holstunarmusigbigbandclub

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Hubert von Goisern

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(1992), *Koa Hiataamadl* (Single, Ariola)

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(2008), *S'Nix* (Sony BMG Music Entertainment)

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(2020), *Zeiten & Zeichen* (Sony BMG Music Entertainment - Capriola/Blanko-Musik)

Various artists (1993), *Schräg dahoam—Das Live-Festival* (BMG)

Various artists (1994), *Schräg dahoam 2—Das Live-Festival* (BMG)

Various artists (2002), *Schräg dahoam 3* (Lawine)

Instrument Abbreviations

accor	accordion
back-vcl	background vocals
beatbox	beatboxing
cl	clarinet
d	drums
didg	didgeridoo
el-b	electric bass
el-g	electric guitar
fl	flute
flhrn	flugelhorn
g	guitar
hrn	horn
keyb	keyboards
lead-vcl	lead vocalist
perc	percussion
sax	saxophone
styr accor	Styrian accordion
tb	trombone

tp	trumpet
tu	tuba
vcl	vocalist

Special Characters of the Transcriptions

x-shaped notehead = supposed pitch


line among noteheads = portamento


→ = later than written

← = earlier than written

↑ = higher than written

↓ = lower than written

Christa Bruckner-Haring is an Assistant Professor and the Deputy Director of the Institute for Jazz and Popular Music Research at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, where she is also co-editor of the publication series *Jazzforschung / Jazz Research*, *Beiträge zur Jazzforschung / Studies in Jazz Research*, and *Jazz Research News*. Her research focuses on historical and sociocultural aspects as well as on musical transcription and analysis of jazz and popular music. Her main fields of expertise include jazz and popular music cultures in Austria and Cuba. ORCID  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1501-1621>.

Elisabeth Kappel is a musicologist engaged in research and teaching at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (Austria). She has a diverse musical background, with degrees in Instrumental and Vocal Pedagogy, Composition/Music Theory, and Musicology. She is the author of *Arnold Schönbergs Schülerinnen: Biographisch-musikalische Studien* (2019) and co-editor of the journal *Jazz Research News*, as well as collaborator to the publications of the Institute for Jazz and Popular Music Research. Her work focuses on the historical, socio-cultural, and analytical study of both classical and popular music. ORCID  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7593-0478>.

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