

## President's Message

The Inaugural Event on May 19 is now behind us. Overwhelming support was given by our membership, for which we are very grateful.

Now we are fast approaching the summer vacation season. This is the time when expatriates have to say goodbye to friends and acquaintances as they are reassigned or returning to their home country. Luckily, many of you will leave Singapore for vacation only, and hopefully return to this great city re-energized in August or September.

While the Swiss Association's program during the main holiday season will be somewhat reduced, the Association will still offer some activities, so don't forget to check our webpage

periodically.

To all of you who are leaving Singapore permanently, I wish you success and happiness at your new destination.

Wherever you are, my best wishes go to all for a relaxing and fun-filled time during the forthcoming holiday season.

Following your return to Singapore, I very much look forward to seeing you again at one, if not all, of the planned activities/functions of our Association.

Your President,  
Luzia Kappeler

## Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

On March 16, 2007, the Swiss Association of Singapore organized a visit to the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Buddhist Monastery. Everyone enjoyed seeing and hearing about the fantastic temples and statues.

During the tour, our guide gave us the chance to learn more about karma, rebirth and nirvana. Some of us were astonished to learn about

certain similarities with our own religions.

Details about the Buddhist Monastery can be found on the internet at the following address: [www.kmspks.org](http://www.kmspks.org).

Swiss Association Member  
Peter Jürg

## Oliver Twist Play

A twist on Twist – *Oliver Twist* that is. We enjoyed a different viewpoint when the Swiss Association saw the play "Oliver Twist" at the Raffles Hotel Jubilee Hall on April 5, 2007. Instead of seeing Dickens's story through Oliver's eyes, the way it was written by Dickens, we were treated to an alternate perspective – seeing the story through the eyes of the villain, Fagin. It was a fun and interesting way to see the well-known story.

One of the highlights of the evening was the "question and answer session" at the end of the play with the entire cast. They told us about their own backgrounds, where else they had performed, whether they made mistakes during

the performance and how they handled it, whether they changed their performance based on the audience or the locale of the show, how they rehearsed for the performance and many other facts. The audience was full of young Singaporean teenagers who had many questions (as did we!), and the cast were very patient in answering all the questions.

The production was produced in Asia by Mrs Wolker and supported by crystal capital group. When another play comes to town, I hope you will have the opportunity to attend.

Editor  
Mary Mapp

## Jass Lessons

Organized by the Swiss Association Singapore and very kindly hosted by Luzia Kappeler and Katrin Draemann, the first round of beginners Jass lessons started in earnest on January 17<sup>th</sup> 2007 at Caldecott Close. Those attending were either total beginners or players who had played some Jass, though in most cases a long time ago. Under the watchful and patient eyes of Luzia, Katrin and other volunteers, we began to learn the meaning of trumps, the top-down and bottom-up aspects of the game. Soon we were let loose into the arena of actually playing a real Jass game, which whilst at times was frustrating (I blamed the cards), was also

rewarding – the first match of the season! I think it is safe to say that everyone who attended these lessons found them most enjoyable and informative and we are now confident that we can safely attend the monthly Jass evenings at the Stammtisch. Whilst we can't always make a match, we can surely hold our own! On behalf of all the beginners, our thanks go to Luzia and Katrin for hosting the events and making Wednesday nights so enjoyable.

Swiss Association Member  
Kerry Allen

## Raffles Tour

Somerset Maugham once called it the legendary symbol for “all the fables of the exotic East”. Few hotels can look back on more than a century of legendary service to so many distinguished guests. Fewer still have preserved their past with a more loving attention to detail.

On April 26, 2007, twenty-five members of the Swiss Association of Singapore gathered at the Raffles Hotel, eager to take part in a tour. We all hoped to get a glimpse behind the scenes of this famous hotel.

Mr. Leslie Danker, resident historian, first took us on a tour of the various restaurants, pointing out their respective specialities. We'll surely all go and visit the “Creamery” when it opens and taste one of the 30 flavours of ice cream. Along the way, Mr. Danker pointed out many details of the various extensions and reconstructions of the building.

Unfortunately for us, but luckily for the hotel, most of the hotel suites were fully booked. The hotel has 103 rooms, all of them suites of

different sizes and different names. Mr. Danker showed us a Palmcourt suite, which has the same floorplan as the Courtyard and Personality suites. They all have a large bathroom with old-fashioned looking but modern fixtures, plus a lounge and bedroom decorated with period furniture.

After completing the tour of the hotel, we were treated to tea, coffee and Danish pastries. With the help of a slideshow, Mr. Danker took us through the history of this famous hotel and shared some anecdotes from his 35 years of service with the Raffles Hotel.

We certainly will look differently at these history-oozing walls next time we visit the Raffles. Today, the Raffles Hotel is more legend than hotel, and is one of the most memorable experiences travel can offer in today's world.

Swiss Association Member  
Anne-Marie Schmid

## Parliament in Session

What is the difference between the Bundeshaus in Bern and the Singapore Parliament? This was the question for the dozen or so members of the SAS who gathered on a searing, hot afternoon in front of the Parliament building. Some "hellos" and "Grüezi" here and there, a few familiar faces thanks to the Raclette evening that took place the Saturday before, and our visit was ready to begin.

After a short while of waiting, we went through a security process which made us feel like we were in an airport. The passport control was meticulous, and all our belongings had to pass through x-ray scanning. Cell phones with cameras had to be deposited and other phones needed to be switched off. A large number of security guards were involved and in retrospect it seemed like there were more security personnel engaged than members of the parliament sitting inside the room. We were given seat numbers and the guards brought us up one floor. Before the door to the visitors' gallery opened, the security personal advised us, in a firm but friendly manner, to bow in the direction of the Speaker of the House before taking our seats and before leaving the room again. We did so, of course, with respect, but it showed that some of us Swiss do not have much experience in bowing with elegance. I thought the locals were more refined in this practice

Once seated, many of us noticed a similarity not to the Bundeshaus, but rather to the British Parliament. The similarities were obvious in terms of organization and seating arrangements but very soon we learned that the session unrolled in a typical Singaporean manner rather than a British one. We had entered a Q&A session where perhaps 40 or 50 members

of the parliament were seated on two sides facing one another. At the end of the two sloped seating areas for the MPs was the Speaker of the House. His job is to ensure the rules and protocol of a parliamentary session are followed. In contrast to what his title might suggest, he didn't speak much at all. Questions coming from the MPs were dealt with in a very organized way. Each time an MP finished his or her question, the related minister stood up and answered in cool and professional style. The answers were mostly prepared, well structured and supported by facts and figures. Only a few supplemental questions from the MPs required the Ministers to speak without notes. Topics that were dealt with during the short time of our visit ranged from hospital bedding capacities and air conditioning standards, to the lack of office and apartment space, up to the issue of the influx of foreign workers in Singapore. If someone had expected heated discussions or political attacks, he would have been disappointed. Unlike what is seen in the British and other European parliaments, this session was not a confrontational one at all, but was fast and efficient. The highlight for all of us was certainly the appearance of the famous SM Goh Chok Tong and MM Lee Kuan Yew. The Minister Mentor entered during the session, silently attended for a short while and then left. We at least got to see him in person! The visit was a brief but interesting insight into a Singapore parliamentary session. After the mandatory bow from each of us, we left the gallery, retrieved our passports and went out to the hot afternoon sun.

Swiss Association Member  
Werner Meier

## Editor's Notes

Remember to visit the Swiss Association website, [www.swiss-sg.org](http://www.swiss-sg.org). It is a wonderful way to keep abreast of our upcoming events, messages and monthly activities, like Jass, Mahjong, Cigar & Whisky Night and the nature walks.

Mary Mapp