
12th International Alpine Music Festival Saas-Fee

Folk music gathering in the glacier village

The International Alpine Music Festival was staged successfully from 9 – 12 July 09 in the glacier village of Saas-Fee. Five local clubs, nine Ländler music formations, two yodelling groups plus the band Wirbelwind, well-known from the Swiss Final of the Folk Music Grand Prix, were given an enthusiastic reception by lots of visitors and local people.

Once again this year numerous musicians and music enthusiasts gathered at the International Alpine Music Festival in Saas-Fee under the motto of "Folk music by and for lovers of folk music". From the Thursday to the Sunday the glacier village was again turned into a musical stage. The streets throughout the village echoed to the sound of music and singing, creating a wonderful atmosphere. After the pouring rain during last year's event, this time even the weather showed its friendlier side, with warm sunshine and pleasant temperatures. A rather important factor for this festival as most of the performances were staged in the open air. For example the Ländler music formations performed on the terraces of various restaurants, the groups of yodellers passed through the streets on the Saturday and Sunday, singing at a wide variety of locations within the village. There was also a joint concert staged by all the formations in the village square.

The first of these concerts was actually given by the Ländler music formations on the Friday evening to welcome the visitors and to 'kick-off' their performances in the restaurants. This was then followed on Saturday and Sunday by two more joint concerts performed by the „grand Ländler music formation" which had been assembled at short notice for this purpose, with the village square almost filled with people for the joint concert on the Sunday morning, much to the pleasure of the musicians. Providing general entertainment but in particular to ensure the right tempo was maintained, Markus Steiner of the

Schwyzrörgeli quartett Hasepfäffer and President of the VSV (Canton of Berne), unhesitatingly took up the conductor's baton for the joint concerts. With a very humorous approach and a good sense of timing, Steiner spontaneously conducted the nine Ländler music formations which then gave their best renditions of one classic after the other in the village square in perfect harmony.

Actual start of the festival on the Thursday

However, the festival actually started on the Thursday evening in the Festival Hall where the local clubs (Alpine horn enthusiasts of the glacier village, "Gletscherecho" yodelling club, old-time music, the "Alpenrösli" musical society, the Saas-Fee dance group in traditional costumes) were enthusiastically received by the 200 visitors. This performance was then followed by music from Paul Bauer of Grächen which prompted dancing and celebration.

Finally, the second grand dance and entertainment evening followed on the Saturday, with an invitation to the "Grand Folk Music Evening" in the Festival Hall where all nine Ländler music formations plus the two groups of yodellers amazed everyone with their performances on stage. After each individual performance by the respective Ländler music formation there was also one further joint concert staged by all the groups, creating a wonderful atmosphere. Once again of course Markus Steiner was happy to take over as musical director for "his grand formation".

The performances by the Ländler music formations and yodellers received such a great response that shortly after the concert started additional tables and chairs had to be set up to cope with the large number of guests.

Finally, the congenial youngsters of the hit and party band Wirbelwind took to the stage as the main event of the evening. Many of those present already knew the group as they had previously taken part in the Swiss Finale of the Folk Music Grand Prix both in 2008 as well as 2009. No sooner had the band picked up their instruments and sung the first notes the dance floor was full and the mood very lively. Celebrations continued until the early morning hours and night turned into day. One special aspect of this evening was that musicians

and visitors shared tables so they could engage in relaxed conversation.

The International Alpine Music Festival in Saas-Fee – in 2009 another successful mix of folk music, Ländler music, hits, yodelling and local tradition, providing fun and ensuring a relaxed and happy atmosphere. Surrounded by the highest mountains in the Alps rising to 1,800 metres above sea level, visitors were able to enjoy this festival in authentic surroundings in a way that was both genuine and unforced. An opportunity for dancing, celebration, enjoyment, for people to meet old friends or make new ones. Occasions like these which bring audience and musicians so closely together are rare. One of the reasons why the festival should be a permanent fixture in any calendar.

Mark the dates now: the next International Alpine Music Festival will be held from 08 – 11 July 2010.

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Further information available from Saas-Fee/Saastal Tourismus, Anja Roy, PR & Events, events@saas-fee.com or 027 958 18 67 (direct).