

# THE “ALMDUDLER TRACHTENPÄRCHENBALL” PART OF TYPICAL AUSTRIAN FOLK CULTURE

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*Almdudler is an Austrian brand of lemonade. In 2007, Almdudler celebrated its 50th anniversary by organizing the “Almdudler Trachtenpärenchenball”, at which all participants had to wear traditional costumes. Since then, other similar events in urban nightlife enthuse many Austrians, young people in particular. An analysis of the ball shows that today’s Austrians strive to choose different styles in order to create a lively folk culture in contemporary society.*

Keywords: *traditional costume, ball, folk culture.*

*Almdudler je avstrijska limonada. Leta 2007 je družba praznovala petdesetletnico in ob tem organizirala Almdudlerjev ples parov v tradicionalnih nošah (Almdudler Trachtenpärenchenball). Odtlej ta ples in podobni dogodki v urbanem nočnem življenju navdušujejo predvsem mlade. Analiza plesa kaže, da ljudje danes v svojem okolju svojo živo ljudsko kulturo ustvarjajo z izborom različnih stilov.*

Ključne besede: *tradicionalna noša, ples, ljudska kultura.*

For almost half a century, Almdudler has been an important part of the Austrian lemonade market and has successfully competed with famous labels such as Coca Cola. Almdudler’s 50th anniversary was celebrated in autumn 2007 at the Viennese city hall with a big traditional costume ball held for all Austrians. The purpose of a traditional ball was to draw a link from tradition to modernity. Due to its success, the ball has been held every year since then and is becoming part of the traditional Viennese ball season.

The “Almdudler Trachtenpärenchenball” (Almdudler Ball) is the only ball in Vienna that requires participants to wear traditional costumes, a fact that enthuses many young people. Similar phenomena can be observed in Vienna’s nightlife as well. For example, the disco “Nachtschicht” celebrates a party every Friday night with the motto “Die Macht der Tracht” (the power of the traditional costume). The new “Disco Prater Dom” has its own “Alpenrauschbereich” (alpine rose area), and the widow of former nightclub-owner Heinz Schimanko in October 2008 opened the new trendy pub “Platzhirsch” (old bull) with furniture made of Swiss stone pine and walls full of deer antlers. She is organizing diverse amusements ranging from “Perchtenumzug” (morning pint) to pop song and golden oldie parties (Wieser 2008). All these events are held primarily for urban young audiences. It is worth to analyzing these new events by means of the “Almdudler Trachtenpärenchenball”. Researching the orchestration and audiences of these phenomena should show whether these events form part of an urban lifestyle or a typical Austrian folk culture. The point of departure for the analysis is research conducted through participating observation at the “Almdudler Trachtenpärenchenball” on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007. After the ball, questionnaires were sent to Almdudler’s department of

marketing as well as to the PR-agency in charge of the ball. An interview was conducted with chief of marketing Claus Hofmann Credner a few days before the ball in 2008. In the interview, Mr Hoffman Credner shed light on the organization and arrangement of the ball, music selection, cooperation among all parties as well as the strategies and knowledge behind the ideas and their realization. Interviews were conducted with ball guests on the day of the ball concerning their motivations for attending the ball and their enthusiasm for traditional costumes. Furthermore, they were asked, if they believed that the orchestration and music fit together with the traditional costumes. All in all, the researcher was able to interview 50 different persons.

This drafted analysis presents the results of this research concerning typical Austrian entertainment forms and their impact on folk cultural developments.

### THE ALMDUDLER BRAND

Almdudler was founded in 1957 by Erwin Klein. In a few years, it became as popular as international companies like Coca Cola due to it being one of the first national companies with a powerful advertising strategy.

Today the company is still run by the Klein family, which has always been successful in competition against international companies. Their secret to success has been the use of their original recipe composed of 30 different Alpine herbs and no chemical additives. In addition, Almdudler has always followed the fashion of taste as far as product development is concerned. Their products include the original Almdudler, Almdudler with sparkling or still mineral water, Almdudler light or mixed with beer. Almdudler is one of the best known brands in Austria. The company's corporate designs range from "Almdudler Trachtenpärenchen" (the well-known couple in traditional costume) to the suitable sound logo (e.g. music for the telephone waiting loop) to the embroidered webpage and the headquarters building that resembles an alpine hut. Almdudler advertisements attract customers with images of of Austrian nature, traditions and cozyness.

From the beginning, Almdudler was characterised by its unusual advertising line and strong advertising memory. The company won numerous advertising prizes both at home and abroad. The "Almdudler Trachtenpärenchen", the singular mould Almdudler bottle and the advertising slogan: "If they do not have Almdudler I will go back home" – are merely the most apparent reasons why Almdudler is one of the most successful Austrian brands.<sup>1</sup> Almdudler ranks together with Mozart balls, Manner Original Neapolitaner Wafers, Musikantenstadl and Vienna's New Year concert among the Austrian trademarks.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf.: [http://www2.almdudler.com/über\\_uns/international](http://www2.almdudler.com/über_uns/international), <http://www2.almdudler.com/Werbung>, Firma Almdudler 2007.



Almdudler pärchen: „Almdudler Trachtenpärichen“ the brand of Almdudler - the Almdudler couple in traditional clothes.

In 2007, Almdudler celebrated its 50th birthday, a date worth celebrating for such a successful company. Apart from organizing many activities, including the launch of a special edition of bottles, Almdudler wanted to mark this particular anniversary in a special way: “A highlight that perfectly matches our brand, the unique connection of tradition and modernity. The ball should revive the Almdudler brand, and the outstanding values of this brand should be approved and emotionally loaded. [...] This ball must be a special event for Almdudler and a celebration for all Austrians.”<sup>2</sup>

### THE “ALMDUDLER TRACHTENPÄRCHENBALL”

Almdudler’s 50th anniversary was to be celebrated as a special event, and thus the idea of a ball in traditional dress in the Viennese city hall was born. This ball was not planned as a classical Viennese ball. It was meant to generate – in the tradition of the Almdudler brand – a link between that which is authentic, traditional, and Austrian to that which is modern in order to underline the Austrian speciality of this particular brand. At the ball, Almdudler presented itself together with other Austrian business partners such as Puntigamer beer or Schlumberger sparkling wine and Austrian tourist destinations. Every partner rented out a part of the city hall, in which they were responsible for organizing and presenting a program in the common context of the ball.

The concept and the program of the ball in the years 2007 and 2008 were the result of cooperation between Almdudler, its business partners, and the assigned event and PR-companies. The original ideas were conceived primarily by Almdudler representatives and were developed further with the remaining organization team. A program director working together with Almdudler management and marketing representatives were responsible for a continual program of events from the beginning of the ball to five o’clock in the morning. The PR-agency was responsible for the appearance and well-being of special guests. The event agency was responsible for the evening running smoothly. Every year, the entire team commits itself to organizing and preparing the ball; in addition, they strive to develop new ideas each year – in this area, company owner Thomas Klein plays a leading role.

Entrance to the ball was granted to everyone wearing traditional costume. At the ball, numerous interpretations of traditional dress were observed. This included traditional costumes combined with Latex and minis, high-quality wool jackets combined with “bang”-yellow leather trousers, red cross-hatched jackets beside black transparent ones, braids, hats and classical ball hair-styles. One could observe a multi-colored mixture of diverse styles. The boundary between clothing and costume was blurred as ball visitors presented a complex image of the possibilities and interpretations of tra-

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Claus Hoffmann Credner, 20.8.2008.



Logoball: Invitation card to the “Almdudlertrachtenpärchenball” ball of Almdudler in traditional clothes, 2008.

ditional dress. According to data gathered from interviews, it seems that many visitors spent a great deal of time looking for a suitable costume. Some searched for articles of clothing through acquaintances, friends or in special clothing stores. For this reason, not everything fitted perfectly. Some ball visitors from Vienna bought clothes specifically for this evening. Others already possessed such articles of clothing but wore them only to rare occasions like weddings or at the Festival in October in Munich. Some interviewees who travelled to Vienna especially for the ball owned a traditional costume but at the ball wanted to appear with a more remarkable one. At the entrance to the ballroom, photographers tried to take pictures of the fanciest couple, and the pictures were disseminated in the media after the ball. However, extraordinarily well-dressed couples were in minority.

The opening ceremony began in the main hall at nine in the evening. Each year, a different Austrian tourist destination sponsors the ball, and thus the ball is presented under the patronage of a certain region. The ball itself becomes an advertisement for the region, and the respective tourism federation becomes in turn an ambassador for the Almdudler brand in its region. The district of Salzburg sponsored the ball in 2007, and the valley Zillertal in Tyrol in 2008. That year, an enormous alpine hut with the Zillertal logo was built in the main hall. The tourism partners are responsible for a special program in the main hall and for the opening ceremony. In addition, it is their duty to choose music groups from their regions.

In 2007, traditional local brass bands and a local dancing group in traditional costumes were invited for the opening ceremony, which was hosted by a famous Austrian moderator in traditional leather trousers. Although every year the brass bands play

mostly pieces of music from J. Strauß such as “the blue Danube waltz” and the “march of Radetzky”, the entrance and inaugural speech of the company director that follows is different every year – “and those who know him are aware that it will be something special”.<sup>3</sup> In 2007, Thomas Klein presented himself as the Almdudler couple in traditional costume, dressed as half man, half woman. In 2008, Mr Klein appeared dressed as a mountain to the accompaniment of the film music from “Heidi”. After he had taken off his mountain coat that – according to Mr Klein – was watered down with the fresh spring water used to make Almdudler, a man dressed as a flowering meadow of Almdudler alpine herbs took the stage.

The music program that followed consisted of popular folk music bands that appear on commercial TV programs such as “Grand Prix der Volksmusik” (Grand Prix of Folk Music) or “Musikantenstadl”. In these programs, one finds popular folk music mixed with regional specialities as well as traditional costumes, all combined to create a domestic atmosphere. “With the broad selection of music coming from the various ball rooms, we wanted to offer a wide range of entertainment, from the traditional to the modern.”<sup>4</sup> In one of these rooms a hit party took place; this party was organized by the Viennese discotheque “Passage” in accordance with an Almdudler advertising concept that was easy to transfer to the ball. According to Mr Hoffmann Credner, each ball needs a disco that provides a contrast to the “traditional part of music” and that targets young people. In the case of the 2008 ball, a well-known discotheque from Zillertal called “Mountain De Luxe” contributed to a good atmosphere with electronic dance music. The highlight of the evening at 11 p.m. was the appearance of a German guest star such as punk & rock icons Nina Hagen, Guido Horn or Otto. All these guests are well known for their special, funky appearance.

At the 2007 ball, a traditional dancing group from Salzburg performed a “Schuhplattler” at midnight, a traditional dance that became famous as a presentation for tourists at the beginning of the 20th century. In 2008, a midnight event of the traditional dancing group Schönbrunn from Vienna took place. That year, the folk dancing group Schönbrunn took the stage together with Zabine Kapfinger and her partner Alex Zaglmaier (famous for their 3rd place win in the televised celebrity dancing contest held in 2007). The latter performed their own choreography to a famous arrangement of the melody for the traditional dance “Hiatamadl” written by Austrian musician and composer Hubert von Goisern. The folk dancing group danced traditional Austrian folk dances accompanied by a traditional music group. Afterwards, the audience was invited by the performers to join in the traditional dance “Topporzer crosspolka” and a Galopp through the ball room. This last event, a dancer of the group related in an interview, was not planned in advance with the organizer. They arranged everything

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Claus Hoffmann Credner, 20.8.2008.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Claus Hoffmann Credner, 20.8.2008.

independently. At first, one of the dancers was a little bit concerned whether the audience would like it, but the audience joined the call and seemed to enjoy it.

Many guests – up to 3000 – attended the balls in 2007 and 2008. When asked why they wished to attend these balls, many argued that they went because they could wear traditional costumes. In response to questions concerning the music and the program, most of them had no special opinion. They could not name any musical highlight except the star guests and were also unable to make any suggestions for the music or the program for the future. For ball visitors, the most memorable feature of the ball was the entire ambiance, the general good atmosphere; however, some missed typical ballroom music and considered the popular folk music part was too dominant. The issue of additional traditional folk music came up in discussion when it was explicitly brought up by the participants. Some would have preferred more room for this kind of music. Others estimated that the popular folk music part was traditional enough.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the answers of the organization team were quite similar to that of the participants.

## CONCLUSION

### CONCERNING THE BALL

The ball focuses on the Almdudler brand and on traditional dress in all its manifestations as an attempt is to draw a link between tradition and modernity. The ball was open to everybody, and its organizers strived to please the majority through combining stylistic elements of different genres – not too much from this and not too little from that, just something for everyone.

The evening offered surprises, presented unusual interpretations, but not outside the realm of the familiar. All in all, the events were designed in the Almdudler spirit and apart from the individual creation of traditional costumes and their performances, there was no room for creative developments.

The ball followed the principles of a classic event, which raises a number of questions. Participating in an event equates participating in an adventure: a visitor's pleasure depends on the level of possible activity and emotional involvement granted through participation because emotions penetrate deeper through participation (cf. Schäfer-Mehdi 2006). The Almdudler brand aims to accord emotional appeal to its product in order to strengthen brand awareness and popularity. A ball offers these possibilities through music, dance and entertainment. However, visitors' perceptions of the ball's music and entertainment were unemotional and nobody identified with a certain music program. The interviews conducted with ball visitors demonstrated that visitors

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Interviews 2007, 2008.

evaluated the wearing of traditional costumes as more important than the music at the ball. One could expect that elements of traditional folk music could emotionally move the audience through participation because traditional folk music has elements that are generally well-known. However, apart from the initiative of the traditional folk dancing group in 2008, there was no further invitation for the ball visitors to participate. It is important to keep in mind that while the program tries to cover both traditional as well as modern music trends, the traditional was primarily represented by commercial, popular (folk) music.

Mr Hoffmann Credner stated: “Vienna had never before witnessed an event such as that ball. We were surprised by the extent to which the audience appreciated this event. The Almdudler brand and its ball prove that modernity and tradition fit together very well.”<sup>6</sup> In light of this statement the question arises: What is specifically Austrian about this ball and its program? If it were not Austrian, it would not fit in with the Almdudler brand and it would not appeal to the masses.

Almost every Austrian female and male has drunk Almdudler – mixed or pure, at typical Austrian places like an alpine hut or a sausage stand, during après-ski– and everybody knows the “Almdudler Trachtenpärenchen”. Thanks to this longstanding advertising strategy, Almdudler is *the* Austrian lemonade. Furthermore, nearly every male and female Austrian has been to a ball and has worn traditional costumes. At the ball, Almdudler brought together different Austrian lifestyles. Together with its the partners, Almdudler created a typically Austrian product celebrated by specifically Austrian forms of entertainment.

#### CONCERNING FOLK CULTURE

The classic education- and income-based social classes don't exist anymore. Instead, there exist different milieus that consist of various interests. For this reason, leisure time activities and patterns of consumption cannot be linked to certain classes anymore. The Almdudler advertising strategy tries to adapt to these contemporary living trends in numerous ways, including with the organization of the “Trachtenpärenchen-ball”. Nowadays, people move between an urban lifestyle, an alpine romantic lifestyle, as well as an ecologically-conscious lifestyle. Elements and styles of tradition and modernity that are accessible through different media are mixed together, distorted and newly interpreted (Schäfer-Mehdi 2006, Wagner 1997, Warneken 2006). The traditional costume represents an interface of these lifestyles. In this sense, Almdudler's response with its ball enables social actors to be individual designers of their own national costume as a combination of clothing, shoes, hairstyle and jewelry. The ball becomes a catwalk, a stage for the visitors. One looks, laughs, takes photos. Everybody contributes to the atmosphere of the ball with their individual interpretation of

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Claus Hoffmann Credner, 20.8.2008.

traditional dress. Every "Trachtenpärenchen" is part of the ball either with its traditional costume or with a trendy variety. The "Trachtenpärenchen" community on the internet with the election of the best costume also forms part of this trend by way of its active involvement through discussions on this topic. For all these reasons, the ball also loses its elitist character.

Today one finds various styles of music and performance practice through diversified music programs on the radio, television, internet or other data mediums. People are accustomed to combining different styles of music or switching between them. For this reason, music and its somewhat elitist practice of performance need not necessarily fit together any more (Wagner 1997). Thanks to media programs such as "Grand Prix der Volksmusik" or "Musikantenstadl", popular folk music is very well known in Austria and represents an alpine romantic lifestyle, cozyness and idyll. According to existing research, the audience of these televised popular folk music programs is approximately 50 years old and from rural areas (Fellner 2006). However, the visitors of the ball are approximately 30 years old, college-educated and from urban areas. If you believe Thomas Klein: "This is no fashion. Nowadays, people become more aware of their traditions" (Wieser 2008). According to interview results, this kind of music and orchestration is seen as Austrian folk music by the majority of the population. Nobody distinguishes between popular folk music and traditional folk music. Both fit together with traditional dress. For this reason, popular folk music as it is staged on TV, in alpine huts, discos, night clubs or beer tents and as it is mixed with regional and folkloristic elements has become part of an Austrian folk culture that addresses diverse milieus.

Especially in urban areas, social groups identify with such trends and commercial interests go along with them. This phenomenon started in the 19th century, when rich people from the cities adapted to living conditions of the countryside in order to protect them and capitalize on them. As a result, new practices of performance were developed. Our contemporary ideas concerning tradition are still influenced by that time. Nowadays, tradition has been imported to rural regions as regional specialties for tourism, for example. A product of this process is the growth of regional dancing and of music groups that strictly follow these "traditions". However, tastes develop and influence presumably timeless traditions.

Tourist destinations, advertising agencies or TV programs concerning popular folk music deal with traditional elements that they adapt for their needs and combine with modern elements. The case of Almdudler proves that the ideas of companies motivated by economic interest are more creative and react more quickly to social change. These innovations are necessary in order to develop new styles. Regional or traditional specialties are only interesting if you are able to earn money with them. For this reason, regional elements were marginalized at the ball.

Why was it not possible to find regional or traditional specialties at the ball such as music groups who play typical traditional music of its region? Why do brass bands

always play pieces by Strauss and nothing special of their regions? If there were more prominent regional overtones to the ball, the region would present itself more significantly and it would stand out from other destinations or events. The visitors of the ball would probably experience something more special. However, the mass audience would not recognize typical music from Tyrol or from Salzburg. This would not serve to attract and impress the audience. Typical regional products would have to fit into the commercial concept of the ball and presented as a unique selling point. Often it is the lack of information between people working in the cultural and economic fields that hinders the formation of a perfect link between tradition and modernity. In other words, only through cooperation is it possible to develop folk culture for everybody.

What was missing at the Almdudler ball or the “alpine rose party” was the ball’s functional involvement in a particular social context. For this reason, emotional feelings cannot emerge. Only there where there is no stage, where there are no economic backgrounds, only where there are no empty spaces for development and expression, only here can tradition and modernity come together. In this manner, new individual, emotionally-loaded folk culture will be created by involving new fashions. The trends of today (for example the variety of traditional costumes at the ball) show that human beings draw from all influences and do not wish to distinguish between authentic, traditional or popular folk elements. They wish to be creative using diverse elements.

Since the dawn of industrialization and social change, elements of folk culture symbolize the ideal world that aids persons to find stability in a global world. Folk culture enables persons to escape from everyday life to a half-strange, picturesque world. This explains why emotionally loaded elements of folk culture are still produced and a lively folk culture persists in our contemporary society (Bausinger 2005; Haid 1986; Leimgruber 2001).

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## ALMDUDLERJEV PLES PAROV V TRADICIONALNIH NOŠAH – DEL TIPIČNE AVSTRIJSKE LJUDSKE KULTURE

*Že skoraj pol stoletja je pijača »Almdudler« del avstrijskega tržišča limonade in je uspešna kakor Coca Cola. Od samega začetka je prepoznavna zaradi nenavadnega oglaševanja, še posebej z »Almdudler Trachtenpäarchen«, z almdudlerjevim parom v tradicionalnih nošah. Oglašuje lepoto avstrijskega narave, izročila in domačnosti. Limonada Almdudler je zato ena najuspešnejših avstrijskih blagovnih znamk in se uvršča med izdelke avstrijske prepoznavnosti.*

*Petdesetletnico podjetja so leta 2007 praznovali v mestni dvorani na Dunaju z »Trachtenpärchenball Almdudler« – Almdudlerjevim plesom v tradicionalnih nošah. S prireditvijo so želeli povezati tradicijo in sodobnost. Zaradi uspeha je ples postal del tradicionalne dunajske plesne sezone. Ta ples in tudi druge podobne prireditve v urbanem nočnem življenju navdušujejo veliko mladih. Raziskovanje zvočne podobe in udeležencev plesa naj bi pokazalo, ali so ti pojavi del urbanega načina življenja ali tipične avstrijske ljudske kulture. V letih 2007 in 2008 je bilo v raziskavo vključenih 50 oseb, pogovori pa so potekali s pripravljalci programa in z obiskovalci.*

*Koncept in program plesa sta oblikovana v sodelovanju med družbo Almdudler in njenimi poslovnimi partnerji. Vsako leto se plesa udeleži do tri tisoč gostov, starih večinoma med 20 in 30 let. Oblečeni so v pisano mešanico različnih slogov tega, kar razumejo kot »tradicionalno nošo«, meje med njimi pa so nejasne in zabrisane. Skupaj s prireditvijo obiskovalcem predstavljajo številne interpretacije tradicionalnih oblačil.*

*Vsako leto prireditve vodi druga regija, ki pripravi slavnostni začetek z izborom glasbenih skupin s svojega območja. Lokalne godbe na pihala v tradicionalnih nošah igrajo večinoma Straussove melodije, kot so Na lepi modri Donavi in Radetzkyjevo koračnico. Povabijo pa tudi lokalne plesne skupine, da prestavijo ljudske plesne. Program nadaljujejo narodnozabavni ansambli s programom, ki ustreza komercialnim televizijam, prav tako pa tudi uspešnice in diskoteka z elektronsko plesno glasbo. Ples je dostopen vsem, zato skuša z glasbenim konceptom ustreči večinskemu okusu. Tradicionalni in sodobni elementi se prepletajo in preobražajo, hkrati pa so deležni novih interpretacij.*

*Zaradi turizma in različnih medijev, posebno televizijskih programov, prihaja do združevanja različnih stilov in glasbenih zvrsti. Posebno elementi narodnozabavne glasbe so v Avstriji zelo poznani in predstavljajo alpsko romantiko, domačnost in idilo. Kakor so pokazali pogovori, to zvrst večina sprejema kot avstrijsko ljudsko glasbo in je ne loči od tradicionalne ljudske glasbe. Obe glasbi se povezuje s tradicionalno nošo. Iz teh razlogov je narodnozabavna glasba, kakor jo prikazujejo na televiziji, v alpskih kočah, v diskotekah ali pivskih šotorih, v povezavi s krajevnimi in folklornimi elementi, postala del avstrijske ljudske kulture, namenjene različnim okoljem.*

*Samo tam, kjer ni odra ali ekonomskega ozadja, tam, kjer je prostor za razvoj in izražanje odprt, se izročilo in sodobnost zbližujeta in nastajajo novi čustveno napolnjeni ljudskokulturni elementi. Sodobne težnje, npr. raznovrstnost tradicionalnih noš na plesu, kažejo, kaj vse vpliva na ljudi: ljudje si namreč ne želijo ločevanja med izvirnimi, tradicionalnimi, folklornimi ali narodnozabavnimi elementi. Svojo ljudsko kulturo želijo oblikovati z različnimi elementi, kar jim pomaga pri orientaciji in iskanju trdnosti v globalnem svetu. To pojasnjuje obstoj žive ljudske kulture v sodobni družbi.*

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